



Chasing Shadows: The Nixon Tapes, the Chennault Affair, and the Origins of Watergate

Ken Hughes

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The break-in at Watergate and the cover-up that followed brought about the resignation of Richard Nixon, creating a political shockwave that reverberates to this day. But as Ken Hughes reveals in his powerful new book, in all the thousands of hours of declassified White House tapes, the president orders a single break-in--and it is not at the Watergate complex. Hughes's examination of this earlier break-in, plans for which the White House ultimately scrapped, provides a shocking new perspective on a long history of illegal activity that prolonged the Vietnam War and was only partly exposed by the Watergate scandal.

As a key player in the University of Virginia's Miller Center Presidential Recordings Program, Hughes has spent more than a decade developing and mining the largest extant collection of transcribed tapes from the Johnson and Nixon White Houses. Hughes's unparalleled investigation has allowed him to unearth a pattern of actions by Nixon going back long before 1972, to the final months of the Johnson administration. Hughes identified a clear narrative line that begins during the 1968 campaign, when Nixon, concerned about the impact on his presidential bid of the Paris peace talks with the Vietnamese, secretly undermined the negotiations through a Republican fundraiser named Anna Chennault. Three years after the election, in an atmosphere of paranoia brought on by the explosive appearance of the Pentagon Papers, Nixon feared that his treasonous--and politically damaging--manipulation of the Vietnam talks would be exposed. Hughes shows how this fear led to the creation of the Secret Investigations Unit, the "White House Plumbers," and Nixon's initiation of illegal covert operations guided by the Oval Office. Hughes's unrivaled command of the White House tapes has allowed him to build an argument about Nixon that goes far beyond what we think we know about Watergate.

Chasing Shadows is also available as a special e-book that links to the massive collection of White House tapes published by the Miller Center through Rotunda, the electronic imprint of the University of Virginia Press. This unique edition allows the reader to move seamlessly from the book to the recordings' expertly rendered transcripts and to listen to audio files of the remarkable--and occasionally shocking--conversations on which this dark chapter in American history would ultimately turn.

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