

# Watergate scandal

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## Watergate scandal



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**Watergate** was a major [political scandal](#) that occurred in the United States in the 1970s, following a break-in at the [Democratic National Committee](#) (DNC) headquarters at the [Watergate office complex](#) in [Washington, D.C.](#) in 1972 and [President Richard Nixon's administration's](#) attempted cover-up of its involvement. When the conspiracy was discovered and investigated by the [U.S. Congress](#), the Nixon administration's resistance to its probes led to a [constitutional crisis](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

The term *Watergate* has come to encompass an array of clandestine and often illegal activities undertaken by members of the Nixon administration. Those activities included such "dirty tricks" as bugging the offices of political opponents and people of whom Nixon or his officials were suspicious. Nixon and his close aides apparently ordered investigation of activist groups and political figures, using the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) (FBI), the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), and the [Internal Revenue Service](#) (IRS).

The scandal led to the discovery of multiple abuses of power by the Nixon administration, [articles of impeachment](#),<sup>[2]</sup> and the resignation of Nixon. The scandal also resulted in the [indictment](#) of 69 people, with trials or [pleas](#) resulting in 48 being found guilty, many of whom were Nixon's top administration officials.<sup>[3]</sup>

The affair began with the arrest of five men for breaking and entering into the DNC headquarters at the Watergate complex on Saturday, June 17, 1972. The FBI investigated and discovered a connection between cash found on the burglars and a [slush fund](#) used by the [Committee for the Re-Election of the President](#) (CRP), the official organization of Nixon's campaign.<sup>[4][5]</sup> In July 1973, evidence mounted against the President's staff, including testimony provided by former staff members in an investigation conducted by the [Senate Watergate Committee](#). The investigation revealed that President Nixon had a tape-recording system in his offices and that he had [recorded](#) many conversations.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

After a protracted series of bitter court battles, the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) unanimously ruled that the president was obligated to release the tapes to government investigators, and he eventually complied. These audio recordings implicated the president, revealing he had attempted to cover up activities that took place after the break-in and to use federal officials to deflect the investigation.<sup>[5][8]</sup> Facing near-certain [impeachment](#) in the [House of Representatives](#) and equally certain conviction by the [Senate](#), Nixon resigned the presidency on August 9, 1974.<sup>[9][10]</sup> On September 8, 1974, his successor, [Gerald Ford](#), [pardoned him](#).

The name "Watergate" and the [suffix "-gate"](#) have since become synonymous with political scandals in the United States.<sup>[11][12][13][14][15]</sup>

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## Wiretapping of the Democratic Party's headquarters



E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, who led the Watergate break-in team, were stationed in a Watergate Hotel room while the burglary was underway. A lookout was posted across the street at the Howard Johnson Hotel. During the break-in, they would remain in contact with each other and with the burglars by radio. These Chapstick tubes outfitted with tiny microphones were discovered in Hunt's White House office safe.



Transistor radio used in the Watergate break-in



Walkie-talkie used in Watergate break-in

In January 1972, [G. Gordon Liddy](#), general counsel to the [Committee for the Re-Election of the President](#) (CRP), presented a campaign intelligence plan to CRP's Acting Chairman [Jeb Stuart Magruder](#), Attorney General [John Mitchell](#), and Presidential Counsel [John Dean](#), that involved extensive illegal activities against the [Democratic Party](#). According to Dean, this marked "the opening scene of the worst political scandal of the twentieth century and the beginning of the end of the Nixon presidency."<sup>[16]</sup>

Mitchell viewed the plan as unrealistic. Two months later, he was alleged to have approved a reduced version of the plan, to include burgling the [Democratic National Committee's](#) (DNC) headquarters at the [Watergate Complex](#) in [Washington, D.C.](#)—ostensibly to photograph campaign documents and install listening devices in telephones. Liddy was nominally in charge of the operation, but has since insisted that he was duped by Dean and at least two of his subordinates. These included former CIA officers [E. Howard Hunt](#) and [James McCord](#), then-CRP Security Coordinator (John Mitchell had by then resigned as Attorney General to become chairman of the CRP).<sup>[17][18]</sup>

In May, McCord assigned former FBI agent [Alfred C. Baldwin III](#) to carry out the wiretapping and monitor the telephone conversations afterward.<sup>[19]</sup> McCord testified that he selected Baldwin's name from a registry published by the [Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI](#) to work for the Committee to Re-elect the President.<sup>[19]</sup> Baldwin first served as bodyguard to Martha Mitchell, the wife of John Mitchell, who was living in Washington.<sup>[19]</sup> Baldwin accompanied Martha Mitchell to

Chicago.[19] Martha did not like Baldwin and described him as the "gauchest character I've ever met." [19] The Committee replaced Baldwin with another security man.[19]

On May 11, McCord arranged for Baldwin, whom investigative reporter [Jim Hougan](#) described as "somehow special and perhaps well known to McCord," [19] to stay at the Howard Johnson's motel across the street from the Watergate complex.[19] The room 419 was booked in the name of McCord's company.[19] At behest of [G. Gordon Liddy](#) and [E. Howard Hunt](#), [19] McCord and his team of burglars prepared for their first Watergate break-in, [19] which began on May 28.[19]

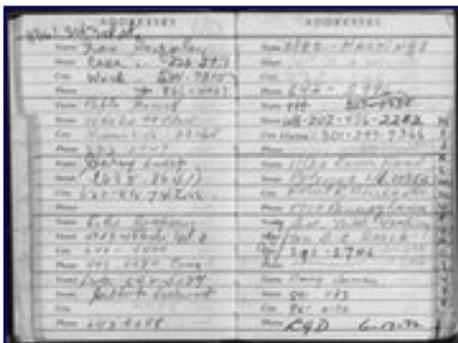
Two phones inside the offices of the DNC headquarters were said to have been [wiretapped](#). [19] One was the phone of [Robert Spencer Oliver](#), who at the time was working as the executive director of the Association of State Democratic Chairmen, and the other was the phone of DNC secretary [Larry O'Brien](#). [20] The FBI found no evidence that O'Brien's phone was bugged. [21] However, it was determined that an effective listening device had been installed in Oliver's phone. [22]

Despite the success in installing the listening devices, the Committee agents soon determined that they needed to be repaired. [22] They planned a second "burglary" in order to take care of this. [22]

Shortly after midnight on June 17, 1972, [Frank Wills](#), a security guard at the Watergate Complex, noticed tape covering the [latches](#) on some of the doors in the complex leading from the underground parking garage to several offices (allowing the doors to close but remain unlocked). He removed the tape, and thought nothing of it. He returned an hour later and, having discovered that someone had retaped the locks, Wills called the police. Five men were discovered inside the DNC office and arrested. [17] They were Virgilio González, [Bernard Barker](#), [James McCord](#), [Eugenio Martínez](#), and [Frank Sturgis](#), who were charged with attempted burglary and attempted interception of telephone and other communications. On September 15, a [grand jury](#) indicted them, as well as Hunt and Liddy, [23] for conspiracy, burglary, and violation of federal wiretapping laws. The five burglars who broke into the office were tried by a jury, Judge [John Sirica](#) officiating, and were convicted on January 30, 1973. [24]

