

FOREWORD

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [/] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as */Meeting appears to be breaking up/* or */Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./*

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Dictabelt 25B, Item 25B2

August 12, 1963

JFK: Hi, fine I appreciated what you said.

Mansfield:¹ Well, I'm sorry, Mr. President.

JFK: And I appreciated your note. Mike, I've just been talking to Larry² on this matter of Stennis.³ The reason I made such a thing about it is because, in my opinion, the Chiefs⁴ are the key and what they will say in public would be more pro-treaty than what they will say under interrogation by Scoop Jackson⁵ with leading questions and Barry Goldwater⁶ and Strom,⁷ And, uh, where it's a much hotter atmosphere and where these fellows can be taken along a road . . .

Mansfield: Yeah.

JFK: . . . which can be much more mischievous. When they, but if they go on record first in front of Foreign Relations Committee, then it's more difficult for them to, uh, even though they'll still do this same thing with Stennis. The public record is there first, the-, they don't have to worry about what they said in private the day before. Now I understand that there was an agreement made that John Stennis, uh, uh, by Max Taylor⁸ that he'd come Wednesday the fourteenth. But no agreement was ever made, I'm sure, because nobody could possibly make it that he would hear the Chiefs first before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mansfield: No, that's [words unintelligible].

JFK: Now, as I, I understand he's around saying there was such an agreement.

Mansfield: Yes, that was his understanding and . . .

¹ Mike Mansfield, senator from Montana.

² Lawrence F. O'Brian, special assistant to the president.

³ John Stennis, senator from Mississippi.

⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁵ Henry M. Jackson, senator from Washington.

⁶ Barry Goldwater, senator from Arizona.

⁷ Strom Thurmond, senator from South Carolina

⁸ General Maxwell D. Taylor, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

JFK: Who with, who was the agreement with?

Mansfield: Well, when I talked to him I just mentioned Maxwell Taylor and I suppose he assumed the Chief of, the Chiefs of Staff at the same time.

JFK: No, but I understand th-, bu-, Max Taylor said he would be there the fourteenth . . .

Mansfield: That's right.

JFK: . . . but he didn't say he would be there before he was at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. What right really has a subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee to hear on a bill which, uh, on a major piece of legislation, uh, the, uh, Chiefs of Staff, uh, uh, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

Mansfield: No, no, no right at all, except that they've been trying to get, uh, Taylor and the Chiefs for some time and, uh . . .

JFK: Well, you see they had two Chiefs but they were having them on the comprehensive.⁹

Mansfield: That's right.

JFK: Actually they haven't got a juris-, this is a matter really which is a Foreign Relations Committee matter and which they also have a right it seems to me to explore. But for them to say that they should have the Chiefs, in private, which will be leaked in the most distorted way as scripts are because al-, that's already happened. See they, two weeks ago at the time that Averell¹⁰ was signing it, stories came out about the statements of the Chiefs. But, of course, they were talking about the comprehensive. What I am concerned about is that these Chiefs will write in private a record which they will then feel obliged to sustain in, uh, in, uh, public. Well, if we could get them on public record, uh, and publicize that to the nation, then whatever was leaked out of the, of the, uh, committee, uh, would have much less impact.

Mansfield: That's true, but, I think, that you'd get the backs of these people up. I think, uh, Stennis may come with us on the treaty, but I think he's being pushed by, by his committee. Uh, uh . . .

⁹ Comprehensive test ban treaty.

¹⁰ W. Averell Harriman, assistant of state for Far Eastern affairs and head of the treaty delegation.

JFK: But except, he hasn't had any right to, uh, I think you can just say that, of course, you can have Max Taylor but you've got. . . . He has no right to say that we promised him, because nobody did, that he would have them before the, uh. . . . I mean that's no, he hasn't any jurisdiction in the matter.

Mansfield: No.

JFK: What we're gonna do is appease him in the hope that we might get him and which we may or may not get 'im . . .

