

Transcript of President

Following is an unofficial transcript of President Nixon's press conference yesterday in San Clemente, Calif., as transcribed by The Washington Post from a tape recording:

The President: I have an announcement before going to your questions. It is with a deep sense of not only official regret but personal regret that I announce the resignation of Secretary of State William Rogers, effective September the 3d. A letter which will be released to the press after this conference will indicate my appraisal of his work as Secretary of State.

I will simply say at this time that he wanted to leave at the conclusion of the first four years. He agreed to stay on because we had some enormously important problems coming up including the negotiations which resulted in the end of the war in Vietnam, the Soviet summit, the European security conference, as well as in other areas, Latin America and in Asia where the Secretary of State, as you know, has been quite busy over these past eight months. As he returns to private life, we will not only miss him in terms of his official service, but I shall particularly miss him because of his having been through the years a very close, personal friend and adviser. However, I hope still to have the benefit of, and I know that I will.

As his successor I shall nominate and send to the Senate for confirmation the name of Dr. Henry Kissinger. Dr. Kissinger will become Secretary of State, assume the duties of the office, after he is confirmed by the Senate. I trust the Senate will move expeditiously on the confirmation hearings because there are a number of matters of great importance that are coming up.

There are, for example, some matters that might even involve some foreign

travel by Dr. Kissinger that will have to be delayed in the event that the Senate hearings are delayed. Dr. Kissinger's qualifications for this post I think are well known by all of you ladies and gentlemen, as well as those looking to us, and listening to us on television and radio. He will retain the position after he becomes Secretary of State of assistant to the President for national security affairs.

In other words, he will have somewhat a parallel relationship to the White House which George Shultz has. George Shultz as you know is Secretary of the Treasury but is also an assistant to the President in the field of economic affairs. The purpose of this arrangement is to have a closer coordination between the White House and the departments. And in this case between the White House, the national security affairs, the NSC and the State Department which carries a major load in this area. And also another purpose is to get the work out in the departments where it belongs. And I believe that this change in this respect with Dr. Kissinger moving in as Secretary of State and still retaining the position as assistant to the President for national security affairs will serve the interest not only of coordination but also the interests of an effective foreign policy.

I will simply say finally with regard to Secretary Rogers that he can look back on what I think, and I suppose it is a self-serving statement, but I will say it about him rather than myself at the moment, one of the most successful eras of foreign policy in any admin-

Nixon's Press

Conference

istration in history. An era in which we ended a war, the longest war in America's history; an era in addition—in which we began to build a structure of peace particularly involving the two great powers, the Peoples Republic of China and the Soviet Union, where before there had been nothing but ugly and at some times very, very difficult confrontations.

We still have a long way to go. There are trouble spots in the area of the Middle East, others, Southeast Asia, which we could go into in detail. But as Secretary Rogers looks back on his years, Secretary of State, he can be 4½ years of service as Secretary of State, he can be very proud that he was one of the major architects of what I think was a very successful foreign policy. And now we'll go to the questions. I think AP, Miss Lewine has the first question.

White House Tapes

Q. You have said that disclosure of the tapes could jeopardize and cripple the functions of the presidency. Two questions. If disclosure carries such a risk, why did you make the tapes in the first place? And what is your reaction to surveys that show three out of four

Americans believe you were wrong in making the tapes?

A. Well, with regard to the questions as to why Americans feel we were wrong to make the tapes, that is not particularly surprising. I think that most Americans do not like the idea of the taping of conversations, and frankly it is not something that particularly appeals to me. As a matter of fact, that is why when I arrived in the White House and saw this rather complex situation set up where there was a taping capacity not only in the President's office, the room outside of his office, but also in the Cabinet room and at Camp David and in other areas, that I had the entire system dismantled.

It was put into place again in June of 1970 because my advisors felt it was important in terms particularly of national security affairs to have a record for future years that would be an accurate one. But a record which would only be disclosed at the discretion of the President, or according to directives that he would set forth. As you know, of course, this kind of capability not only existed during the Johnson administration, it also existed during the Kennedy administration. And I can see why both President Johnson and President Kennedy did have the capability because, not because they wanted to infringe upon the privacy of anybody, but because they felt that they had some obligation, particularly in the field of foreign policy and some domestic areas, to have a record that would be accurate.

