

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.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 16A

Conversation #4: President Kennedy and RFK

[Begins in mid-conversation. Follows hard on the heels of the conversation with McNamara (conversation #3) on the tape. Some pause between, but not much.]

President: . . . Yeah, and was going to reconsider it, and we want to restudy the contract, and all that crap.

RFK: I don't know how they can . . .

President: I know--I wouldn't--I think probably a lot of that stuff comes out of McClellan, or out of that goddamned staff up there, don't you think? . . . acknowledge the right of the Senate to review the contract--some crappy stuff. But I just wanted, uh, I just figured that we'd just go ahead. I was just talking to Senator (SIC) McNamara, and he says everybody says McNamara's right, so . . .

RFK: Yeah.

President: . . . I think we can let Jerry Adlerman [McClellan Committee staff] proceed.

RFK: Well, I--Yeah, I think that that's clear.

President: Yeah.

RFK: Yeah.

President: Well, it's a--[How] is McNamara.

RFK: Well, I think he's fine. Uh, you know, I think he's fine. He's so mad. [laugh]

President: Well, John's a real bastard, isn't he, with his . . .

RFK: Yeah.

President: . . . mealy mouthing. Who do you think he spoke to after . . .

RFK: Well, I think he spoke to Scoop [Henry M. Jackson].

President: To Scoop? And Scoop says . . .

RFK: and who would be the other Democrat? Sam Erwin [SIC]. Sam Erwin.

President: Yeah.

RFK: He's gonna talk to [Claiborne] Pell. Then Sco--Scoop must've said--and wouldn't--you know, he doesn't pay that much attention to Jerry Adlerman. Scoop must've said, uh, we can't take this, and this is the review by themselves, so we won't do that.

President: Yeah.

RFK: So, then he gets in and then we come see him and he gets these questions.

President: Yeah.

RFK: Well, then the, uh, they say, well, why ask the questions? That'll prove you're on their side.

President: Unh.

RFK: This is what I imagine.

President: Yeah.

RFK: And, uh, . . . and, uh, and then, you know, you're--so, well, why--it's--so, you see, 've got a foot in both camps--ah, take the questions, and then he doesn't ask them, and then . . .

President: Yeah.

RFK: . . . uh, so that nobody up there's gonna criticize--now he's gonna be bellyachin' around the Senate: "I have all this pressure from all sides. I'm just tryin' to be fair, and I haven't made up my mind, and I'm, you know, I have the pressure one side, and then . . .

President: Yeah, but I just want to wait and then just let that Dynasoar [NASA project comparable to the Space Shuttle program of the 1970s] go right down the hopper. Scare ol' Scoop.

RFK: I hope you are, aren't you?

President: Yeah.

RFK: Hunh?

President: I'm sure gonna talk to somebody about that. Scoop. Right.

RFK: They've been real bastards.

President: Yeah, but . . .

RFK: Hey, Jack . . .

President: Yeah?

RFK: I just taked to John McCone, and we got the thing down pretty much where the--the--all the--they're not certain yet where the ship went from, but at least the ammunition, et cetera--these guys were very original. But they got it--the, uh, ammunition, here in Alexandria.

President: Virginia?

RFK: Yeah. And then they got a small boat with two outboards on the back. Went fifty-five miles an hour.

President: [*incredulously*] Fifty-five miles an hour?

RFK: Yeah. And then they got a little smaller boat. This--their boat was about, I guess, twenty-five or twenty-six . . . and then they got a little smaller boat, put a small outboard on it, filled it with explosives, and ran up alongside the ship and started the outboard motor and ran it into the ship.

President: And where'd they . . . jump off?

RFK: Well, either that or they ran it off, see, from their own little bigger boat. There're five of them.

President: Yeah?

RFK: So they had some guts. But I spoke to them about . . .

President: Did they blow the boat up?

RFK: Yeah, well, I guess--either that--I think they might have sunk it.

President: Yeah.

RFK: Uh, . . . I spoke to him about prosecuting these fellows.

President: Yeah.

RFK: And I guess it's quite clear they violated the law.

President: Yeah.

RFK: And he said he got a call from Dick [Richard B.] Russell yesterday--was sore as hell that--uh, I hope nobody's planning to take any action against these people. . . . Because, he said, you people launched an invasion back in 1961 that wasn't successful and now these people are doing something and it is successful and what're you tryin' to do?

President: That's typical of him, isn't it?

RFK: Yeah. So, at least you know that side of it.

President: Yeah, but ones against Cuba--I don't mind if they blow up some Cuban ships, but if they blow up a Russian ship.

RFK: Yeah, or went into Cuba and caused some, uh . . . and . . . uh.

President: Yeah.

RFK: But, not to come back and keep saying about the fact that it comes from the United States. You know,--or that they--their plans originate in the United States.

President: Is that what they announced?

RFK: Well, that's what--you know, they had the press conference and all the rest of the business.

President: They have another one? They have another press . . . ?

RFK: No, but the first group . . .

President: The first one . . .

RFK: And then they publicize it. You know, everybody knows about this. I think that's the . . . There're two things: first, that the--fact that it's against Russian sh--uh, Russians; and the second thing, that they give it such wide publicity that they're doing.

President: Yeah, [two or three words indistinct] But, isn't that typical of Russell? What did John McCone say?

RFK: Well, he said--I don't know what he said to him. He was a little . . . But, uh, he agreed that they weren't doing any good, anyway.

President: Yeah.

RFK: But, anyway, I'll let you know later on today.

President: What would be, uh, I hate to prosecute these fellows . . .

RFK: But . . .

President: . . . but I just want to make it goddamned sure that they don't do it any more.

RFK: But I don't see how you can do it . . . make sure.

President: Unless you do?

RFK: Yeah. And I--and, uh, Hell, I don't see how you can do it. I mean, they-- you know, this--this happened a week after the last time you said that.

President: Yeah.

RFK: We made it quite clear to the other people.

President: Was this a different group?

RFK: Yeah. It's a rival group.

President: Oh, it's a rival group.

RFK: Um-hmmh.

President: Yeah. They ought to just stay out of the United States, shouldn't they? What would you arrest them for?

RFK: I guess the Logan Act.

President: Yeah. Here--You could about--wait about three days 'fore you do it.

RFK: Well, in any case, I--uh, you know, I'll talk to you first, but I'll--then . . .

President: But we oughtta have a John McCone brief, so if anybody speaks--'cause they'll all be talking to him, and John ought to endorse our course of action. I mean, I don't want him saying, yeah, I didn't want him to do it.

RFK: Well, then I think that, uh, . . . But, you see, the [Sterling J.] Cottrell Committee had a meeting on this, and I just found out about it last night.

President: Yeah.

RFK: What they should do. And I don't think it ever came out very clearly.

President: Yeah.

RFK: Wo, it might be that you'd want to bring, uh, the four or five people involved together and just . . .

President: McCone and you and Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense?

RFK: Yeah. And I got a call from Secretary of State last night, and he said, I hope you prosecute them.

President: Yeah.

RFK: So I think everybody should get their views over.

President: Yeah. O.K. Righto. O.K.

[disconnect]