

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 8B

Item 8B1

March 2, 1963

[continuation of item 8A4]

[begins in mid-conversation]

JFK: . . . were designed only in part to collect military intelligence data; two: that so- . . . four Soviet overflights, staged between January 22nd [27th?] and February 23rd in a way McNamara called, quote, a pattern, unquote, also were designed to lessen the little enthusiasm the United States' naval allies have shown for a multilateral nuclear . . . [sticks] . . . shown for a multilateral nuclear force composed of surface vessels by reminding them, etc., . . . that they have long range bombers capable of hunting down such ships. Diplomatic authorities here stress in that connection McNamara's notation that Soviet aerial surveillance had become chronic and hitherto conducted only by short or medium, . . . and so on. [finishes reading] Uh, . . . I don't, uh, . . .

McNamara¹: We . . . we have a reply to that which proved very effective with Von Hassel.

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: That the . . . the, uh, surface ships carrying Polaris missiles would be merchantmen, not easily recognized as these carriers were. Furthermore, that they would be lying in the coastal waters, uh, and in the bays and channels of . . . of the Western European coast. And it is quite a different situation. We'll get in touch with Watson and give him the same story.

JFK: No. No. This was Ward. I guess . . .

McNamara: Oh, all right.

JFK: . . . I don't know. Whoever he is. The only thing is . . . I was wondering . . . Have we given, uh, . . . I suppose we have, Merchant² the sort of most up-to-date military thinking at the . . .

¹ Robert S. McNamara

² Livingston Merchant, Special Representative for Multilateral Force Negotiations.

McNamara: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed, we have. He has . . . and he has Admiral Lee³ with him, as a matter of fact, who . . .

JFK: What is our private naval opinion about the ability of the Russians to . . . get these ships?

McNamara: The private naval opinion as to the ability of the Soviets to, uh, . . . uh, follow the . . . the merchant shipping is that it would be almost impossible.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

McNamara: And that were they to follow the merchant shipping, uh, we would be aware of it. We can interpose our submarines between the Soviet craft and the . . . the, uh, Polaris-carrying merchant shipping. And we would thereby be aware of the . . . the, uh, Soviet attempt to follow them. And this in itself would be warning of some possible Soviet attempt against the merchant shipping. And we would thereby be aware of the . . . the, uh, Soviet attempt to follow them. And this in itself would be warning of some possible Soviet attempt against the merchant shipping.

JFK: You mean if they picked . . . where if the air started to follow them all?

McNamara: Yes.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I would, uh, . . . but, anyway . . .

McNamara: I think that we have effective answers to . . . to the Ward type claim. As a matter of fact, in talking to Von Hassel about it, he seemed, uh, . . . uh, to completely accept our explanation on why the surface craft were . . . were relatively invulnerable in . . . in European-type waters. Now, when you get off the coast of China, uh, that's something else again. This is the argument we are trying to use, and . . . to use to establish our requirement for Polaris submarines, uh, and the European requirement for a surface fleet.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah. Well, in addition, uh, if you took the idea that you . . . you'd give up all surface ships, . . . If you could get the idea they all could be caught, you would certainly give up all carriers. If a . . . uh, I mean, you wouldn't be building any carriers if we thought they were so easy to detect and destroy.

McNamara: That's right. Frankly, I don't know how the Soviets detected these carriers. I've asked the Navy to look into it. They have an easy explanation that the Soviets are aware that the passage of the carriers through the Straits of Gibraltar, and

³ Admiral John M. Lee, U.S. Navy.

of the sailing of the carriers from Norfolk, . . . I don't think that it's quite that easy. And therefore we're . . . we're analyzing in great detail the path of these carriers, the speed of the carriers, and the ways in which the Soviets might have picked them up. I just don't have an answer to it at the moment.

JFK: Right. OK. Fine.

McNamara: I will follow it, and also get in touch with Ward.

JFK: We might take a look at whoever, uh, . . . Goldwater's latest thing about the electronic gear.

McNamara: I . . . I will do that.

JFK: OK. Thanks.

Dictabelt 8B

Item 8B2

March 2, 1963

[begins in mid-conversation]

JFK: . . . yeah, well, that was all right.

Bundy⁴: And that is about right, it seems to me.

JFK: What about the electronic?

