

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.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 27A

Conversation #1: President Kennedy and Robert S. McNamara

October 10, 1963, 3:45 p.m.

Sec. McNamara: We are working on it. We are trying to obtain the latest information. Also the terms of the instructions that General [] McConnell has given to the convoy leader.

President: I see, well, alright. Not on this incident, but I think we shouldn't let them give a 90 minute ultimatum . . .

Sec. McNamara: I agree.

President: . . . because then you have to eat . . . I'd rather . . .

Sec. McNamara: That is what I am trying to find out, what does he mean by an ultimatum.

President: Because now we got a message in from the British (here is General [Maxwell D.] Taylor) saying that they think they should have more time, the Russians. So I think we get ourselves into a position of, uh . . .

Sec. McNamara: Well, we have got a standard operating procedure on this, and I am trying to find out what degree his instructions conform to it. I really can't answer that question.

President: Yeah.

Sec. McNamara: But I quite agree with you, Mr. President.

President: Particularly when we are only a telephone call away. [General Lyman] Lemnitzer can call us. Now General Taylor is right here. It seems to me that we may want to let, on the grounds that we have spoken to the Russians here, we may want to give them a little more time. That is the decision if it is at 4:30 we can extend the ultimatum time on the grounds that we have taken it

up directly with the foreign minister. And he has told us that we are going to get some, uh, that they will let us know, and we could use that as an excuse to perhaps go another half an hour or 45 minutes.

Sec. McNamara: Well, I have this call coming in. Let me take that, and then I will call you back.

President: Ok.

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Dictabelts

Dictabelt 27A

Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy

[begins in mid-conversation?]

RFK: . . . but I can tell you, Ed Lahey is in the hospital,

JFK: Yeah?

RFK: I thought maybe you'd wanna . . .

JFK: The newspaper man?

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: You know what hospital it is?

RFK: No, but the White House staff . . .

JFK: O.K, Fine. Listen, uh, you have to go up there Tuesday; we'll talk before you go Tuesday about what you ought to say.

RFK: Yeah. We're coming over with, uh, Royall and *[Boyce?]* . . .

JFK: *[overrides previous]* O.K.

[disconnect]

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Dictabelt 27A

Conversation #3: President Kennedy and Robert S. McNamara

October 10, 1963, 6:50 p.m.

President: Hello.

Sec. McNamara: Bob McNamara, Mr. President.

President: Yeah, Bob.

Sec. McNamara: I just talked to General [] McConnell, he was on the line to the commander who had received orders for instructions five minutes before the allotted time to move his two convoys ahead.

President: Yeah.

Sec. McNamara: So that they moved on just about 11 minutes ago.

President: Did they get permission from the Russians?

Sec. McNamara: From the Soviets, that is right.

President: Five minutes before the time.

Sec. McNamara: Yeah, the allotted time ran out . . .

President: 6:30?

Sec. McNamara: . . . at 6:30 our time. And five minutes ahead of that, the Soviets allowed them to move.

President: That is interesting, isn't it?

Sec. McNamara: We have two more convoys, large convoys, going through early tomorrow morning. Normally they would stop, dismount and allow the Soviets to count. We propose to follow the normal procedure. And I don't think there will be any trouble.

President: Right, ok. That is fine, Bob.

Sec. McNamara: Thank you.

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Dictabelt 27A

Conversation #3A: Unidentified Voice

October 1963

[fragment; possibly McNamara] [recording begins in mid-sentence]

Voice: . . . if not, I'll let you know as soon as I hear any more information,

[disconnect]

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Dictabelt 27A

Conversation #4: President Kennedy and Dean Rusk

October 1963

[begins in mid-sentence]

Sec. Rusk: . . . few minutes. Um, I also urged him to be sure that this came to the personal attention of the Chairman [Khrushchev], because it's just possible the Chairman doesn't know about this. Um . . . I got the impression from him that -- that he and Gromyko were pretty upset about this, uh, but we just -- we just can't tell. But he's just gone off now to get off a message. Uh, he accepted everything I said. I emphasized the importance of time here, that even a few hours' further incident of this sort could -- could inflame public opinion, not only here, but throughout the West, and set back everything we've been trying to do in the last few months to try to work out some agreements.

President: Yeah.

Sec. Rusk: And he accepted that. He said that's correct. He--he understands that.

President: O.K.

Sec. Rusk: So, we'll see what happens.

President: O.K.

Sec. Rusk: Alright.

[disconnect]

Papers of John F. Kennedy

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Dictabelt 27A

Conversation #5: Evelyn Lincoln and Gerald G. Wagner

October 1963

Mrs. Lincoln: Hello?

White House Operator: Uh, Mr. Jerry Wagner calling you.

Mrs. Lincoln: O.K.

Mr. Wagner: Hi, sorry to bother you, honey.

Mrs. Lincoln: That's O.K., I . . .

Mr. Wagner: I guess yesterday was a rough day for you.

Mrs. Lincoln: Oh, yesterday was just terrible.

Mr. Wagner: Yeah.

Mrs. Lincoln: And I've got your letter right here and he--he just came over and I haven't had a chance to even show it to him today.

Mr. Wagner: Um--um--What d'you think? Think it would be better next week?

Mrs. Lincoln: I think so.

Mr. Wagner: Yeah.

Mrs. Lincoln: This has been terrible.

Mr. Wagner: Yeah.

Mrs. Lincoln: It really has. Yesterday was a madhouse here.

Mr. Wagner: Yeah, with Gromyko and everybody.

Mrs. Lincoln: Oh, yeah, and . . .

Mr. Wagner: Well, I got my ballet company off to the Soviet Union yesterday.

Mrs. Lincoln: Oh, did you really?

Mr. Wagner: That's why I was in New York, and there was a six-hour delay and finally connected with a Russian plane. That was crazy. I didn't have any sleep. I came right to the limousine to come back to Washington.

Mrs. Lincoln: Unh-huh. *[laughs]*

Mr. Wagner: I'm feeling like on the campaign trail.

Mrs. Lincoln: Yeah.

Mr. Wagner: Alright, well, you--uh,--uh,--uh, we'll just skip today, I guess, hunh?

Mrs. Lincoln: Yeah. It won't work today.

Mr. Wagner: Alright.

Mrs. Lincoln: O.K., I tried. O.K. He's buzzing . . .

Mr. Wagner: . . . I didn't want to bother you, I . . .

Mrs. Lincoln: He's buzzing. I have to go.

Mr. Wagner: Alright, bye.

[disconnect]