

**NIXON WHITE HOUSE TAPES**  
**ABUSE OF GOVERNMENTAL POWER SEGMENTS**

**FEBRUARY 1971 – JULY 1973**

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**National Archives and Records Administration**  
**Office of Presidential Libraries**  
**Nixon Presidential Materials Staff**

## **NIXON WHITE HOUSE TAPES**

### **ABUSE OF GOVERNMENTAL POWER SEGMENTS**

This group of Nixon White House tapes consists of tape segments demonstrating abuses of governmental power recorded on the Nixon taping system during the months of February 1971 - July 1973. These Abuse of Governmental Powers (AOGP) segments were released in three groups. The first group of AOGP segments, recorded between May and June 1972, was released on May 17, 1993. The second group of AOGP segments, recorded between February 1971 – April 1972 and July 1972 – July 1973, was released in November 1996. The third group of AOGP segments was released in February 1999, and consisted of newly declassified portions that were previously withheld from the two earlier releases. This group of tapes does not include those tapes and conversations acquired by the Watergate Special Prosecution Force (WSPF) for use in its investigations. This file segment of WSPF conversations was released separately by the National Archives and Records Administration in 1991.

These recorded White House tape segments are part of the Presidential historical materials of the Nixon Administration. These materials are in the custody of the National Archives and Records Administration under the provisions of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 ("PRMPA") (44 U.S.C. 2111 note). The tape logs for these tape segments were prepared by the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff in the course of processing the tapes for public release. Access to Nixon Presidential materials is governed by the PRMPA and its implementing public access regulations.

The recordings in this group are part of a larger body of sound recordings known as the Nixon White House tapes. The White House tapes were recorded at locations in the White House, the Old Executive Office Building (EOB), and Camp David during the Presidency of Richard M. Nixon. The taping system was installed in February 1971 and continued in operation until July 1973.

#### **The White House Taping System**

In February 1971, technicians from the Technical Services Division of the United States Secret Service (USSS) installed listening devices in the White House at the request of the President. They placed seven microphones in the Oval Office: five hidden in the President's desk, and one hidden on each side of the fireplace. They placed two microphones in the Cabinet Room under a small table near the President's chair. The Secret Service technicians wired all devices to central mixers that were then connected to recorders in an old locker room in the White House basement.

In April 1971, the Secret Service technicians installed four microphones in the President's office in the Old Executive Office Building (EOB). These microphones were located in the President's

desk. Wires from the microphones led to a mixer and recorders in an adjoining room. The Secret Service also tapped the telephones in the Oval Office, in the President's EOB office, and in the Lincoln Sitting Room in the White House residence. These telephone conversations were recorded by tapping the telephone lines from the White House switchboard and relaying the conversations to recorders in a closet in the basement of the residence.

Finally, in May 1972, the Secret Service set up a taping system in the President's study in Aspen Lodge at Camp David. There were three separate recording systems put in place. A single microphone recorded conversations taking place in the study. The President's telephone on his desk was tapped as was the telephone on a table.

This was a secret taping system maintained by the Secret Service. Only President Nixon, H. R. Haldeman and a few of the President's close personal assistants knew the system existed. One of the key features of the system was that the recording equipment in the Oval Office, the EOB office, and Camp David, and on the telephones was sound activated, operating without a conscious decision by the President to record a specific conversation. Most participants were unaware that their conversations with the President were being recorded. The system was tied to the Secret Service's Presidential Locator System and would only activate if the President was present in the room. It was designed to continue recording for fifteen to thirty seconds after the president left the room.

The Cabinet Room recording system operated somewhat differently. It was a manual system, rather than a sound activated system. It was activated by Alexander Butterfield, a Special Assistant to the President who managed the President's daily activities in the West Wing of the White House. Butterfield activated the system from a switch on his desk (although the Secret Service also placed an on/off switch on the side of the President's chair in the Cabinet Room). When Butterfield inadvertently left the system "on," the tape recorders captured non-historical conversations as well as hours of room noise.

