

WHITE HOUSE TAPES
5TH CHRONOLOGICAL RELEASE
PART II
NOVEMBER 1972 - DECEMBER 1972



Richard Nixon Presidential Library
National Archives and Records Administration

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NIXON WHITE HOUSE TAPES
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This group of 55 Nixon White House tapes, released on December 2, 2008, consists of the conversations which took place in the Oval Office, in the President's Old Executive Office Building (EOB) office, and on certain telephones in the Oval Office, the President's EOB office, and in the Lincoln Sitting Room in the residence of the White House. This group of White House tapes also includes room conversations and telephone conversations recorded in the President's study in the Aspen Lodge at the Camp David Presidential retreat in Maryland. In all, there are 1,398 conversations totaling approximately 198 hours of listening time. These conversations were recorded, for the most part, from November 1, 1972 to December 31, 1972. However, a few conversations included as part of the "December 1972" tapes were recorded in January 1973. For archival purposes, they are included in this installment.

According to the terms of the 1996 Tapes Settlement Agreement between the National Archives, President Nixon's Estate, and Public Citizen, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff has previously processed and released to the public seven installments of Nixon White House Tapes. The installments were:

1. Abuse of governmental power (AOGP) conversations. These tapes consisted of excerpted portions of conversations that documented evidence of abuses of governmental power. These excerpted portions were recorded between February 1971 and July 1973. This first installment was released to the public in October 1996 and totaled 201 hours of listening time.
2. Cabinet Room conversations. These conversations were recorded in the Cabinet Room in the White House between February 1971 and July 1973. This second installment was released to the public in November 1997 and totaled 154 hours of listening time.
3. First chronological segment. These conversations were recorded between February and July 1971. They were released to the public in October 1999 and totaled 445 hours of listening time.
4. Second chronological segment. These conversations were recorded between August and December 1971. They were released to the public in October 2000 and totaled 420 hours of listening time.
5. Third chronological segment. These conversations were recorded between January and June 1972. They were released to the public in February 2002 and totaled 425 hours of listening time.

6. Fourth chronological segment. These conversations were recorded between July and October 1972. They were released to the public in December 2003 and totaled 238 hours of listening time.
7. Fifth chronological segment, part I (tapes 33, 388, and 813). These conversations were recorded in November 1972. They were released to the public in July 2007 and totaled 11 ½ hours of listening time.

The National Archives intends to release the remaining tapes of the fifth chronological release (from January 1973 to July 1973) as soon as possible.

All of these tapes are in the custody of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and are part of the Nixon presidential historical materials under the provisions of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 (PRMPA) (44 USC 2111 note). In July 2007 with the establishment of the Nixon Presidential Library, the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation signed a deed of gift donating large portions of previously withdrawn conversations from the White House tapes. These donated conversations concern personal and political matters that were initially identified and reviewed by the archivists as “returnable” to the Nixon Foundation as the content of those conversations had no bearing on the constitutional and statutory duties of the Presidency, as stipulated in the PRMPA and its implementing public access regulations. Conversations determined to fall within the scope of the Nixon Foundation’s deed of gift, were reviewed according to the terms of the deed. Accordingly, access to the Nixon materials, including the tapes, is now governed by the PRMPA, its implementing public access regulations, the 1996 Tapes Settlement Agreement, and the 2007 deed of gift.

A Brief History of the White House Taping System

In February 1971, the United States Secret Service (USSS), at the request of the President, installed listening devices in the White House. They placed seven microphones in the Oval Office: five in the President’s desk and one on each side of the fireplace. They placed two microphones in the Cabinet Room under the table near the President’s chair. The Secret Service technicians wired all devices to central mixers which 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 EOB. These microphones were located in the President’s desk and wires 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. 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 the President’s desk was tapped as was the telephone on the study 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 its key features was that the recording equipment in the Oval Office, the EOB office, at 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 were being recorded. The system was tied to the Presidential Locator System and would only activate if the president were 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 rather than a sound activated system. It was activated by Alexander Butterfield, a Special Assistant to the President who managed the President's 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 on/off switches on either side of the President's chair at the Cabinet Room table). When Butterfield inadvertently left the system "on," the tape recorders captured non-historical conversations as well as hours of room noise.