Bundy: I don't know what that is. Uh, it's . . . It has nothing to do with the difference . . . We do have . . . we do have that kind of thing going on, but they are two type . . . quite different reconnaissance missions.

JFK: Yeah.

Bundy: So that there's just no connection between the two.

JFK: I thought someone . . .

Bundy: You want someone to say that?

JFK: Well, I thought we, uh, . . . The only thing, I, uh, . . .

Bundy: I would rather not talk about those things. They are very sensitive.

JFK: That's right. I agree. Well, I would like to have somebody . . .

Bundy: Point that out?

JFK: . . . point out that whatever . . . whether the story is accurate or inaccurate, it is the sort of thing that is, uh, . . . Senator . . . Secre-- . . . Senator Goldwater . . .

Bundy: Helpful to the enemy.

⁴ McGeorge Bundy

JFK: It's helpful to the enemy, and the last thing that Senator Goldwater oughta . . . ought to do is use information that, uh, . . . that is, uh, . . .

Bundy: Well, now, do you think that is something for Mansfield to do, . . .

JFK: Mansfield won't do it.

Bundy: . . . or do you think that is something for McNamara to do?

JFK: What I would have to do is have some high, uh, Defense Department spokesman said that Senator Goldwater seems to be . . ., yeah, . . . It isn't accurate, I guess, is it? There's no . . .

Bundy: Is it . . . Well, in the sense that these things exist it's accurate, Mr. President. In the sense that it has anything to do with, uh, what you would do with the low-level flight, it's nonsense. They're two entirely different missions.

JFK: Yeah. Well, I suppose, uh, everybody's known that we have got these electronic planes, unfortunately, . . .

Bundy: Well, I don't care much . . . no, it is really not known, and one never likes to talk about that particular topic. So that there is every reason for making a shocked noise and . . . and, uh, why don't I get Bob McNamara's people to do it?

JFK: Well, uh, they . . . if just somebody would say that it's a . . ., uh, . . .

Bundy: Misfort-- . . . it's unfortunate to have this aid and comfort given to, uh, . . .

JFK: Well, not aid and comfort, Just say it's . . . uh, it's the sort of thing which is . . . involves intelligence, which is the last thing that ought to be discussed this way. You'd . . . and it's [1 word?] Senator Goldwater . . .

Bundy: This kind of disclosure is helpful to the people in Cuba, you know.

JFK: Well, the only thing, I suppose, is that confirms it, doesn't it?

Bundy: Well, no, that's . . . I mean, discussion of it can only be helpful with . . .

JFK: . . . to the . . . to our enemies, and Senator Goldwater, who's, uh, certainly should, as a member of the Armed Services Committee, should know that. Couldn't some anonymous Defense Department spokesman say that?

Bundy: Yeah. Yeah. I think so.

[phone hangs up]

Dictabelt 8B

Item 8B3

March 2, 1963. 11:25 AM

JFK: Hello.

McNamara⁵: Mr. President.

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: On the two points that you raised this morning . . . I talked to General Carroll of DIA, who says we have no new equipment on our electronic intelligence aircraft. It is simply the typical electronic intelligence equipment which is sensitive to electronic emanations, and perhaps, uh, could pick up generators associated with SAM sites, for example.

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: In any case, it is a violation of security. So I called General LeMay who is . . . is a close friend of Goldwater's, and . . . and, uh, asked him to get in touch with Goldwater and handle it directly and we are also going to try to get a . . . a senator on . . . on the Armed Services Committee to say in the Senate this is a violation of security.

JFK: Very good.

McNamara: We'll handle it that way. Secondly, on the Ward article . . . We will brief Ward as well as other newspaper correspondents on a background basis as to the difference between maintaining surveillance over a . . . a fleet, including the carriers and other escort ships on the one hand, following a known and prescribed course between the U.S. and Gibraltar versus maintaining surveillance over merchant ships, uh, using the coastal waters, channels, bays, harbors, etc., of Western Europe. I think we can stop the story that way.

JFK: The, uh, . . . we, uh, . . . I noticed, uh, I read the Manchester Guardian. They had another . . . they had a story about this, probably, . . . the fact the United States itself does not use surface vessels for Polaris indicates that they're not as good. Of course, uh, . . .

⁵ Robert S. McNamara

McNamara: Well, now, they . . . We've got a real problem with Great Britain. We have to let them use some of that because of their decision . . .

