

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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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 4J, Item 4J1

[Belt 4J was badly deteriorated when received, and the transcript is offered with reservations. An echo is frequently heard in the background, and the belt often skips.]

October 2, 1962

[Begins mid-conversation.]

JFK:¹ . . . what about the other, the troop situation down there? How do you, how are, how are you, how many, uh . . .

Vance:² Uh, we have got, uh, it should be about ten thousand now. Those are what Howze³ is trying to stabilize in the Oxford area, sir. And, uh, what we propose to do on this, was General Wheeler⁴ was going to get in touch with, uh, General Howze, ask him to prepare a plan with respect to the phased withdrawal of, uh, troops of Mississippi. And to submit that back so that we could then come and submit it to you, sir.

JFK: Yes, the quicker we could probably make some public [belt skips] . . . -'s better off . . .

Vance: Right, sir.

JFK: . . . psychologically would be. They think that that's the number that they may need for a while?

Vance: Yeah. They think that for the time being or so that this, this is the safest number to have there.

JFK: I see.

Vance: It may be somewhat excessive, sir, but my feeling is it's better to be safe on [this one?].

JFK: [Belt skips.] . . . instructions down there about the, how they should handle people? That they . . .

¹ President Kennedy's side of the conversation is also recorded on Audiotape 27, Item 2.

² Cyrus R. Vance.

³ Hamilton Howze.

⁴ Earle G. Wheeler.

Vance: Minimum force [word unintelligible], minimum force.

JFK: . . . uh, sort of a restated, uh, I think it, it may have to be restated today because, uh, in the first, uh, [force?] was desirable and now, uh, it is, won't be. So that I suppose every time you get a [belt skips] . . . knocked down, it feeds the fires around the place. So I suppose, uh, at least it oughta be brought to his attention . . .

Vance: Right . . .

JFK: . . . to see how he thinks it should be done.

Vance: . . . well, we will do so.

JFK: Okay. Fine.

Vance: Sir, do you want, sir, do you want to release anything [at this stage?], would you like us to do it in terms of the public release?

JFK: Uh, let me just think about that, uh, let me just think about that. [Pause.] [Words unintelligible] Barnett.⁵ He asked us to do it? Barnett? Barnett asked us for them or, uh, who's asked, uh . . .

Vance: Barnett has not asked us, Barnett has not asked us to do this.

JFK: Yeah. Who has asked us?

Vance: Mr. President, I can't tell you who in the state of Mississippi has.

JFK: We might do it this way. You see, well now [do it this way?] say the president has approved the, uh . . .

Vance: All right. [I'll use?] the president has approved. We'll release it over here and check the [release with, uh?] . . .

JFK: Better find out who's asked us to do it, though, so that, uh. . . . [Off the phone to someone in the room.] Well, when did he ask us to do it? [Back on the phone to Vance.] The guess is that they, uh. . . . Kenny⁶ says that the governor asked the civil def-. . . . Of course, I suppose he didn't ask for the troops because he didn't have to ask us for the troops. We'd given 'em that, [words

⁵ Ross Barnett.

⁶ Kenneth P. O'Donnell.

unintelligible/ that. We'd given 'em the declaration [for the troops?]. Well, now who, who have you been talking to about this, Cy? Is it [Bob?] McDermott?⁷

Vance: McDermott. Yeah.

JFK: About the twenty-five hundred? What they're going to do with twenty-five hundred troops, I don't know. We agreed to, uh, help them [altogether?] to clean up. I don't know what they're going to do with twenty-five hundred soldiers to get out.

Vance: Uh, the letter I have from McDermott says, "While we have no way to judge the appropriate figure, the state director of civil defense of Mississippi has informed the Public Health Service officials that twenty-five hundred troops would be needed."

JFK: I see. All right, well, I see. Well, anyway the request . . .

Vance: Yeah.

JFK: . . . of the, uh, civil defense director, uh. . . .

Vance: State director of civil defense of Mississippi.

JFK: . . . yeah, uh, the president has approved the, uh [belt skips] . . . have 'em . . .

Vance?: Yeah. Fine.

JFK: . . . so we don't get [Barnett into it?].

Vance: Right.

JFK: Okay. Fine.

Vance: Yes, indeed, sir.

JFK: Thank you, bye.

[Phone hangs up.]

⁷ Edward A. McDermott.