Tapes Processing

The archivists have archivally processed the sound recordings for public access under PRMPA, its implementing public access regulations, the 1996 Tapes Settlement Agreement, and starting with the July 2007 release, the 2007 deed of gift.

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 restrictions.

The PRMPA regulations define eight restriction categories. In accordance with PRMPA and its implementing public access regulations, NARA restricts the content if release of the information 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 the PRMPA (restriction category "G");
- Disclose non-historical material (restriction category "H").

In some cases, the archivists withheld certain portions which were so unintelligible that the staff could not adequately review them for release at this time. These portions are noted on the tape subject log as "Unintelligible." For all of the withdrawals (except those removed because they were unintelligible), the tape subject log will note the relevant restriction category and the

duration of the withdrawal. For national security withdrawals, the tape subject log will also indicate the main topic or topics of the withdrawal.

Portions of conversations determined to fall within the “G” restriction category originally were to be returned to the Nixon Estate in accordance with PRMPA and its implementing public access regulations. However, the July 2007 deed of gift from the Nixon Foundation donated a large portion of this “G” material to NARA. The deed of gift allows NARA to retain and review all of the “G” material that does not concern the medical history or personal finances of Richard M. Nixon and does not concern the private, non-public activities of the immediate First Family (Thelma “Pat” Nixon, Tricia Nixon Cox, Edward Cox, Julie Nixon Eisenhower, and David Eisenhower). The archivists review these deeded portions to determine if they can be released to the public. In conducting this review, the archivists only restrict information that constitutes a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. These privacy withdrawals are indicated on the tapes subject logs as “Deed of gift-privacy” along with the duration of the withdrawal. Material previously returned to the Nixon Foundation that falls outside of the scope of the deed of gift as well as material returned to the Nixon Foundation under the 2007 deed of gift are indicated on the tapes subject logs as “Personal returnable” along with the duration of the withdrawal.

In past tapes processing, room noise captured on the tapes had been withdrawn. If President Nixon was alone in the room during these room noise recordings, the room noise was withdrawn as “G” personal returnable. If President Nixon was not in the room, the room noise was withdrawn as “H” non-historical. Under the 2007 deed of gift agreement, the Nixon Foundation allowed NARA to retain and release room noise captured on the tapes that had been designated as “G” material under PRMPA. In this release, for the sake of consistency and because of its potential, albeit limited, historical value, the Director of the Nixon Presidential Library decided to release both types of room noise as well as any incidental background conversation inadvertently captured on the tapes (e.g. faint conversations in the outside hallway). Room noise is segregated from identifiable conversations and labeled as such. Withdrawals from the room noise segments have been made for unintelligible segments that might be conversation. Room noise is not indicated on the tape subject logs.

All withdrawals under PRMPA or the 2007 deed of gift, including unintelligible withdrawals, are identified on the tapes by a ten second tone.

In this installment, the National Archives is releasing 55 White House tapes recorded between November 1, 1972 and January 12, 1973 totaling approximately 198 hours of listening time. Approximately 49 hours are room noise. In the course of processing the tapes, the Nixon Presidential Library restricted a total of approximately 2 ½ hours worth of conversation. According to PRMPA and the 2007 deed of gift, the archivists determined that approximately 98 minutes remained under the restriction category “G” and would be returned to the Nixon Estate. Under the deed of gift, the archivists withheld only 82 seconds for privacy. In the course of processing these recordings, the archivists determined that approximately 39 minutes required restriction because the conversations or room noise were too unintelligible to review. The archivists only restricted 4 minutes worth of conversation for reasons of national security (restriction category “B”). Lastly, the archivists only restricted 5 minutes worth of conversation

for restriction category “D” (release would clearly constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy).

