

A Chronology of the Watergate Crisis

Event	Date	Note
Kennedy defeats Nixon in 1960 presidential race	November 1960	In an extremely close election, Vice-President Nixon loses to JFK.
Pat Brown defeats Nixon in 1962 California gubernatorial race	November 1962	Following defeat, Nixon tells reporters "You won't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore."
Nixon defeats Humphrey and Wallace for president	November 1968	During the height of the Vietnam War, Nixon wins by 510,000 votes out of 73,000,000 (43%) of popular vote.
Nixon orders wiretaps to discover leaks of secret bombing of Cambodia	May 1969	FBI is given orders for wiretap though no court order is obtained.
Pentagon Papers published by New York Times	June 13, 1971	Daniel Ellsberg is indicted for theft, conspiracy, and espionage for leaking papers that expose the government's plans in Vietnam, though the Supreme Court refuses to stop publishing papers.
Plumbers unit created to discredit Ellsberg	June 1971	Secret White House group assigned to ruin Ellsberg's reputation break into psychiatrist's office in Beverly Hills but find nothing embarrassing.
Plumbers present program to Attorney General Mitchell	January 1972	\$1 million program of kidnapping, wiretaps, and other illegal campaign activities. Mitchell rejects plan as too expensive, but does not condemn as wrong.
Dirty tricks in 1972 presidential race	Spring 1972	In plan to divide Democrats, Nixon's aides uses various techniques, including forged letters to cause ill-will among candidates.
Watergate burglars arrested	June 17, 1972	Plumbers break into Democratic National Committee offices to repair wiretap bug. White House dismisses event as "third-rate burglary."
Hush money paid to Watergate burglars	September 1972	\$220,000 given to convicted Plumbers in exchange for promise of silence.
Nixon defeats McGovern for presidency	November 1972	Carrying 49/50 states (520-17 in the electoral college) and 61% of the popular vote, Nixon easily defeats McGovern.
Nixon lies about his awareness of cover-up	April 17, 1973	Stating that he learned of cover-up in March of 1973, Nixon orders "intensive new inquiries." In fact, he knew about cover-up since June 1972.
Nixon fires top aides	April 29, 1973	Ehrlichman and Haldemann fired by Nixon, who appoints new Attorney General Elliot Richardson who is empowered to appoint a special prosecutor for the Watergate matter.
Senate Watergate hearings	May 1973	Sen. Ervin conducts three months of televised hearings which report enemies lists, money drops, illegally obtained campaign funds, and harassment by IRS of political enemies. Most importantly, a secret tape-recording system in the White House is discovered.

Vice-President Agnew accused of income-tax evasion, bribery, conspiracy, and extortion	August 1973	At first protesting innocence, Agnew eventually resigns and pleads "no contest" to charges. He is fined \$10,000 and placed on three years probation. Agnew is succeeded by Gerald Ford as vice-president in October.
Court rules Nixon must present tapes to Special Prosecutor Archibold Cox	October 1973	Appeals Court rules 5-2 that "the President ...is not above the law's commands."
Saturday Night Massacre	October 20, 1973	Nixon offers summaries of tapes to Cox, who demands actual tapes. Nixon orders Richardson to fire Cox, who refuses and resigns. Asst. Attorney General Ruckelshaus also refuses and resigns. Finally Robert Bork fires Cox. In its first-ever editorial, Time magazine states "The President Should Resign."
8 former White House aides indicted by grand jury for conspiring in cover-up	March 1974	Mitchell, Haldeman, Ehrlichmann and others accused of obstructing justice and perjury. Nixon is named as an un-indicted co-conspirator because Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski argued that a president must first be impeached and removed from office before an indictment.
Nixon releases heavily-edited tape transcripts	April 1974	In televised address, Nixon releases transcripts allegedly containing all relevant Watergate information. They reveal President and aides to be vulgar and constantly plotting to "get" their enemies. Republican Senator Scott calls taped conversations "shabby, disgusting, and immoral." A key 18-minute section of a June 20, 1972 meeting is inexplicably missing.
House Committee recommends impeachment hearings	July 1974	Judiciary Committee votes 27-11 to impeach Nixon for cover-up, abuse of powers, and failure to abide by subpoenas.
In U.S. v. Richard Nixon, Supreme Court rules that Nixon must hand over tapes	July 24, 1974	Voting 8-0, Court rules that executive privilege does not apply and that Nixon must hand over tapes to Judge John Sirica.
Nixon releases three tapes to soften impact of full disclosure	August 5, 1974	Included is the "smoking gun" which proves that Nixon ordered cover-up as early as June 23, 1972 and lied to the public for nine months.
Secretary of Defense requires all military commanders to refuse orders from White House unless also signed by him	August 5, 1974	Secretary Schlesinger issues first-ever order, indicating lack of trust in Nixon's decision-making
Nixon resigns the presidency	August 8, 1974	After pledging to his Cabinet his refusal to resign, top Republicans inform him that if impeached, he would be convicted by a huge margin in the Senate. Nixon becomes first president to resign office. Ford succeeds Nixon.
Ford pardons Nixon	September 1974	Proclaiming that the "long national nightmare is over," Ford issues pardon for any Nixon crimes.