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . to use Polaris submarines.

JFK: I see.

McNamara: As far as Western Europe is concerned, we have a good strong argument as to why they should use surface ships, and we use submarines.

JFK: 'course, if we were arguing submarines, they would be around saying that they have to buy 'em from the United States . . .

McNamara: That's it exactly.

JFK: . . . and they got too much control for the United States . . .

McNamara: And . . . and the two strong arguments, therefore, in favor of surface ships for Western Europe are, one: they can build them and, two: their waters are entirely different than the waters we have to operate our subs in around the world.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

McNamara: And these two arguments . . . I . . . I've used them on Von Hassel, and . . . and, uh, Admiral Lee is with Livy Merchant and using them in the North Atlantic Council. We talked to Lee by telephone yesterday, and he says that . . . that they are acceptable.

JFK: Right. Right. Good. OK. Fine. Thank you.

[phone hangs up]

Dictabelt 8B

Item 8B4

March 2, 1963, 6:46 PM.

[begins in mid-conversation]

JFK: We were just talking about the fact that, uh, in . . . in interrogation last week of the Stennis Committee, Senator Goldwater asked some questions about the use of the carrier aircraft from Es-- . . . the aircraft from the carrier Essex. . . .

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: . . . with their markings painted out, which . . .

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: Well, we figure that, uh, somebody over there has told them about . . . you, know, that thing on Wednesday morning? . . . that we . . . ?

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: And that, uh, therefore, either Dirksen's gonna spring it or Goldwater's gonna spring it, and they're gonna spring it in such a way that it looks like there was U.S. air cover and that you were . . . wrong, and I was wrong in saying there wasn't. Now, the question is . . . how . . . What exactly is it . . . We . . . We're gonna get Max Taylor to look up exactly . . . or 're you familiar with what the, uh, . . .

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: . . . what happened on that?

RFK: Ah, . . .

JFK: Did . . . did we paint out the markings on the planes?

RFK: Yeah. Yeah. We painted out the markings on the planes.

JFK: How many planes?

RFK: And I think there were three planes.

JFK: Yeah?

RFK: And they flew air cover for an hour.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: O-- . . .

JFK: . . . but didn't see anybody.

RFK: . . . over the beach.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: And, uh, they were supposed to give, uh, air cover to the B-26s that were coming in.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: And, uh, unfortunately, they . . . between all of them, they got the hours mixed up. I think you gave 'em from seven to eight or something . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: and, uh, they must've thought it was seven . . . CIA thought it was seven to eight Central American time.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: So the result was that the . . . B-26s came in an hour . . .

JFK: Late.

RFK: . . . late, and were all shot down.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: Or, two of them shot down.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

RFK: And I think that's probably the ones that had the Americans in them.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: I think, uh, that . . . that has been in the paper, . . . about the fact that, uh, the, uh, they flew this . . . air cover for an hour.

JFK: Has that been in the paper?

RFK: Uh, I've seen references to it in the paper. I don't know if any formal story's been written on it, but, uh, it's been in the paper that they, uh, . . . and it's been in U.S. News and World Report.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . that they uh, specifically, . . . I'm almost sure, . . . I've read it someplace in the last couple of months.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . about the fact that they've, uh, that they, uh, flew for that hour.

JFK: Well, my guess is it's gonna come out. We're just trying to figure out how to get it out. If we can say it's been all printed . . . otherwise Dirksen will announce that United States planes with their paintings marked out flew over the Bay of Pigs, and were only used an hour, and therefore either you were wrong or I was wrong in not using 'em more, or . . . and so on and so forth. So we're trying to think about how to get . . .

RFK: Well, I think if somebody could look up . . . uh, . . . uh, . . . where it's appeared in the newspapers. Do you have that kind of people over there?

JFK: [/laughs] I would think that's a rather difficult assignment.

RFK: Not really.

JFK: It isn't?

RFK: No. I mean, just look in the . . . If they have an index and they got it under Bay of Pigs . . ., [both laugh] . . . and they go down . . . Wednesday . . . six o'clock . . .

JFK: Yeah?

RFK: But, uh, I'm sure it's in U.S. News.

JFK: It's been in U.S. News, you think?