### **Processing and Review for Public Access**

The Nixon Presidential Materials Staff (NLNS) has archivally processed the sound recordings for public access under the PRMPA, its implementing regulations, and the 1996 Tapes Settlement Agreement. Archival processing included duplicating the recordings to preserve the original tapes, enhancing the sound quality of the tape copies, describing the contents of the tapes by creating tape subject logs and other finding aids, and reviewing the tapes for public access. The review for public access conducted by the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff consisted of examining the materials to identify information which require restriction in accordance with the PRMPA regulations (36 CFR 1275.50 and 36 CFR 1275.52). NLNS archivists restrict information if release would:

- Violate a Federal statute or agency policy (restriction category "A");
- Reveal national security information (restriction category "B");
- Violate an individual's rights (pending) (restriction category "C");

Constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy (restriction category “D”);  
 Disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information (category “E”);  
 Disclose investigatory/law enforcement information (restriction category “F”);  
 Disclose purely private and personal information, as defined by PRMPA (category “G”);  
 Disclose purely non-historical historical material (restriction category “H”)

When the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff withheld information from a tape in accordance with the PRMPA regulations, the reason for the withdrawal and its duration are indicated on the tape subject log. Each withdrawn item is given a unique number within a conversation. When listening to a tape, the user will hear a distinctive tone lasting several seconds that will alert the user that information has been restricted.

In some cases, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff archivists withheld certain portions of conversations that were so unintelligible that they could not adequately review them for release at this time. These portions are noted on the tape subject log as “[Unintelligible]” or “[UNINTELLIGIBLE].”

### **Previously Released “Watergate” Tapes**

On May 28, 1980, the National Archives released the 12 ½ hours of conversations recorded on the White House tapes that were played in open court and used by the Watergate Special Prosecution Force (WSPF) as part of the “Watergate” criminal trials. On June 4, 1991, the National Archives released all 60 hours worth of tapes acquired by the Watergate Special Prosecution Force for use in its investigations. These 60 hours worth of tapes included the 12 ½ hours played in open court and became known as the “WSPF Tapes.” They are also part of Record Group (RG) 460, Records of the Special Prosecution Force.

### **Abuse of Governmental Power Conversations**

The materials in this group consist of tape segments relating to abuses of governmental power for the months of February 1971 - July 1973. These tape segments were identified by the National Archives during its review of the Nixon White House tapes and relate to abuses of governmental power as defined in the PRMPA regulations. The regulations provide in 36 CFR 1275.16 (c):

"The term abuses of governmental power popularly identified under the generic term "Watergate" (also referred to as abuses of governmental power), shall mean those alleged acts, whether or not corroborated by judicial, administrative, or legislative proceedings, which allegedly were conducted, directed, or approved by Richard M. Nixon, his staff or persons associated with him in his constitutional or statutory functions as President, or as political activities directly relating to or having a direct effect upon those functions, and which--

- (1) Were within the purview of the charters of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities or the Watergate Special Prosecution Force; or

(2) Are circumscribed in the Articles of Impeachment adopted by the House Committee on the Judiciary and reported to the House of Representatives for consideration in House Report No. 93-1305."

The Abuses of Governmental Power segments for these openings were, generally, parts of longer conversations in which the participants also discussed matters other than Watergate. Those parts of a recorded conversation unrelated to abuses of governmental power were not included as part of the releases. The length of the individual Abuse of Governmental Power segments ranges from less than a minute to over one hour.

### **Description of the Abuse of Governmental Power Releases**

The Abuse of Governmental Power (AOGP) conversations were released in three groups:

1. AOGP Conversations from May – June 1972. There are 41 segments of conversations in this group, totaling approximately 3 hours of listening time. They were released on May 17, 1993. Main topics include: Administration efforts to plant erroneous information in the apartment of Arthur Bremer, who shot Presidential candidate George Wallace, misuse of government agencies, illegal fundraising activities, and discussions of the “Watergate” break-in and planning the cover-up and public relations strategy. This group also contains the 18 ½ minute gap conversation. In addition to President Nixon, participants include: Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman, Special Counsel Charles W. Colson, Domestic Policy advisor and Staff Assistant John Ehrlichman, White House Counsel John Dean, and Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler.

