

U.S. to rest coverup trial case

New York News

WASHINGTON — The prosecution will rest its case tomorrow against five former top Nixon aides after six weeks of playing 30 White House tapes and listening to 30 witnesses from the highest levels of government.

But after Thursday's playing of four never-before-published tapes — which revealed Nixon conceding that he might have committed a crime by offering hush money to Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt Jr. — the last days of the prosecution's case were almost anti-climatic.

Hunt took the witness stand again Friday to admit that he had written a memorandum a week after the November 1972 presidential

election demanding cash in return for his silence — not only about the Watergate break-in, but also about the 1971 burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Egil Krogh Jr., leader of the White House "plumber's team" in charge of organizing the Ellsberg break-in, also testified briefly.

Krogh said one of the defendants, John Ehrlichman, former presidential domestic affairs adviser, told him to "hang tough" when Watergate prosecutors began probing the Ellsberg case.

Ehrlichman's lawyer, William Frates, immediately moved for a mistrial, arguing that Ehrlichman was already convicted in that case

and was being subjected to double jeopardy.

Federal District Judge John Sirica denied the mistrial motion but did hint that he might drop charges that Ehrlichman and Mitchell lied to FBI agents. That law has been criticized as unfair because no transcripts are taken of the interviews.