As far as I am concerned, we now do not have that capability, and I am just as happy that we don't. As a matter of fact, I have a practice, whenever I'm not too tired at night, of dictating my own recollections of the day. I think that that perhaps will be the more accurate record of history in the end. I think we'll go to the UP now, and then we'll come to the television.

Gray Phone Call

Q. Mr. President, on July 6, 1972, you were warned by Patrick Gray that you were being "mortally wounded"

by some of your top aides. Can you explain why you didn't ask who they were, why, what was going on?

A. Well, in the telephone conversation that you refer to that of course has been quite widely reported in the press as well as on television, Mr. Gray said that he was concerned that as far as the investigation that he had responsibility for, that some of my top aides were not cooperating.

Whether the term used was "mortally wounding" or not, I don't know. Some believe that it was, some believe that it wasn't. That's irrelevant. He could have said that. The main point was, however, I asked him whether or not he had discussed this matter with General Walters because I knew that there had been meetings between General Walters, representing the CIA, to be sure that the CIA did not become involved in the investigation, and between the director of the FBI. He said that he had. He told me that General Walters agreed that the investigation should be pursued. And I told him to go forward with a full press, on the investigation, to which he has so testified.

It seemed to me that with that kind of directive to Mr. Gray that that was adequate for the purpose of carrying out the responsibilities. As far as the individuals were concerned I assume that the individuals that he was referring to involved this operation with the CIA. That's why I asked him the Walters question.

When he cleared that up he went forward with the investigation and he must have thought that it was a very good investigation, because when I sent his name down to the Senate for confirmation the next year I asked him about his investigation and he said he was very proud of it. He said it was the most thorough investigation that had ever taken place since the assassination of President Kennedy, that he could defend it with enthusiasm and that under the circumstances therefore, he had carried out the directive that I had given him on July 6. So there was no question about Mr. Gray having direct orders from the President to

carry out an investigation that was thorough. Mr. Jarrell.

Haldeman and Tapes

Q. Attorney General Petersen has testified that on April 15th of this year he met with you and warned you at that time that there might be enough evidence to warrant indictments against three of your top aides, Messrs. Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Dean. You accepted their resignations

on April 30th, calling Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman two of the finest public servants you had known; after that, you permitted Mr. Haldeman, after he had left the White House, to hear confidential tapes of conversations you had had in your office with Mr. Dean. My question is, why did you permit a man who you knew might be indicted to hear those tapes which you now will not permit the American public or the federal prosecutors handling the case to listen to?

A. The only tape that has been referred that Mr. Haldeman has listened to, he'd listened to at my request. And he listened to that tape, that was the one on September the 15th, Mr. Jarrell, because he had been present and was there. I asked him to listen to it in order to be sure that as far as any allegations that had been made by Mr. Dean with regard to that conversation, I wanted to be sure that we were absolutely correct in our response. That's all he listened to. He did not listen to any tapes in which only Mr. Dean and I participated. He listened only to the tape on September 15th, this is after he left office, in which he had participated in the conversation throughout.

Some Group Listen

Q. Mr. President one of the lingering doubts about the . . . about your denial of any involvement, is concerning your failure to make the tapes available — give it to the Senate committee or to the special prosecutor. You're made it perfectly clear you don't intend to release those tapes.

A: Perfectly clear?

Q: Perfectly clear. But is there any way that you could have some group lis-

ten to tapes and give a report so that that might satisfy the public mind?

A.: I don't believe, first, it would satisfy the public mind, and it shouldn't. The second point is that, as Mr. Wright, who argued the case, I understand, very well before Judge Sirica this morning, has indicated, to have the tapes listened to — he indicated this also in his brief — either by a prosecutor or by a judge or in camera or in any way, would violate the principle of confidentiality. And I believe he is correct. That is why we are standing firm on the proposition that we will not agree to the Senate committee's desire to have, for example, its chief investigator listen to the tapes, or the special prosecutor's desire to hear the tapes; and also why we will oppose, as Mr. Wright did in his argument this morning, any compromise of the principle of confidentiality.