## Cover-up and its unraveling

### Initial cover-up



Address book of Watergate burglar Bernard Barker, discovered in a room at the Watergate Hotel, June 18, 1972

Within hours of the burglars' arrest, the FBI discovered the name of [E. Howard Hunt](#) in the address books of Barker and Martínez. Nixon administration officials were concerned because Hunt and Liddy were also involved in a separate secret activity known as the [White House Plumbers](#), which was set up to stop security "[leaks](#)" and to investigate other sensitive security matters. Dean would later testify he was ordered by top Nixon aide [John Ehrlichman](#) to "[deep six](#)" the contents of Howard Hunt's White House safe. Ehrlichman subsequently denied that. In the end, the evidence from Hunt's safe was destroyed (in separate operations) by Dean and the FBI's Acting Director, [L. Patrick Gray](#).

Nixon's own reaction to the break-in, at least initially, was one of skepticism. Watergate prosecutor James Neal was sure Nixon had not known in advance of the break-in. As evidence, he cited a June 23 taped conversation between the President and his Chief of Staff, [H. R. Haldeman](#), in which Nixon asked, "Who was the asshole who ordered it?" But Nixon subsequently ordered Haldeman to have the CIA block the FBI's investigation into the source of the funding for the burglary.

A few days later, Nixon's Press Secretary, [Ron Ziegler](#), described the event as "a third-rate burglary attempt." On August 29, at a news conference, President Nixon stated Dean had conducted a thorough investigation of the matter, when in fact Dean had not conducted any investigation at all. Nixon also said, "I can say categorically that... no one in the White House staff, no one in this Administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident." On September 15, Nixon congratulated Dean, saying, "The way you've handled it, it seems to me, has been very skillful, because you—putting your fingers in the dikes every time that leaks have sprung here and sprung there."<sup>[17]</sup>

## Money trail



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*(March 2016)* ([Learn how and when to remove this template message](#))

On June 19, 1972, the press reported that one of the Watergate burglars was a [Republican Party](#) security aide.<sup>[25]</sup> Former Attorney General John Mitchell, who at the time was the head of the Nixon re-election campaign (CRP), denied any involvement with the Watergate break-in or knowledge of the five burglars. On August 1, a \$25,000 [cashier's check](#) earmarked for the Nixon re-election campaign was found in the bank account of one of the Watergate burglars. Further investigation by the FBI would reveal the team had thousands of dollars more to support their travel and expenses in the months leading up to their arrests. Examination of their funds showed a link to the finance committee of CRP.

Several donations (totaling \$86,000) were made by individuals who thought they were making private donations by certified and cashier's checks for the President's re-election. Investigators' examination of the bank records of a Miami company run by Watergate burglar Barker revealed an account controlled by him personally had deposited a check and then transferred it (through the [Federal Reserve Check Clearing System](#)).

The banks that had originated the checks were keen to ensure the depository institution used by Barker had acted properly in ensuring the checks had been received and endorsed by the check's payee, before its acceptance for deposit in Bernard Barker's account. Only in this way would the issuing banks not be held liable for the unauthorized and improper release of funds from their customers' accounts.

The investigation by the FBI, which cleared Barker's bank of fiduciary malfeasance, led to the direct implication of members of the CRP, to whom the checks had been delivered. Those individuals were the Committee bookkeeper and its treasurer, [Hugh Sloan](#).

As a private organization, the Committee followed normal business practice in allowing only duly authorized individual(s) to accept and endorse checks on behalf of the Committee. No financial institution could accept or process a check on behalf of the Committee unless a duly authorized individual endorsed it. The checks deposited into Barker's bank account were endorsed by Committee treasurer Hugh Sloan, who was authorized by the Finance Committee. However, once Sloan had endorsed a check made payable to the Committee, he had a legal and fiduciary responsibility to see that the check was deposited only into the accounts named on the check. Sloan failed to do that. When confronted with the potential charge of federal bank fraud, he revealed that Committee deputy director [Jeb Magruder](#) and finance director [Maurice Stans](#) had directed him to give the money to [G. Gordon Liddy](#).

Liddy, in turn, gave the money to Barker, and attempted to hide its origin. Barker tried to disguise the funds by depositing them into accounts in banks outside of the United States. What Barker, Liddy, and Sloan did not know was that the complete record of all such transactions were held for roughly six months. Barker's use of foreign banks in April and May 1972, to deposit checks and withdraw the funds via cashier's checks and money orders, resulted in the banks keeping the entire transaction records until October and November 1972.

All five Watergate burglars were directly or indirectly tied to the 1972 [CRP](#), thus causing Judge Sirica to suspect a conspiracy involving higher-echelon government officials.[\[26\]](#)

On September 29, 1972, the press reported that John Mitchell, while serving as Attorney General, controlled a secret Republican fund used to finance intelligence-gathering against the Democrats. On October 10, the FBI reported the Watergate break-in was part of a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage on behalf of the Nixon re-election committee. Despite these revelations, Nixon's campaign was never seriously jeopardized; on November 7, the [President was re-elected](#) in one of the biggest landslides in American political history.

## **Role of the media**

The connection between the break-in and the re-election committee was highlighted by media coverage—in particular, investigative coverage by [The Washington Post](#), [Time](#), and [The New York Times](#). The coverage dramatically increased publicity and consequent political repercussions. Relying heavily upon [anonymous sources](#), *Post* reporters [Bob Woodward](#) and [Carl Bernstein](#) uncovered information suggesting that knowledge of the break-in, and attempts to cover it up, led deeply into the upper

reaches of the Justice Department, FBI, CIA, and the White House. Woodward and Bernstein interviewed [Judy Hoback Miller](#), the bookkeeper for Nixon, who revealed to them information about the mishandling of funds and records being destroyed.[27]

Chief among the *Post's* anonymous sources was an individual whom Woodward and Bernstein had nicknamed [Deep Throat](#); 33 years later, in 2005, the informant was identified as [William Mark Felt, Sr.](#), deputy director of the FBI during that period of the 1970s, something Woodward later confirmed. Felt met secretly with Woodward several times, telling him of Howard Hunt's involvement with the Watergate break-in, and that the White House staff regarded the stakes in Watergate extremely high. Felt warned Woodward that the FBI wanted to know where he and other reporters were getting their information, as they were uncovering a wider web of crimes than the FBI first disclosed. All of the secret meetings between Woodward and "Deep Throat" (W. Mark Felt) took place at an underground parking garage somewhere in [Rosslyn](#) over a period from June 1972 to January 1973. Prior to resigning from the FBI on June 22, 1973, Felt also anonymously planted [leaks](#) about Watergate to [Time magazine](#), the [Washington Daily News](#) and other publications.[28]