Following this release the National Archives announced its intention to release additional AOGP segments in monthly increments, beginning with the July 1972 AOGP conversations. However, attorneys for President Nixon received a District Court injunction blocking future releases. Professor Stanley Kutler and Public Citizen Litigation Group sued for additional public releases. The injunction was finally lifted and the suit settled when the National Archives, the Estate of President Nixon, and Public Citizen announced the Tapes Settlement Agreement in 1996. The Settlement Agreement provided for the orderly processing of all the Nixon White House tapes in specific installments and time schedules. Under the terms of the agreement, the Abuse of Governmental Power conversations would be released, not by the month, but in one large installment.

2. AOGP Conversations from February 1971 – July 1973. This group of recordings consist of all identified segments of conversations relating to abuses of governmental power, as defined by PRMPA, except those previously released as part of the Watergate Trial tapes, the Watergate Special Prosecution Force tapes, and the May June 1972 AOGP tapes. In all, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff released 201 hours worth of conversations. They were released to the public on November 18, 1996. Main topics included the misuse of Federal agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Justice, and the Central

Intelligence Agency. Conversations discussed the selling of ambassadorships and other illegal fundraising activities. Other conversations detailed deceptive and/or illegal campaign activities, the ITT investigation and the various “Watergate” investigations. Many of the 1973 conversations detail the administration’s efforts to influence the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. Besides the President, participants included members of his White House staff, other governmental officials, Congressional leaders, and members of the press.

3. Declassified AOGP Conversations from May 1971 – July 1973. This group of White House tapes consists of previously withheld tape segments from the first two AOGP public releases. These segments were previously withheld from public access for reasons of national security (restriction category “B”). In all, 182 segments were reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12958. 119 segments were declassified, five were sanitized and portions declassified, and 53 segments were exempted from declassification. This public release of declassified Abuse of Governmental Power segments totals approximately 54 minutes. Main topics include: the Pentagon Papers, the assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, wiretaps, the Huston Plan, and the “Watergate” break-in and cover-up.

### **Audio Quality**

The audio quality of the recordings varies greatly. In general, conversations recorded in the Oval Office are of good quality; those recorded in the President's office in the Old Executive Office Building are of poorer sound quality. Conversations recorded on telephones are generally very audible. In some instances, background noises, such as footsteps or the clinking of coffee cups, make parts of tape segments more difficult to understand.

The National Archives duplicated the original tapes using both analog and digital technology for preservation purposes and to produce copies with improved sound quality and audibility for review of the conversations. Digital audio cassettes (DATS) were used for review purposes. Analog cassette copies were then produced from DATS for researcher use.

### **Tape Subject Logs**

There are no transcripts for these tapes.

Tape subject logs, prepared by the National Archives, are available in association with the tapes as aids to the listener. There is a separate tape log for each tape segment released. Each tape log includes the names of participants, date, time, and location of the conversation, and an outline of the content of the recording.

### **Conversation Numbers**

During its processing of the White House tapes, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff identified and assigned a unique number to each recorded conversation. The conversation number consists of an initial number that identifies the reel of original White House tape. Each conversation on each reel is identified by the number following the hyphen. Thus the number 342-9 refers to the ninth conversation on the tape reel 342.

The Abuse of Governmental Power tapes for this opening include some conversations for which two or more separate segments are being released. In such cases, the segments are indicated by consecutive numbers in parenthesis following the conversation number. For example, the numbers 342-9 (1), 342-9 (2), etc. refer to the various segments of conversation 342-9.