Let me explain very carefully that the principle of confidentiality either exists or it doesn't exist, and once it is compromised, once it is known that a conversation that is held with the President can be subject to a subpoena by a Senate committee, by a grand jury, by a prosecutor, and be listened to by anyone, the principle of confidentiality is thereby irreparably damaged.

Incidentally, let me say that now the tapes are no longer being made, I suppose it could be argued that what difference does it make now, now that these tapes are also in the past. What is involved here is not only the tapes; what is involved, as you ladies and gentlemen well know, is the request on the part of the Senate committee, and the special prosecutor as well, that we turn over presidential papers — in other words, the records of conversations with the President made by his associates.

Those papers, and the tapes as well, cannot be turned over without breaching the principle of confidentiality. It was President Truman that made that argument very effectively in his letter to a Senate committee, or his response to a congressional committee — a House committee, it was — in 1953 when they asked

him to turn over his papers. So whether it is a paper or whether it is a tape — what we have to bear in mind is that for a President to conduct the affairs of this office and conduct them effectively, he must be able to do so with the principle of confidentiality intact.

Otherwise, the individuals who come to talk to him — whether it's his advisers or whether it's a visitor in the domestic field, or whether it's someone in a foreign field — will always be speaking in a unified way rather than laying it on the line, as it has to be laid on the line if you're going to have the creative kind of discussion that we have often had and that has been responsible for some of our successes in the foreign policy period, particularly in the past few years.

Ordered Investigations

Q: Mr. President, could you tell us who you personally talked to in directing

that investigations be made both in June of '72, shortly after the Watergate incident, and last March 21 when you got new evidence and ordered a more intensive investigation?

A: Certainly. In June I of course talked to Mr. MacGregor, first of all, who was the new chairman of the [Nixon reelection] committee. He told me that he would conduct a thorough investigation as far as his entire committee staff was concerned. Apparently that investigation was very effective except for Mr. Magruder, who stayed on. But Mr. MacGregor does not have to assume responsibility for that. I say not responsibility for it because basically what happened there was that he believed Mr. Magruder, and many others have believed him too. He proved, however, to be wrong. In the White House the investigation's responsibility were given to Mr. Ehrlichman at the highest level, and in turn he delegated them to Mr. Dean, the White House counsel — something of which I was aware and of which I approved.

Mr. Dean, as White House counsel, therefore, sat in on the FBI interrogations of the members of the White House staff because what I wanted to know was whether any member of the White House staff was in any way involved. If he was involved, he would be fired. And when we met on September 15, and again throughout our discussions in the month of March, Mr. Dean insisted that there was not — and I use his words — "a scintilla of evidence" indicating that anyone on the White House staff was involved in the planning of the Watergate break-in.

Now in terms of after

March 21, Mr. Dean first was given the responsibility to write his own report, but I did not rest it there. I also had a contact made with the Attorney General himself — Attorney General Kleindienst — told him — this was on the 27th of March — to report to me directly anything that he found in this particular area. And I gave a responsibility for Mr. Ehrlichman on the 29th of March to continue the investigation that Mr. Dean was unable to conclude, having spent a week at Camp David and unable to finish the report.

Mr. Ehrlichman questioned a number of people in that period at my direction, including Mr. Mitchell, and I should also point out that as far as my own activities were concerned, I was not leaving it just to them. I met at great length with Mr. Ehrlichman, Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Dean and Mr. Mitchell on the 22d. I discussed the whole matter with them. I kept pressing for the view that I had had throughout — that we must get this story out — get the truth out, whatever and whoever it's going to hurt.

And it was there that Mr. Mitchell suggested that all the individuals involved in the White House appear in an executive session before the Ervin committee. We never got that far, but at least that was — that's an indication of the extent of my own investigations. I think we'll go to Mr. Lisagor now.