During this early period, most of the media failed to grasp the full implications of the scandal, and concentrated reporting on other topics related to the 1972 presidential election.[29] After the reporting that one of the convicted burglars wrote to Judge Sirica alleging a high-level cover-up, the media shifted its focus. *Time* magazine described Nixon as undergoing "daily hell and very little trust." The distrust between the press and the Nixon administration was mutual and greater than usual due to lingering dissatisfaction with events from the [Vietnam War](#). At the same time, public distrust of the media was polled at more than 40%.[29]

Nixon and top administration officials discussed using government agencies to "get" (or retaliate against) those they perceived as hostile media organizations.[29] The discussions had precedent. At the request of Nixon's White House in 1969, the FBI tapped the phones of five reporters. In 1971, the White House requested an audit of the tax return of the editor of [Newsday](#), after he wrote a series of articles about the financial dealings of [Charles Rebozo](#), a friend of Nixon.[30]

The Administration and its supporters accused the media of making "wild accusations," putting too much emphasis on the story, and of having a liberal bias against the Administration.[29] Nixon said in a May 1974 interview with supporter [Baruch Korff](#) that if he had followed the liberal policies that he thought the media preferred, "Watergate would have been a blip." [31] The media noted that most of the reporting turned out to be accurate; the competitive nature of the media guaranteed widespread coverage of the far-reaching political scandal.[29] Applications to [journalism schools](#) reached an all-time high in 1974.[29]

## **Scandal escalates**

Rather than ending with the conviction and sentencing to prison of the five Watergate burglars on January 30, 1973, the investigation into the break-in and the Nixon Administration's involvement grew broader. Nixon's conversations in late March and all of April 1973 revealed that not only did he know he needed to remove Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Dean to gain distance from them, but he had to do so

in a way that was least likely to incriminate him and his presidency. Nixon created a new conspiracy—to effect a cover-up of the cover-up—which began in late March 1973 and became fully formed in May and June 1973, operating until his presidency ended on August 9, 1974.[32] On March 23, 1973, Judge Sirica read the court a letter from Watergate burglar [James McCord](#), who alleged that [perjury](#) had been committed in the Watergate trial, and defendants had been pressured to remain silent. Trying to make them talk, Sirica gave Hunt and two burglars provisional sentences of up to 40 years.

On March 28, on Nixon's orders, aide John Ehrlichman told Attorney General [Richard Kleindienst](#) that nobody in the White House had prior knowledge of the burglary. On April 13, Magruder told U.S. attorneys that he had perjured himself during the burglars' trial, and implicated John Dean and John Mitchell.[17]

John Dean believed that he, Mitchell, Ehrlichman and Haldeman could go to the prosecutors, tell the truth, and save the presidency. Dean wanted to protect the presidency and have his four closest men take the fall for telling the truth. During the critical meeting with Dean and Nixon on April 15, 1973, Dean was totally unaware of the president's depth of knowledge and involvement in the Watergate cover-up. It was during this meeting that Dean felt that he was being recorded. He wondered if this was due to the way Nixon was speaking, as if he were trying to prod attendees' recollections of earlier conversations about fundraising. Dean mentioned this observation while testifying to the Senate Committee on Watergate, exposing the thread of what were taped conversations that would unravel the fabric of Watergate.[33]

Two days later, Dean told Nixon that he had been cooperating with the U.S. attorneys. On that same day, U.S. attorneys told Nixon that Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Dean and other White House officials were implicated in the cover-up.[17][34][35]

On April 30, Nixon asked for the resignation of Haldeman and Ehrlichman, two of his most influential aides. They were later both indicted, convicted, and ultimately sentenced to prison. He asked for the resignation of Attorney General Kleindienst, to ensure no one could claim that his innocent friendship with Haldeman and Ehrlichman could be construed as a conflict. He fired [White House Counsel](#) John Dean, who went on to testify before the [Senate Watergate Committee](#) and said that he believed and suspected the conversations in the Oval Office were being taped. This information became the bombshell that helped force Richard Nixon to resign rather than be impeached.[36]

Writing from prison for *New West* and *New York* magazines in 1977, Ehrlichman claimed Nixon had offered him a large sum of money, which he declined.[37]

The President announced the resignations in an address to the American people:

In one of the most difficult decisions of my Presidency, I accepted the resignations of two of my closest associates in the White House, Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know. Because Attorney General Kleindienst, though a distinguished public servant, my personal friend for 20 years, with no personal involvement whatsoever in this matter has been a close personal and professional associate of some of those who are involved in this case, he and I both felt that it was also

necessary to name a new Attorney General. The [Counsel to the President](#), John Dean, has also resigned.[\[38\]](#)

On the same day, Nixon appointed a new attorney general, [Elliot Richardson](#), and gave him authority to designate a special counsel for the Watergate investigation who would be independent of the regular [Justice Department](#) hierarchy. In May 1973, Richardson named [Archibald Cox](#) to the position.[\[17\]](#)

## Senate Watergate hearings and revelation of the Watergate tapes

Main article: [Nixon White House tapes](#)

See also: [United States Senate Watergate Committee](#)



President Nixon giving a televised address explaining release of edited transcripts of the tapes on April 29, 1974

On February 7, 1973, the United States Senate voted 77–0 to approve Senate Resolution [S](#) and establish a select committee to investigate Watergate, with [Sam Ervin](#) named chairman the next day.[\[17\]](#) The hearings held by the Senate committee, in which Dean and other former administration officials testified, were broadcast from May 17 to August 7, 1973. The three major networks of the time agreed to take turns covering the hearings live, each network thus maintaining coverage of the hearings every third day, starting with [ABC](#) on May 17 and ending with [NBC](#) on August 7. An estimated 85% of Americans with television sets tuned into at least one portion of the hearings.[\[39\]](#)

On Friday, July 13, 1973, during a preliminary interview, deputy minority counsel [Donald Sanders](#) asked White House assistant [Alexander Butterfield](#) if there was any type of recording system in the White House.[\[40\]](#) Butterfield said he was reluctant to answer, but finally stated there was a new system

in the White House that automatically recorded everything in the [Oval Office](#), the [Cabinet Room](#) and others, as well as Nixon's private office in the [Old Executive Office Building](#).

