

**Tapes and Ford****Jack Anderson**

**T**HOSE PERNICIOUS, all-hearing Nixon tapes are back again to haunt the GOP. The tapes seem to support John Dean's charge that in 1972 then-President Nixon used Gerald Ford to help block an early Watergate investigation.

Even more troublesome, we have now established that Mr. Nixon purposely altered the tape transcripts to cover up Mr. Ford's possible role in stopping the late Representative Wright Patman (Dem-Tex.) from investigating Watergate.

Patman was hot on the trail of the Watergate conspiracy before the 1972 election. He discovered, for example, how the Watergate money had been laundered in Mexico. But the White House brought pressure on his House Banking Committee to halt the probe dead in its tracks.

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**P**RESIDENT FORD has conceded that, as House Republican leader, he opposed the probe. But twice he has sworn that he acted on his own without any pressure from the White House. Dean, former White House counsel, has all but called Mr. Ford a liar. Dean now claims that he learned from two White House aides, William Timmons and Richard Cook, that they had consulted with Mr. Ford about derailing Patman.

Our own investigation doesn't disprove Mr. Ford's sworn testimony. But we have positively established that Mr. Nixon altered the transcripts in at least

eight instances to conceal Mr. Ford's possible involvement. In each instance, Mr. Nixon appeared to believe that his staff would be in touch with Mr. Ford and that Mr. Ford would intervene.

On Sept. 15, 1972, for example, a worried Mr. Nixon discussed the Patman probe with aides. He wanted the investigation stopped, he told his aides. Then, referring to Mr. Ford, Mr. Nixon declared: "Jerry has really got to lead on this. He's got to really be..."

Mr. Nixon was emphatic. He said Mr. Ford should be told: "Now goddamn it, get the hell over with this (ending the probe)." To stress the urgency, Mr. Nixon added: "I'm getting into this thing."

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**T**HESE STATEMENTS were picked up by the hidden microphones in the Oval Office. But Mr. Nixon later deleted them and other references to Mr. Ford from the transcripts.

This doesn't necessarily mean that Mr. Nixon's instructions to his staff were carried out. It is always possible, as Mr. Ford insists, that they never spoke to him about the probe. It should also be noted that Mr. Ford had nothing to do with editing the transcripts. It wasn't Mr. Ford but Mr. Nixon who was responsible for the deletions.

Footnote: Timmons and Cook both deny that they talked with Mr. Ford about killing the Patman investigation. We have been unable to get any comment from Mr. Nixon.