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Ford Defends Withholding Some Nixon-Taped Talks

NEW YORK (AP) — President Ford says he recognizes that the original agreement to forward to former President Richard M. Nixon his administration's tapes and papers "probably had to be modified."

However, Ford said he did not think all the taped material should be made public because most of the persons participating in discussions with Nixon did not know they were being taped.

Ford was interviewed Oct. 26 for this Saturday's "Reasoner Report" on ABC-TV. That was prior to a tentative new White House agreement giving the Watergate special prosecutor access to the Nixon material. The special prosecutor had objected to the agreement.

FORD SAID, "We have agreed that we won't implement it (the agreement) until there is a reasonable satisfaction from the special prosecutor's point of view."

But he added: "A lot of people, and this is, I think, quite important, were taped (by then-secret White House recording devices) without their knowledge, including myself."

"I have no objection to whatever I said in the Oval Office or elsewhere, but there are some people, including high-ranking government officials from other governments who were in the Oval Office, whose conversations were taped, which is vitally important in their own home or own country, or in world diplomacy."

"I'm not sure that all of that material ought to be made public. It could be harmful."

THE NEW agreement is intended to supersede a written understanding announced when Ford pardoned Nixon. The old pact provided that the tapes and documents were to be kept subject to subpoena for three years, after which they will revert to Nixon.

Ford made no specific mention of any pending new agreement during his interview with newsman Harry Reasoner at Camp David Md. But the President said he is "fundamentally interested" in making the Nixon material "available for any criminal prosecutions, for any legitimate utilization historically."