On Monday, July 16, 1973, in front of a live, televised audience, chief minority counsel [Fred Thompson](#) asked Butterfield whether he was "aware of the installation of any listening devices in the Oval Office of the President." Butterfield's revelation of the taping system transformed the Watergate investigation. Cox immediately subpoenaed the tapes, as did the Senate, but Nixon refused to release them, citing his [executive privilege](#) as president, and ordered Cox to drop his subpoena. Cox refused. [\[41\]](#)

## "Saturday Night Massacre"

Main article: [Saturday Night Massacre](#)

On October 20, 1973, after Cox refused to drop the subpoena, Nixon commanded Attorney General [Elliot Richardson](#), and then Richardson's deputy, [William Ruckelshaus](#), to fire the special prosecutor. Richardson and Ruckelshaus both refused to fire Cox and resigned in protest. Nixon's search for someone in the Justice Department willing to fire Cox ended with the [Solicitor General Robert Bork](#). Though Bork claims to believe Nixon's order was valid and appropriate, he considered resigning to avoid being "perceived as a man who did the President's bidding to save my job."[\[42\]](#) Bork carried out the presidential order and dismissed the special prosecutor.

These actions met considerable public criticism. Responding to the allegations of possible wrongdoing, in front of 400 [Associated Press](#) managing editors on November 17, 1973, Nixon stated emphatically, "I'm not a crook."[\[43\]](#)[\[44\]](#) He needed to allow Bork to appoint a new special prosecutor; Bork chose [Leon Jaworski](#) to continue the investigation.

## Legal action against Nixon Administration members

On March 1, 1974, a [grand jury](#) in Washington, D.C., indicted several former aides of President Nixon, who became known as the "[Watergate Seven](#)": Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, [Charles Colson](#), [Gordon C. Strachan](#), [Robert Mardian](#) and [Kenneth Parkinson](#), for conspiring to hinder the Watergate investigation. The grand jury secretly named President Nixon as an [unindicted co-conspirator](#). The special prosecutor dissuaded them from an indictment of Nixon, arguing that a President can only be indicted after he leaves office.[\[45\]](#) John Dean, [Jeb Stuart Magruder](#), and other figures had already pleaded guilty. On April 5, 1974, [Dwight Chapin](#), the former Nixon appointments secretary, was convicted of lying to the grand jury. Two days later, the same grand jury indicted [Ed Reinecke](#), the Republican [lieutenant governor](#) of [California](#), on three charges of perjury before the Senate committee.

## Release of the transcripts

The Nixon administration struggled to decide what materials to release. All parties involved agreed that all pertinent information should be released. Whether to release unedited [profanity](#) and vulgarity divided his advisers. His legal team favored releasing the tapes unedited, while Press Secretary [Ron Ziegler](#) preferred using an edited version where "[expletive deleted](#)" would replace the raw material.

After several weeks of debate, they decided to release an edited version. Nixon announced the release of the transcripts in a speech to the nation on April 29, 1974. Nixon noted that any audio pertinent to national security information could be [redacted](#) from the released tapes.[\[46\]](#)

Initially, Nixon gained a positive reaction for his speech. As people read the transcripts over the next couple of weeks, however, former supporters among the public, media and political community called for Nixon's resignation or impeachment. Vice President [Gerald Ford](#) said, "While it may be easy to delete characterization from the printed page, we cannot delete characterization from people's minds with a wave of the hand."[\[47\]](#) The Senate Republican Leader [Hugh Scott](#) said the transcripts revealed a "deplorable, disgusting, shabby, and immoral" performance on the part of the President and his former aides.[\[48\]](#) The House Republican Leader [John Jacob Rhodes](#) agreed with Scott, and Rhodes recommended that if Nixon's position continued to deteriorate, he "ought to consider resigning as a possible option."[\[49\]](#)

The editors of [The Chicago Tribune](#), a newspaper that had supported Nixon, wrote, "He is humorless to the point of being inhumane. He is devious. He is vacillating. He is profane. He is willing to be led. He displays dismaying gaps in knowledge. He is suspicious of his staff. His loyalty is minimal."[\[50\]](#) The [Providence Journal](#) wrote, "Reading the transcripts is an emetic experience; one comes away feeling unclean."[\[51\]](#) This newspaper continued, that, while the transcripts may not have revealed an indictable offense, they showed Nixon contemptuous of the United States, its institutions, and its people. According to *Time* magazine, the Republican Party leaders in the [Western United States](#) felt that while there remained a significant number of Nixon loyalists in the party, the majority believed that Nixon should step down as quickly as possible. They were disturbed by the bad language and the coarse, vindictive tone of the conversations in the transcripts.[\[51\]\[52\]](#)

## Supreme Court

The issue of access to the tapes went to the US Supreme Court. On July 24, 1974, in [United States v. Nixon](#), the Court, which did not include the recused Justice [William Rehnquist](#) (who had recently been appointed by Nixon and had served as Assistant Attorney General of the Office of Legal Counsel in the Nixon Justice Department), ruled unanimously that claims of executive privilege over the tapes were void. They ordered the president to release them to the special prosecutor. On July 30, 1974, President Nixon complied with the order and released the subpoenaed tapes for the public.

## Release of the tapes

The tapes revealed several crucial conversations[\[53\]](#) that took place between the President and his counsel, John Dean, on March 21, 1973. In this conversation, Dean summarized many aspects of the Watergate case, and focused on the subsequent cover-up, describing it as a "cancer on the presidency." The burglary team was being paid [hush money](#) for their silence and Dean stated: "That's the most troublesome post-thing, because Bob [Haldeman] is involved in that; John [Ehrlichman] is involved in that; I am involved in that; Mitchell is involved in that. And that's an obstruction of justice." Dean continued, stating that Howard Hunt was blackmailing the White House, demanding money

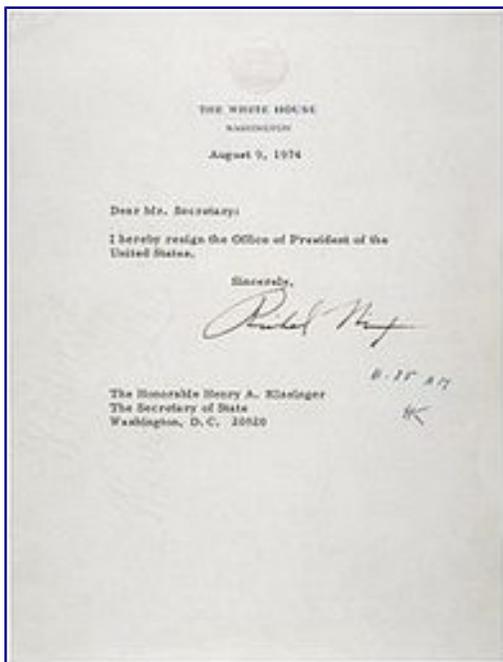
immediately; President Nixon replied that the blackmail money should be paid: "...just looking at the immediate problem, don't you have to have – handle Hunt's financial situation damn soon? [...] you've got to keep the cap on the bottle that much, in order to have any options."[\[54\]](#)