Mansfield: That's right.

JFK: . . . and we're, and we take great danger, it seems to me, in getting the Chiefs of Staff on in a sour way. That's what I'm concerned about.

Mansfield: That's true, but then what, what happens if there's a foul up on this is he gets at the rest of the Armed Service Committee and, uh, he, he, he weakens the, uh, the strength we, we must have to, to pass the treaty.

JFK: Well, I think that what we oughta. . . . Uh, what is your judgment about our saying to Stennis, he can have Max Taylor the fourteenth, but, uh, that Max . . .

Mansfield: My judgment is that he'll come back and say, "Mr. President, it was my understanding that I would have Max Taylor and the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

JFK: Yeah, all right, let's say he says he has Max Taylor and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Wednesday the fourteenth. But that, nobody ever said that it would be first, and that we will therefore get a statement of the Joint Chiefs which will be submitted for the public record on Wednesday, perhaps Wednesday morning, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Then, that would be the public record. Then they're not going to be able to leak it on us.

Mansfield: No, but . . .

JFK: Do you have any objection to that?

Mansfield: Well, uh, that's, uh, I can see your point, but then they, they'll pull out this, this leak that Larry told you about, I hope.

JFK: Yeah, but I told. . . . That cable . . .

Mansfield: I know . . .

JFK: . . . was sent by, uh, with my full knowledge. Because I, for the reason that I'm now saying, I thought it was very important that they go before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee before they go with the Preparedness Committee¹¹ and I would use as my justification for that this very, this leak out of the Preparedness Committee, uh, that, two weekends ago. And therefore we're on very solid ground for saying that it should go in prepar-, in, in the presentation of a case, we should have the right, it seems to me, to present our case. Then they should ha-, have the right, anybody wants to rebuttal or examination. So it's quite obvious that what's going to happen is that they're attempting to cut across the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in an area where they have jurisdiction second to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with our, with the key witness, in executive session, subject to leaking and subject to interrogation by Goldwater and others in private. Then when they get on public record, they're going to be inhibited, it seems to me, by private record they've made. Well, if they make the public record first, then the p-, what they say in private can't be leaked because they've already said they were for it. Now, uh, I don't care about this cable. That cable was sent with my full knowledge. I don't know what it said, but I told them to get ahold of Fulbright and find out whether Fulbright wouldn't arrange his things, so these people would come first.

Mansfield: That's true. That's true, But, uh . . .

JFK: Is that what the cable says?

Mansfield: Well, yes, that to, that to get them to, to appear before the Foreign Relations Committee.

JFK: That's correct.

Mansfield: And, uh, I have discussed this with John Sparkman¹² who has been doing yeoman work with Stennis . . .

JFK: Yeah.

Mansfield: . . . and, uh, he in effect agreed with what I suggested in the memorandum I gave to Larry. I also want you to know though that anything you want to do, you go ahead and do it and it'll have my full support.

JFK: Yeah, I understand that.

¹¹ Subcommittee on Preparedness Investigation of the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

¹² John J. Sparkman, senator from Alabama.

Mansfield: I was thinking of the votes.

JFK: I understand, wha-, the only thing is, John Stennis, uh, who's a good fellow and everything, he's making up a story or somebody is, when he says there was an agreement that they would come first to him. What there was evidently was Max Taylor's agreement that he would come the fourteenth. Now, I would like to get these Chiefs, 'cause I regard the Chiefs as key to this thing.

Mansfield: Yes.

JFK: If we don't get the Chiefs just right, we can blow, get blown.

Mansfield: *[Words unintelligible]*

JFK: I would like to get them on a public record, uh, before, uh, they go to the Preparedness Committee. Now, uh, I will call you back but I just wanted to, uh, and find out whether we can get some, uh . . . Evidently, we can get some...¹³

¹³ Continued on Belt 25C, Item 25C1.