RFK: Yeah. In fact, I think it was in the . . . in their answer to me, I think they put it in, but I think it was in even before that.

JFK: They had an answer to you?

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: U.S. News did?

RFK: Yeah.

JFK: What other ways do you have . . . How would you handle it, then, in the committee, or . . .

RFK: Uh, . . . Well, again, I think probably we'd go back to the fact that the Congress was informed about this.

JFK: Was it?

RFK: Yeah. I'm sure they were. They were told everything else. Uh, . . . [pause] . . . Well, I think it's awfully important if we could get the fact that that was out, uh, I mean there was some mention about it in the newspaper sometime ago, and we could document that.

JFK: OK. Well, I'll see what we can find out here.

RFK: All right.

JFK: All right.

[phone hangs up]

Dictabelt 8B

Item 8B5

March 2, 1963, 10:32 PM

RFK: Hello. Jack?

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: The thing, of course, to remember on this . . . I don't know how much you're gonna get into it, but the thing to remember on this . . . is this, uh, what you did on that day, Tuesday, for Wednesday, was something that was added to the plan.

JFK: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

RFK: And not something that was taken away or was in . . . a plan that was made inadequate by some deficiency in . . . in, uh, withdrawal of something . . .

JFK: Yeah. That's right.

RFK: That you added that on Tuesday . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: And it's never been planned before and this . . . plan specifically said this wouldn't be done.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: It was something that you added in order to help.

JFK: You heard about, uh . . .

RFK: But I, you know, if somebody's gonna say something in the Senate about it . . .

JFK: Yeah. Well, you know how they are. Make everything look lousy these days. You know, Rowland Evans said that he talked to Dirksen. Dirksen said, "I don't quite get this." He said."/2 words?/ . . . What? [laughing] What, you know, just say I don't know, they . . . I think the Kennedys are planning

something to trap us into this thing [laughter] 'cause they're pretty smart down there."

RFK: Well, that's what we have . . . We haven't figured how to close the trap yet.

JFK: Yeah. That's right. We haven't quite figured out . . .

RFK: Uh, well, we'll learn it.

JFK: It just shows you, boy, what that press is, doesn't it?

RFK: But, God. Still, the poll.

JFK: What?

RFK: What . . . you're down to seventy percent?

JFK: When?

RFK: Huh?

JFK: When was this?

RFK: The Gallup Poll.

JFK: When was that?

RFK: Oh, about two days ago?

JFK: No. I didn't see it.

RFK: Yeah. It went seventy-six percent to seventy.

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: But, with your popularity seventy percent now, . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . you'd break fifty-fifty with a Republican.

JFK: What?

RFK: Seventy percent . . . Eighteen percent are against you.

JFK: Yeah?

RFK: Well, I mean, I don't get what the . . . the press must be doing you some good.

JFK: Then what, you'd break fifty-fifty?

RFK: Do fifty-fifty with a Republican.

JFK: Oh, you mean on approval/disapproval?

RFK: Yeah. And then the, uh, independents.

JFK: I didn't see that poll. Was this in the Post?

RFK: I don't know what paper. I read it going up in the plane Wednesday or Thursday.

JFK: I see.

RFK: You think you got troubles, you ought to see what's happening to Nelson Rockefeller.

JFK: Why? What?

RFK: Well, you know, all the bars . . . They call every drink a Nelson cocktail ... a Rockefeller cocktail. Everything's the same except it's fifteen percent more.

JFK: Do they really?

RFK: Oh, and all . . . You walk along the streets, and out in the front . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . it says, "Come in and buy a Nelson . . . a Rockefeller cocktail." Everything costs fifteen percent more. In every bar. How would you like that following you around?

JFK: Yeah, but . . . and have . . . He's lucky those papers aren't publishing. . . .

RFK: Well, then, did you see the story about him in, uh . . .

JFK: Wall Street Journal?

RFK: Wall Street Journal. That's not a complete plus.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

RFK: I think he's really having his problems . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . troubles. You're not. I've seen you on television.

JFK: We've dropped six percent in a month, have we?

RFK: Since January.

JFK: Oh, since that Congress has been back.

RFK: Yeah, and to get a little bit more partisan, but imagine seventy percent?

JFK: *[words missing]*

RFK: Better than you were in 'sixty.

JFK: OK.

RFK: Righto.

[phone hangs up]