At the time of the initial congressional impeachment, it was not known if Nixon had known and approved of the payments to the Watergate defendants earlier than this conversation. Nixon's conversation with Haldeman on August 1, 1972, is one of several that establishes he did. Nixon states: "Well...they have to be paid. That's all there is to that. They have to be paid."[\[55\]](#) During the congressional debate on impeachment, some believed that impeachment required a criminally indictable offense. President Nixon's agreement to make the blackmail payments was regarded as an affirmative act to obstruct justice.[\[56\]](#)

On December 7, 1973, investigators found that an [18½ minute portion](#) of one recorded tape had been erased. [Rose Mary Woods](#), Nixon's longtime personal secretary, said she had accidentally erased the tape by pushing the wrong pedal on her tape player when answering the phone. The press ran photos of the set-up, showing that it was unlikely for Woods to answer the phone while keeping her foot on the pedal. Later [forensic](#) analysis in 2003 determined that the tape had been erased in several segments – at least five, and perhaps as many as nine.[\[57\]](#)

## Final investigations and resignation

See also: [Impeachment process of Richard Nixon](#)



Nixon's resignation letter, August 9, 1974

## [Richard Nixon's resignation speech](#)

Menu

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Resignation speech of President [Richard Nixon](#), delivered August 8, 1974.

*Problems playing this file? See [media help](#).*

Nixon's position was becoming increasingly precarious. On February 6, 1974, the [House of Representatives](#) approved [H](#) giving the Judiciary Committee authority to investigate impeachment of the President.[\[58\]\[59\]](#) On July 27, 1974, the [House Judiciary Committee](#) voted 27–11 to recommend the first article of impeachment against the president: [obstruction of justice](#). The House recommended the second article, [abuse of power](#), on July 29, 1974. The next day, on July 30, 1974, the House recommended the third article: [contempt of Congress](#). On August 20, 1974, the House authorized the printing of the Committee report H. Rept. 93-1305, which included the text of the resolution impeaching President Nixon and set forth articles of impeachment against him.[\[60\]\[61\]](#)

## "Smoking Gun" tape

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Nixon Oval Office meeting with H.R. Haldeman "Smoking Gun" Conversation June 23, 1972 [Full Transcript](#)

On August 5, 1974, the White House released a previously unknown audio tape from June 23, 1972. Recorded only a few days after the break-in, it documented the initial stages of the cover-up: it revealed Nixon, Swingle, and Haldeman had conducted a meeting in the Oval Office where they discussed how they will stop the FBI from continuing their investigation of the break-in as they recognised that there was a high risk that their position in the scandal may be revealed.

Haldeman introduced the topic as follows:

...the Democratic break-in thing, we're back to the—in the, the problem area because the FBI is not under control, because [Gray](#) doesn't exactly know how to control them, and they have... their investigation is now leading into some productive areas [...] and it goes in some directions we don't want it to go.[\[62\]](#)

After explaining how the money from CRP was traced to the burglars, Haldeman explained to Nixon the cover-up plan: "the way to handle this now is for us to have Walters [CIA] call Pat Gray [FBI] and just say, 'Stay the hell out of this ...this is ah, business here we don't want you to go any further on it.'"[\[62\]](#)

President Nixon approved the plan, and after he was given more information about the involvement of his campaign in the break-in, he told Haldeman: "All right, fine, I understand it all. We won't second-

guess Mitchell and the rest." Returning to the use of the CIA to obstruct the FBI, he instructed Haldeman: "You call them in. Good. Good deal. Play it tough. That's the way they play it and that's the way we are going to play it."[\[62\]](#)[\[63\]](#)

Nixon denied that this constituted an obstruction of justice, as his instructions ultimately resulted in the CIA truthfully reporting to the FBI that there were no national security issues. Nixon urged the FBI to press forward with the investigation when they expressed concern about interference.[\[64\]](#)

Before the release of this tape, President Nixon had denied any involvement in the scandal. He claimed that there were no political motivations in his instructions to the CIA, and claimed he had no knowledge before March 21, 1973, of involvement by senior campaign officials such as [John Mitchell](#). The contents of this tape persuaded Nixon's own lawyers, [Fred Buzhardt](#) and James St. Clair, that, "The tape proved that the President had lied to the nation, to his closest aides, and to his own lawyers – for more than two years."[\[65\]](#) The tape, which was referred to as a "[smoking gun](#)" by [Barber Conable](#), proved that Nixon had been involved in the cover-up from the beginning.

In the week before Nixon's resignation, Ehrlichman and Haldeman tried unsuccessfully to get Nixon to grant them pardons—which he had promised them before their April 1973 resignations.[\[66\]](#)

## Resignation



[Oliver F. Atkins](#)' photo of Nixon leaving the [White House](#) on [Marine One](#) shortly before his resignation became effective, August 9, 1974[\[67\]](#)

The release of the "[smoking gun](#)" [tape](#) destroyed Nixon politically. The ten congressmen who had voted against all three articles of impeachment in the House Judiciary Committee announced they would all support impeachment when the vote was taken in the full House.

On the night of August 7, 1974, Senators [Barry Goldwater](#) and [Hugh Scott](#) and Congressman [John Jacob Rhodes](#) met with Nixon in the Oval Office and told him that his support in Congress had all but disappeared. Rhodes told Nixon that he would face certain impeachment when the articles came up for

vote in the full House. Goldwater and Scott told the president that there were enough votes in the Senate to convict him, and that no more than 15 Senators were willing to vote for acquittal.

Realizing that he had no chance of staying in office, Nixon decided to resign. In a [nationally televised address](#) from the Oval Office on the evening of August 8, 1974, the president said, in part:

In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the Nation. Throughout the long and difficult period of Watergate, I have felt it was my duty to persevere, to make every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you elected me. In the past few days, however, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing that effort. As long as there was such a base, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion, that to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the spirit of that deliberately difficult process and a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future....

I would have preferred to carry through to the finish whatever the personal agony it would have involved, and my family unanimously urged me to do so. But the interest of the Nation must always come before any personal considerations. From the discussions I have had with Congressional and other leaders, I have concluded that because of the Watergate matter I might not have the support of the Congress that I would consider necessary to back the very difficult decisions and carry out the duties of this office in the way the interests of the Nation would require.

*I have never been a quitter.* To leave office before my term is completed is abhorrent to every instinct in my body. But as President, I must put the interest of America first. America needs a full-time President and a full-time Congress, particularly at this time with problems we face at home and abroad. To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and the Congress in a period when our entire focus should be on the great issues of peace abroad and prosperity without inflation at home. Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow. Vice President Ford will be sworn in as President at that hour in this office.[68]



[Oliver F. Atkins'](#) photo of Nixon leaving the [White House](#) shortly before his resignation became effective, August 9, 1974

The morning that his resignation took effect, the President, with Mrs. Nixon and their family, said farewell to the White House staff in the [East Room](#).<sup>[69]</sup> A helicopter carried them from the White House to [Andrews Air Force Base](#) in [Maryland](#). Nixon later wrote that he thought, "As the helicopter moved on to Andrews, I found myself thinking not of the past, but of the future. What could I do now?" At Andrews, he and his family boarded Air Force One to [El Toro Marine Corps Air Station](#) in California, and then were transported to his home in [San Clemente](#).

