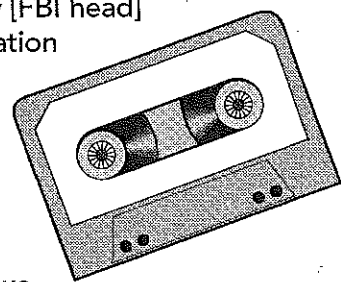


## The "Smoking Gun"

Throughout the Watergate affair, President Nixon insisted he had never taken part in the cover-up. He said he had not known anything about the cover-up before March 21, 1973. He also stated on May 22, 1973: "At no time did I attempt, nor did I authorize others to attempt, to implicate the CIA in the Watergate matter." Then Nixon released the tapes of June 23, 1972, under court order. These tapes were made six days after the break-in by the burglars at Watergate. The tapes instantly became known as "the smoking gun." Here's part of what they say. (H.R. Haldeman was one of President Nixon's top aides.)

HALDEMAN: Now, on the investigation, you know the Democratic break-in thing, we're back in the problem area because the FBI is not under control, because Gray [FBI head] doesn't exactly know how to control it and they have—their investigation is now leading into some productive areas [linking the burglars with White House staff]—because they've been able to trace the money [to bribe the burglars to lie at their trials]—not through the money itself—but through the bank sources—the bankers. And, it goes in some directions we don't want it to go. . . . The way for us to handle this now is for us to have Walters [assistant head of the CIA] call Pat Gray and just say, "Stay to hell out of this—this is, ah, business here we don't want you to go any further on it."



NIXON: What about Pat Gray—you mean Pat Gray doesn't want to?

HALDEMAN: Pat does want to. He doesn't know how to, and doesn't have any basis for doing it. Given this, he will then have the basis. . . . We'll call him in and say, "We've got the signal from across the river [from the CIA] to put the hold on this." And that will fit rather well because the FBI agents who are working the case, at this point, feel that's what it is [a CIA operation].

PRESIDENT: This is CIA? They've traced the money? Who'd they trace it to? . . . Would it be somebody here [at the White House]? It isn't from the Committee [to re-elect Nixon], though, from Stans [head of Nixon's campaign fund-raising committee]?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, it is. It's directly traceable and there's some more through some Texas people that went to the Mexican bank which can also be traced to the Mexican bank. . . .

PRESIDENT: Well, I mean, there's no way—I'm just thinking if they don't cooperate, what do they say? That they were approached by the Cubans. That's what they have to say, that they—

HALDEMAN: Well, if they will. But then we're relying on more and more people all the time. That's the problem and they'll stop if we could take this other route.

NIXON: All right. . . . Right, fine.

(continued)



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The "Smoking Gun" (continued)

**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

1. Why were these taped conversations called the "smoking gun"? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the two men planning? \_\_\_\_\_

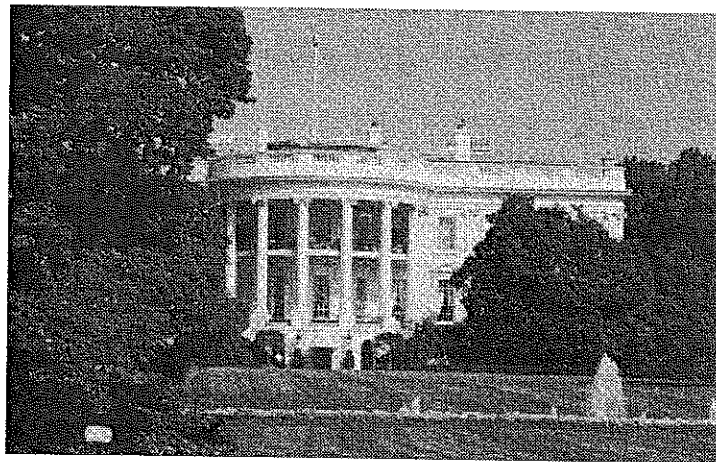
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. The contents of these June 23, 1972 taped conversations were made public on August 5, 1974.

What was the result? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Extra Challenge:** Read the tape transcript for Nixon's White House conversation with John Dean and H. R. Haldeman on March 21, 1973. Nixon claimed that this transcript (and all the others) showed that "not once does it appear that the President of the United States was engaged in a criminal plot to obstruct justice." What do you think? Make a logical argument that supports or undercuts Nixon's argument in connection with the March 21 conversation.



The White House  
Washington, D.C.