Description of the November 1972 and December 1972 Conversations

Conversations in this release involve the President and a variety of participants. The most frequent participants are White House staff members H. R. Haldeman, Henry A. Kissinger, Charles W. Colson, Ronald L. Ziegler, John D. Ehrlichman, Alexander M. Haig, Jr., and Stephen B. Bull. Others include members of the Cabinet, foreign dignitaries, members of Congress, the President’s friends and family, journalists, celebrities, and members of the White House staff and federal agencies. While the conversations document the entire scope of issues in which the Nixon White House engaged in the last two months of 1972, these conversations particularly concern the 1972 Presidential and Congressional elections, President Nixon’s extensive plans for the reorganization of the executive branch in his second term and for the creation of a lasting “New Majority” to support a reinvigorated Republican Party or possibly a new conservative third party, and the late stages of the peace negotiations to end the Vietnam War and the decision to bomb the Hanoi and Haiphong areas in North Vietnam in December 1972. A few of the tapes include conversations from early January 1973.

The previous opening in July 2007 of three November 1972 tapes made available many of the most significant conversations concerning the 1972 Presidential and Congressional elections, but this current release significantly deepens the coverage of the elections. These conversations document the final days of campaigning before the elections and discussions of the conduct of George S. McGovern’s campaign including McGovern’s charges against the President’s Vietnam policies and peace efforts as well as demonstrations in Boston and elsewhere. A number of conversations concern the President’s address to the nation “Look to the Future” on November 2, 1972 that presented his vision for his second term if reelected. Additional conversations concern the outcome of the election including the President’s margin of victory and especially the question of whether the margin would be greater than that of Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. Following the elections, the President also had a number of conversations addressing plans for the inauguration and the struggle in the Democratic Party over the leadership of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) which resulted in the election of Robert S. Strauss as DNC chairman.

After the elections, President Nixon moved almost immediately to implement what he envisioned would be a dramatic reorganization of the executive branch in his second term. At Camp David throughout the middle of November, he met with his top aides, primarily Haldeman and Ehrlichman, to discuss a new structure for governing and future appointments to offices. The reorganization plan divided responsibilities among five top advisors to the President. Haldeman would manage the White House; Ehrlichman would be responsible for domestic policy; Kissinger would handle foreign policy; George P. Shultz would deal with economic policy; and Roy L. Ash would manage the budget. The plan also envisioned a reorganization of the Cabinet that was never fully implemented which would have effectively created “Super” Secretaries for Natural Resources, Human Resources, and Community Development to which all of the cabinet departments concerned with domestic affairs would have reported. Throughout

November and December, President Nixon had numerous conversations concerning possible appointments to his new administration including the replacement of Secretary of State William P. Rogers despite his resistance, the contemplated replacement of Kissinger as National Security Advisor, a new position for Donald H. Rumsfeld, changes at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the National Park Service, and the appointment of women to high level posts including Anne Armstrong as Counselor to the President, and Dixy Lee Ray as the head of the Atomic Energy Commission.

President Nixon's plans for the future of the Republican Party and the creation of a lasting "New Majority" also figure prominently on these tapes. Numerous conversations address the replacement of Robert J. Dole as the chairman of the Republican National Committee (RNC) with George H. W. Bush to serve as the President's chief political operative. The Bush appointment was part of the President's plan to move politics out of the White House with the end of the 1972 elections and the dismantling of Colson's office, a subject about which the President had a number of conversations. Other discussions about the Republican Party's future concerned whom the party would nominate for President in 1976. Frequently, the President connected the future of the Republican Party with the creation of a new conservative majority coalition. These conversations were often between the President and Colson and discussed efforts to pursue political support among labor, Catholics, specific ethnic groups such as Italian-Americans, and southerners. In December, several conversations concerned the President's planned appointment of the building trades union leader Peter J. Brennan and the opportunities for expanding labor support for the New Majority. Some conversations tied the New Majority to the reinvigoration of the Republican Party but the President and his aides also considered the creation of a new independent conservative third party free from older Republican ties to the East Coast liberal establishment. A theme that appears repeatedly in these conversations is the threat of the liberal establishment to American society and its leadership and the need to development alternatives to it. Discussions of the Christmas season receptions at the White House, which are a common topic of the December conversations, at times concerned the New Majority and the liberal establishment, and these included discussions of the White House reception that the President held for his labor supporters and consideration of a ban on *Washington Post* attendance at White House social events.