## President Ford's pardon of Nixon

Further information: [Pardon of Richard Nixon](#)



Pen used by President Gerald R. Ford to pardon Richard Nixon on September 8, 1974.

With President Nixon's resignation, Congress dropped its impeachment proceedings. Criminal prosecution was still a possibility both on the federal and state level.<sup>[45]</sup> Nixon was [succeeded by](#) Vice President [Gerald Ford](#) as President, who on September 8, 1974, issued a full and unconditional [pardon](#) of Nixon, immunizing him from prosecution for any crimes he had "committed or may have committed or taken part in" as president.<sup>[70]</sup> In a televised broadcast to the nation, Ford explained that he felt the

pardon was in the best interest of the country. He said that the Nixon family's situation "is an American tragedy in which we all have played a part. It could go on and on and on, or someone must write the end to it. I have concluded that only I can do that, and if I can, I must."<sup>[71]</sup>

Nixon proclaimed his innocence until his death in 1994. In his official response to the pardon, he said that he "...was wrong in not acting more decisively and more forthrightly in dealing with Watergate, particularly when it reached the stage of judicial proceedings and grew from a political scandal into a national tragedy."<sup>[72]</sup>

Some commentators have argued that pardoning Nixon contributed to President Ford's loss of the [presidential election of 1976](#).<sup>[73]</sup> Allegations of a secret deal made with Ford, promising a pardon in return for Nixon's resignation, led Ford to testify before the [House Judiciary Committee](#) on October 17, 1974.<sup>[74][75]</sup>



[Wikisource](#) has original text related to this article:

[The Nixon Pardon](#)

In his autobiography *A Time to Heal*, Ford wrote about a meeting he had with Nixon's Chief of Staff, [Alexander Haig](#). Haig was explaining what he and Nixon's staff thought were Nixon's only options. He could try to ride out the impeachment and fight against conviction in the Senate all the way, or he could resign. His options for resigning were to delay his resignation until further along in the impeachment process, to try and settle for a censure vote in Congress, or to pardon himself and then resign. Haig told Ford that some of Nixon's staff suggested that Nixon could agree to resign in return for an agreement that Ford would pardon him.

Haig emphasized that these weren't *his* suggestions. He didn't identify the staff members and he made it very clear that he wasn't recommending any one option over another. What he wanted to know was whether or not my overall assessment of the situation agreed with his.[emphasis in original]... Next he asked if I had any suggestions as to courses of actions for the President. I didn't think it would be proper for me to make any recommendations at all, and I told him so.

— [Gerald Ford](#), *A Time to Heal*<sup>[76]</sup>

## Aftermath

### Final legal actions and effect on the law profession

[Charles Colson](#) pleaded guilty to charges concerning the [Daniel Ellsberg](#) case; in exchange, the indictment against him for covering up the activities of the [Committee to Re-elect the President](#) was dropped, as it was against Strachan. The remaining five members of the Watergate Seven indicted in March went on trial in October 1974. On January 1, 1975, all but Parkinson were found guilty. In 1976, the U.S. Court of Appeals ordered a new trial for Mardian; subsequently, all charges against him were dropped.

Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell exhausted their appeals in 1977. Ehrlichman entered prison in 1976, followed by the other two in 1977. Since Nixon and many senior officials involved in Watergate were lawyers, the scandal severely tarnished the public image of the legal profession.<sup>[77][78][79]</sup>

The Watergate scandal resulted in 69 government officials being charged and 48 being found guilty, including:<sup>[3]</sup>

1. [John N. Mitchell](#), [Attorney General of the United States](#) who resigned to become Director of [Committee to Re-elect the President](#), convicted of perjury about his involvement in the Watergate break-in. Served 19 months of a one- to four-year sentence.<sup>[18]</sup>
2. [Richard Kleindienst](#), Attorney General, convicted of "refusing to answer questions" (contempt of court); given one month in jail.<sup>[80]</sup>
3. [Jeb Stuart Magruder](#), Deputy Director of [Committee to Re-elect the President](#),<sup>[22]</sup> pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to the burglary, and was sentenced to 10 months to four years in prison, of which he served 7 months before being paroled.<sup>[81]</sup>
4. [Frederick C. LaRue](#), Advisor to [John Mitchell](#), convicted of obstruction of justice. He served four and a half months.<sup>[81]</sup>
5. [H. R. Haldeman](#), Chief of Staff for Nixon, convicted of conspiracy to the burglary, obstruction of justice, and perjury. Served 18 months in prison.<sup>[82]</sup>
6. [John Ehrlichman](#), Counsel to Nixon, convicted of conspiracy to the burglary, obstruction of justice, and perjury. Served 18 months in prison.<sup>[83]</sup>
7. [Egil Krogh](#), aide to John Ehrlichman, sentenced to six months.<sup>[81]</sup>
8. [John W. Dean III](#), counsel to Nixon, convicted of obstruction of justice, later reduced to felony offenses and sentenced to time already served, which totaled 4 months.<sup>[81]</sup>
9. [Dwight L. Chapin](#), deputy assistant to Nixon, convicted of perjury.<sup>[81]</sup>
10. [Herbert W. Kalmbach](#), personal attorney to Nixon, convicted of illegal campaigning.<sup>[81]</sup>
11. [Charles W. Colson](#), special counsel to Nixon, convicted of obstruction of justice. Served 7 months in Federal Maxwell Prison.<sup>[80]</sup>
12. [Herbert L. Porter](#), aide to the [Committee to Re-elect the President](#). Convicted of perjury.<sup>[81]</sup>

... and the actual Watergate "Burglary" team:

1. [G. Gordon Liddy](#), Special Investigations Group, convicted of masterminding the burglary, original sentence of up to 20 years in prison.<sup>[81][84]</sup> Served 4½ years in federal prison.<sup>[85]</sup>
2. [E. Howard Hunt](#), Security consultant, convicted of masterminding and overseeing the burglary, original sentence of up to 35 years in prison.<sup>[81][84]</sup> Served 33 months in prison.<sup>[86]</sup>
3. [James W. McCord Jr.](#), convicted of six charges of burglary, conspiracy and wiretapping.<sup>[81]</sup> Served 2 months in prison.<sup>[85]</sup>
4. [Virgilio Gonzalez](#), convicted of burglary, original sentence of up to 40 years in prison.<sup>[81][84]</sup> Served 13 months in prison.<sup>[85]</sup>
5. [Bernard Barker](#), convicted of burglary, original sentence of up to 40 years in prison.<sup>[81][84]</sup> Served 18 months in prison.<sup>[87]</sup>

