

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 8A, Item 8A4

Saturday, March 2, 1963

[item begins in mid-conversation]

McNamara¹: . . . stop low level . . .

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and we rebutted that.

JFK: *[reading]* Senator Goldwater said he was informed that the United States has suspended low level reconnaissance flights over Cuba and is using special, quote, electronic gear, unquote, planes to listen in from outside Cuban territory. Goldwater, an Air Force reserve major general, said in an interview that he was told the low level flights were discontinued February ninth, three days after Secretary Robert McNamara's television reports on the Cuban military situation. An informed government source said that this was in error. Source said low level flights were being carried out as need for them arose, etc.

McNamara: Right. Right.

JFK: *[continues to read]* Goldwater, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said that, quote, electronic gear planes, unquote, are equipped with sensitive devices able to register details of what is going on in Cuba down to the point of detecting a generator in operation, *[finishes reading]*. I don't know how much truth there is to it, but I'm sure it's . . .

McNamara: There isn't any truth that I know of, but he shouldn't be talking about electronic gear.

JFK: I know it. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean that's fantas- . . . uh, somebody, . . . uh, if it's true it's a bad security thing, and i- . . .

McNamara: It is indeed. I'll check on that part. I saw the first part of the story. I hadn't seen the electronic gear. I talked to Mac about the . . . the, uh, statement that he made about low level flights and our rebuttal to it, and I suggested to Mac that if this continues we oughta run a . . . a low level flight if necessary, just to refute him.

¹ Robert S. McNamara

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: We could pick out an isolated target and run it against that.

JFK: Yeah. Right. Well, uh, what, uh . . . The electronic stuff . . . Is there some new electronic . . . ?

McNamara: I . . . no, I'm certain there isn't, Mr. President. I'll look into that. I haven't, uh, . . .

JFK: Good. The other thing is the story of Mark Watson's in the Baltimore Sun about that . . . flying over those carriers . . .

McNamara: Yes.

JFK: . . . Now, he makes the point, uh, no, it's Paul Ward in the Baltimore Sun, [reading] Diplomatic authorities here [aside] this is Washington [continues reading] tended today to link the latest four Soviet flights over United States naval vessels to the current Kremlin campaign against the projected NATO multi-lateral force. Noting that the Kennedy administration recently has advertised a preference for using Polaris-armed surface ships instead of submarines to make up such a force, they suggested, one: the Soviet reconnaissance flights over the aircraft carriers Kitty Hawk, Enterprise, Princeton, and Forrestal, which Senator . . . Secretary McNamara said were designed only in part to collect military intelligence data; two: that the four . . .

[end of recording; continued on belt 8B]