The war in Vietnam and the peace negotiations to end it are prominent topics in these conversations. The most common participants in the discussions with the President about Vietnam were Kissinger, Haldeman, Colson, and Haig. The conversations detail the status of the negotiations in November, and the US posture on the outstanding issues of the return of prisoners of war, the governance of South Vietnam, the withdrawal of US and North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, the maintenance of the demilitarized zone, international and US military and economic aid to North and South Vietnam, and cease-fires in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. As President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam and the North Vietnamese leadership each introduced a number of changes to the draft peace agreement negotiated in October, President Nixon and his aides confronted a possible breakdown of the negotiations in Paris. A number of conversations describe the Nixon administration's reaction including their questioning of South Vietnam's ability to survive under Thieu's leadership, their options for applying pressure to Thieu, especially in the face of his insistence once again on the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from the territory of South Vietnam. Several discussions address the President's

consideration of a bilateral settlement with North Vietnam because of Thieu's intransigence. Other issues surrounding the negotiations that were repeatedly discussed include the question of continued Congressional support for a prolonged war and of the US security guarantee to South Vietnam if North Vietnam were to violate provisions of a settlement agreement. Conversations concerned with the negotiations include two meetings between President Nixon and President Thieu's representative Nguyen Phu Duc and the South Vietnamese ambassador Tran Kim Phuong on November 29 and 30 and a meeting of the President with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on November 30.

Numerous conversations detail President Nixon's decision to bomb the Hanoi and Haiphong areas in North Vietnam in December when talks between the US and North Vietnam were suspended. Conversations address the President's and the public reaction to what the press dubbed the "Christmas bombing" as well as Kissinger's relations with the press and concern about leaks as public criticism of the bombing mounted. The President and his advisors also discussed the North Vietnamese reaction to the bombing and the decision to halt the bombing once the North Vietnamese agreed to resume the talks in Paris as well as the challenge of reconciling Thieu to the decision. Conversations with other notable individuals that primarily concerned Vietnam include the President's November 1 meeting with Cardinal John Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia, the President's December 10 meeting with Soviet ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, and the President's November 22 and January 2 telephone calls to former President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The Watergate investigation also played a significant role during the last two months of 1972 and there are a number of conversations that concern the investigation and surrounding developments. Discussions concerning Watergate that government archivists identified as Abuses of Governmental Power (AOGP) conversations were previously released from 1991 to 1999 as excerpted conversations. These conversations are now released in context with all surrounding discussion and additional conversation provide further context concerning developments related to the Watergate investigation. Topics include the involvement of Donald Segretti and Dwight Chapin in campaign "dirty tricks," the airplane crash that killed Dorothy Hunt, E. Howard Hunt's wife, public relations strategy concerning Watergate including the handling of the public perception of Colson's involvement, sale of ambassadorships, Federal Communications Commission license renewal challenges to *Washington Post*-owned television stations, possible IRS investigations of the tax-exempt status of Common Cause and the Ford Foundation, the loyalty of any newly appointed IRS commissioner, L. Patrick Gray and his confirmation hearings, and Henry Petersen.

Other topics mentioned in this release of tapes include energy policy and Senator Henry M. Jackson's trip to the Middle East, budget cuts involving school lunches and the postponement of the Clean Water Bill, a possible plan for national health insurance, Harry S. Truman's death and memorials in his honor, relations with Canadian Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau, the earthquake in Nicaragua, Henry Kissinger's interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, White House Office of Telecommunications Policy director Clay T. Whitehead's speech on television news bias, the Holocaust, the President's attitude toward modern art and the budget of the National Endowment for the Arts, and the President's recollections about his role in the resignation of President Eisenhower's chief of staff Sherman Adams and about Joseph

McCarthy's charges concerning communists in the State Department. Several conversations concern race relations, and shortly after the election, the President and Haldeman discussed who were the most famous people in the world.