6. [Eugenio Martinez](#), convicted of burglary, original sentence of up to 40 years in prison.[\[81\]\[84\]](#)  
Served 15 months in prison.[\[88\]](#)
7. [Frank Sturgis](#), convicted of burglary, original sentence of up to 40 years in prison.[\[81\]\[84\]](#)  
Served 10 months in prison.[\[88\]](#)

To defuse public demand for direct federal regulation of lawyers (as opposed to leaving it in the hands of state [bar associations](#) or courts), the [American Bar Association](#) (ABA) launched two major reforms. First, the ABA decided that its existing [Model Code of Professional Responsibility](#) (promulgated 1969) was a failure. In 1983 it replaced it with the [Model Rules of Professional Conduct](#).[\[89\]](#) The MRPC have been adopted in part or in whole by 49 states (and is being considered by the last one, California). Its preamble contains an emphatic reminder that the legal profession can remain self-governing only if lawyers behave properly. Second, the ABA promulgated a requirement that law students at ABA-approved [law schools](#) take a course in [professional responsibility](#) (which means they must study the MRPC). The requirement remains in effect.

On June 24 and 25, 1975, Nixon gave secret testimony to a [grand jury](#). According to news reports at the time, Nixon answered questions about the 18½-minute tape gap, altering White House tape transcripts turned over to the House Judiciary Committee, using the [Internal Revenue Service](#) to harass political enemies, and a \$100,000 contribution from billionaire [Howard Hughes](#). Aided by the [Public Citizen Litigation Group](#), the historian [Stanley Kutler](#), who has written several books about Nixon and Watergate and had successfully sued for the 1996 public release of the [Nixon White House tapes](#),[\[90\]](#) sued for release of the transcripts of the Nixon grand jury testimony.[\[91\]](#)

On July 29, 2011, U.S. District Judge [Royce Lamberth](#) granted Kutler's request, saying historical interests trumped privacy, especially considering that Nixon and other key figures were deceased, and most of the surviving figures had testified under oath, have been written about, or were interviewed. The transcripts were not immediately released pending the government's decision on whether to appeal.[\[91\]](#) They were released in their entirety on November 10, 2011, although the names of people still alive were redacted.[\[92\]](#)

[Texas A&M University–Central Texas](#) professor Luke Nichter wrote the chief judge of the federal court in Washington to release hundreds of pages of sealed records of the [Watergate Seven](#). In June 2012 the U.S. Department of Justice wrote the court that it would not object to their release with some exceptions.[\[93\]](#) On November 2, 2012, Watergate trial records for G. Gordon Liddy and James McCord were ordered unsealed by Federal Judge [Royce Lamberth](#).[\[94\]](#)

## **Political and cultural reverberations**

According to Thomas J. Johnson, a professor of journalism at [University of Texas at Austin](#), Secretary of State [Henry Kissinger](#) predicted during Nixon's final days that history would remember Nixon as a great president and that Watergate would be relegated to a "minor footnote."[\[95\]](#)

When Congress investigated the scope of the president's legal powers, it belatedly found that consecutive presidential administrations had declared the United States to be in a continuous open-

ended [state of emergency](#) since 1950. Congress enacted the [National Emergencies Act](#) in 1976 to regulate such declarations. The Watergate scandal left such an impression on the national and international consciousness that many scandals since then have been labeled with the suffix "[-gate](#)".



One of a variety of anti-Ford [buttons](#) generated during the 1976 presidential election: it reads "Gerald...Pardon me!" and depicts a thief cracking a safe labeled "Watergate".

Disgust with the revelations about Watergate, the Republican Party, and Nixon strongly affected results of the November 1974 [Senate](#) and [House elections](#), which took place three months after Nixon's resignation. The Democrats gained five seats in the Senate and forty-nine in the House (the newcomers were nicknamed "[Watergate Babies](#)"). Congress passed legislation that changed [campaign financing](#), to amend the [Freedom of Information Act](#), as well as to require financial disclosures by key government officials (via the [Ethics in Government Act](#)). Other types of disclosures, such as releasing recent income tax forms, became expected albeit not legally required. Presidents since [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) had recorded many of their conversations but the practice purportedly ended after Watergate.

Ford's pardon of Nixon played a major role in his defeat in the [1976 presidential election](#) against [Jimmy Carter](#).<sup>[73]</sup>

In 1977, Nixon arranged [an interview](#) with British journalist [David Frost](#) in the hopes of improving his legacy. Based on a previous interview in 1968,<sup>[96]</sup> he believed that Frost would be an easy interviewer and was taken aback by Frost's incisive questions. The interview displayed the entire scandal to the American people, and Nixon formally apologized, but his legacy remained tarnished.<sup>[97]</sup>

In the aftermath of Watergate, "[follow the money](#)" became part of the American lexicon and is widely believed to have been uttered by Mark Felt to Woodward and Bernstein. The phrase was never used in the 1974 book [All The President's Men](#) and did not become associated with it until the [movie of the same name](#) was released in 1976.<sup>[98]</sup>

## Purpose of the break-in

Despite the enormous impact of the Watergate scandal, the purpose of the break-in of the DNC offices has never been conclusively established. Records from the *United States v. Liddy* trial, made public in 2013, showed that four of the five burglars testified that they were told the campaign operation hoped

to find evidence that linked Cuban funding to Democratic campaigns.[99] The longtime hypothesis suggests that the target of the break-in was the offices of [Larry O'Brien](#), the DNC Chairman.[19][100] However, O'Brien's name was not on Alfred C. Baldwin III's list of targets that was released in 2013. [21] Among those listed were senior DNC official [R. Spencer Oliver](#), Oliver's secretary Ida "Maxine" Wells, co-worker Robert Allen and secretary Barbara Kennedy.[99]

Based on these revelations, [Texas A&M](#) history professor Luke Nichter, who had successfully petitioned for the release of the information,[101] argued that Woodward and Bernstein were incorrect in concluding, based largely on Watergate burglar James McCord's word, that the purpose of the break-in was to bug O'Brien's phone to gather political and financial intelligence on the Democrats.[21] Instead, Nichter sided with late journalist [J. Anthony Lukas](#) of the *New York Times*, who had concluded that the committee was seeking to find evidence linking the Democrats to prostitution, as Oliver's office had frequently been used to arrange such meetings. However, Nichter acknowledged that Woodward and Bernstein's theory of O'Brien as the target could not be debunked unless information was released about what Baldwin heard in his bugging of conversations.[21]

