

Inspector Dagg - Inspection

November 19, 1973

SSS Zumwalt - Technical Security Division 621.0

White House Tapes

On February 11, 1971, DAD Wong (then SAIC Wong, TSD) called me into his office. He stated Mr. Butterfield had contacted him and wanted to record the President's conversations in the Oval Office. I requested a meeting between Mr. Butterfield, DAD Wong and myself to discuss the operation of the system. A meeting with Mr. Butterfield was held on the same afternoon. Present at the meeting were Mr. Butterfield, DAD Wong, SA Randolph Nelson and myself.

Mr. Butterfield stated that the President had requested the Secret Service perform this installation and that the military was not to find out about it (I think he was referring to WHCA), and only a minimum of the Secret Service to be aware of the installation. Mr. Butterfield stated the President wanted all conversations in the Oval Office recorded. The system should start when he enters the office and turn off when he leaves. The recorder should have a voice operated relay that would only record when a sound is made. Mr. Butterfield also stated he wanted the Cabinet Room wired for sound. This system was to have switches under the Cabinet Room table so the President could start and stop the recorders. Switches were also to be provided in Mr. Butterfield's office that would allow him to control the recorders.

Some of the equipment was on hand and some was borrowed from WHCA. The Oval Office and Cabinet Room were installed on the weekend of February 13 and 14, 1971. The installation was performed by SS Roger Schwalm, SS Charles Bretz, SA Nelson and myself. ASAIC Shawver was present during certain times of the installation. GSA electrician McVerry was used to pull cable thru some of the walls. Mr. McVerry was not informed of what we were doing or what the cables were to be used for. The Oval Office and Cabinet Room were wired into WT-1, an old telephone frame room which was under the control of TSD. Special locks were installed on the door to WT-1 with only two keys, one which I kept and the other was placed in Mr. Wong's safe.

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By KA NARA Date 07/16/89

Mr. Wong at a later date said Mr. Butterfield had also requested that the telephones in the Oval Office, EOB office and the Lincoln Room in the Residence be connected into a recorder. It was requested that all three phones be recorded on one recorder. All three phones were connected into a recorder and placed into operation approximately in March, 1971. Mr. Wong also said that Mr. Butterfield wanted the EOB office of the President recorded. The EOB office was to have the same operational control features. The EOB office was wired using the same personnel that was used in the other locations.

This system was wired into Room 175-1/2 in the EOB, which was also under the control of TSD. A special cabinet was constructed in the corner of 175-1/2, and the same special lock was placed on the cabinet door. The EOB office was placed into operation approximately in April, 1971.

Mr. Wong said he had received a request to wire the President's study at Camp David. This installation was not completed until May 18, 1972. The telephone in the study was also connected into a recorder. Both the hard wire and telephone were wired into the TSD room in the shelter under the residence. The system was left in the "Off" position until the President would visit Camp David, at which time both the audio in the study and the telephone were recorded. At the end of each visit the tapes were placed in a metal suitcase and locked. The person who returned the suitcase to TSD did not have the combination to the lock. The tapes were returned to TSD and placed in the vault room. The hard wire system was disconnected March 18, 1973, at the request of Mr. Bull. SAIC Sims advised Mr. Bull that this system should be removed when it was learned that foreign officials would be staying at Camp David.

The tapes were stored in each recording cabinet until a small amount collected. A five-drawer safe was obtained and placed in Trudy Brown's office, Room 43, EOB. The tapes were wrapped ten or twelve to a bundle and marked with dates they were recorded on the outside of the wrapper. The tapes were then locked in the safe. The combination to the safe was stored in the safe in Mr. Wong's office. As this safe began to fill up a room was obtained across from the EOB cafeteria (an old stairway). I had GSA put steel sheets to cover the floor. Five safes were placed in this room and storage of tapes were transferred to this location, and, as far as I know they are still in the same location.

During the year 1971, and the first part of 1972, the only personnel to have access to changing the tapes were SA Nelson, SS Taylor and myself. SA Nelson and SSS Taylor only changed the tapes during my absence, and only for a short period of time. SSS Baker started changing the tapes sometime during 1972. I would change the tape during Baker's absence on leave, trips, etc., after 1972.

In August, 1971, AD Kelley and myself talked about a new system. I presented a fake problem to Chief Burnett, TD&PD, to develop a new system. Chief Burnett started a project to have a new system constructed. The first system was received by Chief Burnett during early 1972. However, the system had an empty ^{noise} sound effect and Chief Burnett stated a filter would be required to correct this problem. When the Watergate break-in was exposed, this project was put on a hold basis and was never used. Six tape recorders were ordered with a modification to operate at 15/16 speed and maintain good quality on the sound. The recorders were to be used with the system Chief Burnett had under development, as a result they were never used either.

The Oval Office, EOB Office, Cabinet Room, White House telephones and the study telephone at Camp David were disconnected and the equipment was removed and returned to TSD supply on July 18, 1973. A complete inventory of all tapes were conducted by SAIC Sims, SSS Baker and myself. A listing was made of all tapes and turned over to General Bennett, Deputy Assistant to the President, at 10:00 p.m., same date. SS Barzee, TSD, changed the combinations to the safes and sealed the combination in an envelope then turned it over to Mr. Bennett. The lock on the door was changed by SS Barzee and only two keys were turned over to Mr. Bennett. I walked with SAIC Sims to 058, EPS Control Center, to inform the watch commander that only General Bennett was to have access to this room. The next morning SAIC Sims showed me an O/M to 058 that only authorized the President to have access to the room where the tapes were stored.

On the afternoon of October 30, 1973, SAIC Sims told me that Mr. Buzhardt said a conversation was missing from the tapes on April 15, 1973, and being this was a weekend, he wanted me to explain to Mr. Ben Veniste, from the Special Prosecutor's Office, the operation of the taping system. The next morning, October 31, 1973, I was informed that I was to be in Mr. Ben Veniste's office at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Adams from Treasury was present during the questioning.

I received a telephone call from SAIC Sims at 1:00 p.m., October 31, 1973, to meet him at Mr. Buzhardt's office. I proceeded to Mr. Buzhardt's office, and, when I arrived, he had a car standing by to go to Judge Sirica's Court. During the car ride, Mr. Buzhardt informed me the two days were recorded on the same tape. During the time I was waiting to be called on the stand, I was questioning SSS Baker as to the last operational procedures on the taping system. I was called to the witness stand at 2:30 p.m. On the evening of October 31, 1973, I had time to observe the timer, at which time I remembered some operational problems I had encountered setting the system up. It was found that a Saturday and Sunday on one tape was a normal operation. This changed the way I thought the system had operated. This means the system did not malfunction, instead, due to the large amount of time the President was in the EOB office during the weekend, the tape just ran out. This was the first time in two years that I know of a weekend tape running out.

I supplied Mr. Buzhardt's staff with samples of the tape used to record on the system on November 8, 1973. The tape recorders what were connected to the system on July 18, 1973, were collected and tagged as to the location they were used. SAIC Sims turned over seven Sony TC 800B and two Uher R-15 recorders to the court at 9:00 a.m., November 16, 1973.

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