Other conversations with notable individuals include the President's telephone call to Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in which they discuss the landmark pornography case *Miller v. California*; the President's telephone call to President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast in which they discussed economic development; the President's meeting with Mstislav Keldysh, President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in which they discussed US-USSR cooperation in science, space, health, trade, and arms control; Delaware's newly elected Senator Joseph R. Biden; George Allen, head coach of the Washington Redskins football team; comedian Bob Hope; astronaut Eugene Cernan and other crewmembers of the Apollo XVII space mission; oil magnate J. Paul Getty; US ambassador to Spain designate Adm. Horacio Rivero; outgoing Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George W. Romney; outgoing Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe; and the President's discussion with James T. Lynn, incoming Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Tape Logs

In the course of processing the tapes, the archivists prepared tape subject logs as researcher aids to follow conversations. Each log contains the tape number, the conversation, the tape location, the date and time of the conversation, and the names of the participants involved. The logs include activity statements which document when someone entered or left a room. These activity statements are based on research done by archivists. In instances when there is a telephone conversation in one of the offices, the logs contain cross references to the corresponding telephone recording, noting the tape and conversation number. The logs also indicate which portions of the tape were reviewed under the 2007 deed of gift. Room noise is not indicated on the tape subject logs. No transcripts have been created for any of these tapes.

Variations in sound quality can produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared with great care and substantial effort, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous or different interpretations from transcripts are always possible. As a general policy, the National Archives does not create transcripts of conversations, and considers existing transcripts to be an interpretation of the record rather than the record itself. NARA considers the actual tapes to be the record, and strongly urges users to listen to the tapes in forming their own interpretation.

Conversation Numbers

During the processing of the White House tapes, the archivists identified and assigned a unique number to each recorded conversation. The conversation number consists of an initial number which identifies the reel of the original White House tape. Each conversation on each reel is further identified by a unique number, with the first conversation on a particular reel usually labeled "1," the second conversation labeled "2," the third conversation labeled "3," and so on

sequentially until the tape goes blank. Infrequent exceptions to the sequential numbering of conversations on a tape occur because of the procedures used to process the tapes. For example, the first conversation on a tape may be labeled “1,” the second “39,” and the third “2.”

When listening to an Oval Office or an EOB office tape recording, there may be instances where the President or someone else in the room places or receives a telephone call while a meeting is in progress. The tape subject log identifies each instance by an activity statement, alerting the listener as to what is occurring, and lists a cross reference, if there is one, indicating the tape and conversation number for that telephone conversation on the White House telephone tapes. Likewise, the subject logs for the White House telephone tapes indicate the cross reference, if there is one, with the corresponding conversation from an Oval Office or an EOB office conversation.

Audio Quality

The audio quality of the recordings varies greatly. In general, conversations recorded in the Oval Office are of good audio quality; those recorded in the President’s EOB office are of poorer sound quality. Conversations recorded on the telephone are generally very audible; however, in some instances, the recording equipment malfunctioned, and those conversations are barely audible. In some instances, background noises, such as footsteps or the clinking of coffee cups and glasses, make parts of the 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 the review of the conversations. Digital Audio Cassettes (DATs) were used for review purposes. Digital audio files, available on compact discs and on the Nixon Library website, were then produced from these DATs for researcher use.

Executive Order 12958 and Declassification

In processing these recordings for public access, the National Archives implemented Executive Order 12958, which mandates declassification of materials more than twenty-five years old. Using agency guidelines, on-site visits from agency declassification specialists, detailed reference information, and textual records from the Nixon Presidential materials, the archivists were able to review substantial amounts of material. The National Archives determined that only 5 minutes required restriction out of 198 hours in this segment. These 21 withdrawals are indicated on the various tape subject logs. For national security withdrawals, the tape subject log indicates the main subject or subjects that have been withdrawn.

Other Finding Aids

In addition to the tapes subject logs, the archivists also created the following lists to assist researchers in their work:

Conversation Lists: Two complete lists of each conversation found on the tapes, providing, the conversation number, the date and time of the conversation, the abbreviations of names of participants (by individual or described by group), the length of the released portion of the conversation, and the reference compact disk or cassette where the conversation can be located. One list is arranged by conversation number and the other by conversation date.

Abbreviations List: A list of the name abbreviations used on the conversation lists.

Index: A search engine searchable by key words such as names, geographic places, and subjects.