In 1968, O'Brien was appointed by Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#) to serve as the national director of Humphrey's presidential campaign and, separately, by [Howard Hughes](#) to serve as Hughes' public-policy lobbyist in Washington. O'Brien was elected national chairman of the DNC in 1968 and 1970. In late 1971, the president's brother, [Donald Nixon](#), was collecting intelligence for his brother at the time and asked [John H. Meier](#), an adviser to Howard Hughes, about O'Brien. In 1956, Donald Nixon had borrowed \$205,000 from Howard Hughes and had never repaid the loan. The loan's existence surfaced during the [1960 presidential election](#) campaign, embarrassing Richard Nixon and becoming a political liability. According to author Donald M. Bartlett, Richard Nixon would do whatever was necessary to prevent another family embarrassment.[102] From 1968 to 1970, Hughes withdrew nearly half a million dollars from the Texas National Bank of Commerce for contributions to both Democrats and Republicans, including presidential candidates Humphrey and Nixon. Hughes wanted Donald Nixon and Meier involved but Nixon opposed this.[103]

Meier told Donald that he was sure the Democrats would win the election because they had considerable information on Richard Nixon's illicit dealings with Hughes that had never been released, and that it resided with Larry O'Brien.[104] O'Brien, who had received \$25,000 from Hughes, did not have any documents but Meier claims to have wanted Richard Nixon to think that he did. It is conjecture that Donald told his brother that Meier had given the Democrats all the damaging Hughes information and that O'Brien had the proof.[105] According to Fred Emery, O'Brien had been a lobbyist for Hughes in a Democrat-controlled Congress, and the possibility of his finding out about Hughes' illegal contributions to the Nixon campaign was too much of a danger for Nixon to ignore.[106]

[James F. Neal](#), who prosecuted the Watergate 7, did not believe Nixon had ordered the break-in because of Nixon's surprised reaction when he was told about it. He cited the June 23, 1972 conversation when Nixon asked Haldeman, "Who was the asshole that did it?"[107]

# Reactions

## China

Chinese then-Premier [Zhou Enlai](#) said in October 1973 that the scandal did not affect the [relations between China and the United States](#).<sup>[108]</sup> According to Thai then-[Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj](#) of [Thailand](#) in July 1975, Chairman [Mao Zedong](#) called the Watergate scandal "the result of 'too much [freedom of political expression](#) in the U.S.'"<sup>[109]</sup> Mao called it "an indication of [American isolationism](#), which he saw as 'disastrous' for Europe." He further said, "Do Americans really want to go isolationist? ... In the two [world wars](#), the Americans came [in] very late, but all the same, they did come in. They haven't been isolationist in practice."<sup>[110]</sup>

## Japan

In August 1973, then-[Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka](#) said that the scandal had "no cancelling influence on U.S. leadership in the world." Tanaka further said, "The pivotal role of the United States has not changed, so this internal affair will not be permitted to have an effect."<sup>[111]</sup> In March 1975, Tanaka's successor, [Takeo Miki](#), said at a convention of the [Liberal Democratic Party](#), "At the time of the Watergate issue in America, I was deeply moved by the scene in the [House Judiciary Committee](#), where each member of the committee expressed his own or her own heart based upon the spirit of the American Constitution. It was this attitude, I think, that rescued American democracy."<sup>[112]</sup>

## Singapore

Then-[Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew](#) said in August 1973, "As one surprising revelation follows another at the Senate hearings on Watergate, it becomes increasingly clear that Washington, [D.C.], today is in no position to offer the moral or strong political and economic leadership for which its friends and allies are yearning."<sup>[113]</sup> Moreover, Lee said that the scandal may have led the United States to lessen its interests and commitments in world affairs, to weaken its ability to enforce the [Paris Peace Accords](#) on Vietnam, and to not react to violations of the Accords. Lee said further that the United States "makes the future of this peace in [Indonesia](#) an extremely bleak one with grave consequence for the contiguous states." Lee then blamed the scandal for economic inflation in Singapore because the [Singapore dollar](#) was pegged to the [United States dollar](#) at the time, assuming the U.S. dollar was stronger than the British [pound sterling](#).<sup>[114]</sup>

## Soviet Union

In June 1973, when Brezhnev arrived in the United States to have a one-week meeting with President Nixon,<sup>[115]</sup> Brezhnev told the press, "I do not intend to refer to that matter—[the Watergate]. It would be completely indecent for me to refer to it. [...] My attitude toward Mr. Nixon is of very great respect." When one reporter suggested that President Nixon and his position with Brezhnev were "weakened" by the scandal, Brezhnev replied, "It does not enter my mind to think whether Mr. Nixon has lost or gained any influence because of the affair." Then he said further that he had respected Nixon because of

Nixon's "realistic and constructive approach to [Soviet Union–United States relations](#) [...] passing from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiations between nations."[\[116\]](#)

## United Kingdom

Talks between Nixon and [Prime Minister Edward Heath](#) may have been bugged. Heath did not publicly display his anger, with aides saying that he was unconcerned about having been bugged at the White House. According to officials, Heath commonly had notes taken of his public discussions with Nixon so a recording would not have bothered him. However, officials privately said that if private talks with Nixon were bugged, then Heath would be outraged. Even so, Heath privately was outraged over being taped without his prior knowledge.[\[117\]](#)

## Other international reactions

Iranian then-Shah [Mohammad Reza Pahlavi](#) told the press in 1973, "I want to say quite emphatically [...] that everything that would weaken or jeopardize the President's power to make decisions in split seconds would represent grave danger for the whole world."[\[111\]](#) An unnamed Kenyan senior official of [Foreign Affairs Ministry](#) accused President Nixon of lacking interest in Africa and its politics and then said, "American President is so enmeshed in domestic problems created by Watergate that foreign policy seems suddenly to have taken a back seat [*sic*]."[\[111\]](#) Cuban then-leader [Fidel Castro](#) said in his December 1974 interview that, of the crimes committed by the Cuban exiles, like killings, attacks on Cuban ports, and spying, the Watergate burglaries and wiretappings were "probably the least of [them]."[\[118\]](#)

## Domestic reactions

After the [fall of Saigon](#) ended the Vietnam War, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said in May 1975 that, if the scandal had not caused Nixon to resign, and the Congress did not override Nixon's veto of the [War Powers Resolution](#), [North Vietnam](#) would not have captured [South Vietnam](#).[\[119\]](#) Kissinger told the [National Press Club](#) in January 1977 that Nixon's presidential powers weakened during his tenure, (rephrased by the media) "prevent[ing] the United States from exploiting the [scandal]."[\[120\]](#)

A publisher of [The Sacramento Union](#) John P. McGoff said in January 1975 that the media overemphasized the scandal, though he called it "an important issue," overshadowing more serious topics, like declining economy and [the energy crisis](#).[\[121\]](#)

## See also

- [List of American federal politicians convicted of crimes](#)
- [List of federal political scandals in the United States](#)
- [List of scandals with "-gate" suffix](#)
- [Second-term curse](#)
- [Watergate Babies](#)
- [Watergate timeline](#)

- [Worse than Watergate](#)

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