### **List of Tape Segments**

The abuse of power segments are listed in numerical order on the following pages. The list shows:

- a) conversation number--number assigned by the National Archives for archival control purposes;
- b) date of tape segment;
- c) time of conversation;
- d) names of participants in the conversations;  
(cited by initials identified in the Appendix);
- e) location of conversation;
- f) duration of conversation;
- g) reference cassette number;
- h) reference cassette segment number;

**Key to Taping Locations Abbreviations**

CAB	Cabinet Room
EOB	Old Executive Office Building
Oval	Oval Office
CDHW	Camp David Hardwire
CDST	Camp David Study Table
CDSB	Camp David Study Desk
WHT	White House Telephone



### Key to Name Abbreviations

MA	Marjorie Acker	FBD	Frederick B. Dent
STA	Spiro T. Agnew	HSD	Harry S. Dent
LCA	Leslie C. Arends	RJD	Robert J. Dole
ALA	Anne L. Armstrong	JDE	John D. Ehrlichman
RLA	Roy L. Ash	JNE	Julie Nixon Eisenhower
HHB	Howard H. Baker, Jr.	TBE	Thomas B. Evans
PJB	Peter J. Brennan	JHF	James H. Falk
CTB	Claude T. Brinegar	RHF	Robert H. Finch
WEB	William E. Brock, III	PMF	Peter M. Flanigan
DKEB	David K. E. Bruce	GRF	Gerald R. Ford
PJB	Patrick J. Buchanan	MLF	Max L. Friedersdorf
SBB	Stephen B. Bull	LG	Leonard Garment
WEB	Warren E. Burger	DRG	David R. Gergen
AFB	Arthur F. Burns	BMG	Barry M. Goldwater
GHWB	George H. W. Bush	WFG	William F. "Billy" Graham
APB	Alexander P. Butterfield	LPG	L. Patrick Gray, III
EJB	Earl J. Butz	RPG	Robert P. Griffin
JFB	J. Fred Buzhardt, Jr.	AMH	Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
JPC	J. Phil Campbell	HRH	Harry R. "Bob" Haldeman
FCC	Frank C. Carlucci	CMH	Clifford M. Hardin
WJC	William J. Casey	BNH	Bryce N. Harlow
KWC	Kenneth W. Clawson, Jr.	RMH	Richard M. Helms
WPC	William P. Clements, Jr.	LMH	Lawrence M. Higby
KRC	Kenneth R. Cole, Jr.	FHH	Floyd H. Hyde
CWC	Charles W. Colson	CMK	Clarence M. Kelley
JBC	John B. Connally	DMK	Donald M. Kendall
JWD	John W. Dean, III	HAK	Henry A. Kissinger
ESD	Edward S. DeBolt	HGK	Herbert G. Klein

RGK	Richard G. Kleindienst	NAR	Nelson A. Rockefeller
EK	Egil "Bud" Krogh, Jr.	WPR	William P. Rogers
MRL	Melvin R. Laird	WDR	William D. Ruckelshaus
WNL	William N. Letson	DHR	Donald H. Rumsfeld
HDL	Hobart D. Lewis	MS	Manolo Sanchez
JAL	John A. Love	RS	Richard Schubert
JTL	James T. Lynn	HS	Hugh Scott
CM	Clark MacGregor	GPS	George P. Shultz
RCM	Robert C. Mardian	EJS	Earl J. Silbert
PWM	Paul W. McCracken	JTS	Joseph T. Sneed
RHM	Robert H. Michel	HS	Herbert Stein
JNM	John N. Mitchell	FHS	Frank H. Strickler
RAM	Richard A. Moore	WET	William E. Timmons
ELM	Edward L. Morgan	PET	Pierre E. Trudeau
BFM	Barry F. Mountain	JDW	Joe D. Waggoner, Jr.
HM	Hyde Murray	SAW	Stephen A. Wakefield
FDN	F. Donald Nixon	GLW	Gerald L. Warren
P	President Richard M. Nixon	GDW	George D. Webster
FCN	Franklyn C. "Lyn" Nofziger	CWW	Caspar W. Weinberger
LBN	Louis B. Nunn	JCW	John C. Whitaker
DMP	David M. Packard	WHO	White House Operator
TAP	Thomas A. Pappas	DKW	David K. Wilson
DP	Doug Parker	JJW	John J. Wilson
RJP	Ralph J. Perk	RMW	Rose Mary Woods
HEP	Henry E. Petersen	CAW	Charles A. Wright
RKP	Raymond K. Price, Jr.	RLZ	Ronald L. Ziegler
CGR	Charles G. "Bebe" Rebozo		
ELR	Elliot L. Richardson		
FR	Frank Rizzo		