

Trial Told of White House

Washington

Former President Nixon and his top aide, H.R. Haldeman, never wanted anyone to know they were recording White House conversations, according to the man who supervised the installation of the elaborate secret taping system.

Alexander Butterfield, once a White House aide, told the jury at the coverup trial of five former Nixon aides that two of the major defendants — former Attorney General John Mitchell

and ex-domestic affairs adviser John Ehrlichman — were never told their talks with Mr. Nixon were being taped.

The 48-year-old head of the Federal Aviation Administration testified that he did not know who made the decision to keep the taping secret, but "I was told that no one was to be told about the system," installed on orders from the former president and Haldeman.

The government is using Butterfield to establish the

authenticity of 26 tapes it plans to play for the jury next week. That role was originally reserved for Mr. Nixon, but the government backed down from enforcing its subpoena for his appearance because of the ex-President's ill health.

Butterfield testified that in listening to more than 30 hours of the conversations he had corrected nearly 200 errors in the written transcripts made by the prosecutors.

But defense lawyers got

Judge John Sirica to stop the witness from telling the jury whether the mistakes were substantial or minor ones.

In later testimony yesterday, a White House technician revealed the existence of mini-gaps on the White House tapes.

James Baker, a Secret Service technician, said there were sometimes gaps of two to three minutes in presidential conversations when he changed tape reels in the White House record-

Secrecy on Taping

ing room, directly under Mr. Nixon's Oval Office.

Questioned by a defense lawyer, he conceded that he would simply cut off the President's conversations when he decided to place a new reel of tape on the then secret recorders.

Earlier yesterday, lawyers for Mitchell, Ehrlichman and Nixon campaign aide Kenneth Parkinson filed motions with Judge Sirica demanding a mistrial based on the disclosure Monday of what the prosecution

described as a "bombshell memo"

The November, 1972 memo turned up over the weekend when convicted Watergate burglar Howard Hunt's former lawyer, William Bittman, delivered it to the prosecutor.

Bittman, an unindicted co-conspirator in the coverup case, had repeatedly denied to investigators the existence of the memo, and defense lawyers had based their attack on Hunt's testimony on the lawyer's denial.

The defendants' lawyers argued in their motions it would be unfair to continue the trial since the newly found memo will clearly convince the jury that Hunt had been telling the truth about "hush monney" demands on the Nixon White House.

Sirica gave government prosecutors, who said they were as surprised as everyone else that the memo had finally turned up, until tomorrow to rebut the motions for a mistrial.

Reuters