Mitchell Veracity

Q: Mr. President, you have said repeatedly that you tried to get all the facts, and just now you mentioned the March 22 meeting. Yet former Attorney General John Mitchell said that if you had ever asked him, at

any time, about the Watergate matter he would have told you the whole story, chapter and verse. Was Mr. Mitchell not speaking the truth when he said that before the committee?

A: Mr. Lisagor, I'm not going to question Mr. Mitchell's veracity and I will only say that throughout I had confidence in Mr. Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell, in a telephone call that I had with him immediately after it occurred, expressed great chagrin that he had not run a tight enough shop and that some of the boys, as he called them, got involved in this kind of activity which he knew to be very, very embarrassing to — apart from its illegality — to the campaign. Throughout I would have expected Mr. Mitchell to tell me in the event that he was involved or that anybody else was. He did not tell me. I don't blame him for not telling me. He has given his reasons for not telling me. I regret that he did not, because he's exactly right; had he told me I would have blown my stack, just as I did at Ziegler the other day.

We'll get you next, Mr. Rather.

Q: I wonder, sir, how much personal blame, to what degree of personal blame do you accept for the climate at the White House and at the re-election committee for the abuses of Watergate?

A: I accept it all.

Q: Mr. President, I want to state this question with due respect for your office, but also as directly as . . .

A: That would be unusual.

Q: I'd like to think not. It concerns . . .

A: Only . . . you're always respectful, Mr. Rather.

Q: It concerns the events surrounding Mr. Ehrlich-

man's contact and on one occasion your own contact with the judge in the Pentagon Papers case, Judge [W. Matt] Byrne. As I understand your own explanation of events and putting together your statement with Mr. Ehrlichman's testimony and what Judge Byrne has said, what happened here is sometime late in March . . . on March 17, I believe you said, you first found out about the break-in at the psychiatrist's office of Mr. Ellsberg that you asked to have that looked into and that you later, I think in late April, instructed Attorney General Kleindienst to inform the judge.

Now, my question is this. That while the Pentagon Papers trial was going on, Mr. Ehrlichman secretly met once with the judge in that case, you secretly met another time with the judge and Mr. Ehrlichman. Now, you're a lawyer, and given the state of the situation and what you knew, could give us some reason why the American people shouldn't believe that that was at least a subtle attempt to bribe the judge in that case and to give at least the appearance of lack of moral leadership?

A: Well, I would say the only part of your statement that is perhaps accurate is that I'm a lawyer. Now, beyond that, Mr. Rather, let me say that with regard to the secret meeting we had with the judge, as he said, I met the judge briefly—after all, I had appointed him to the position—I met him for perhaps one minute outside my door here in full view of all the White House staff and everybody else who wanted to see. I asked him how he liked his job. We did not discuss the case. And he went on for his meeting with Mr. Ehrlichman.

Now, why did the meeting with Mr. Ehrlichman take place? Because we had determined that Mr. Gray could not be confirmed, as you'll recall. We were on a search for a director of the FBI. Mr. Kleindienst had been here and I asked him what he would recommend with regard to a director and I laid down certain qualifications.

I said I wanted a man preferably with FBI experience and preferably with prosecutor's experience. And preferably, if possible, a Democrat, so that we would have no problem in confirmation. He said the man for the job is Byrne. He said he's the best man. I said, are you . . . would you recommend him? He said, yes. Under those circumstances then, Mr. Ehrlichman called Mr. Byrne. He said under no circumstances will we talk to you, he, Ehrlichman, will talk to you unless . . . if he felt that it would in any way compromise his handling of the Ellsberg case. Judge Byrne made the decision that he would talk to Mr. Ehrlichman, and he did talk to him privately, here.

And on that occasion he talked to him privately, the case was not discussed at all. Only the question of whether or not at the conclusion of the case Mr. Byrne would like to be considered as director of the FBI. I understand, incidentally, that he told Mr. Ehrlichman that he would be interested.

Of course, the way that things broke, eventually we found another name. With somewhat the same qualifications, although in this case not a judge, in this case a chief of police with former FBI experience.

See TEXT, A11, Col. 1

TEXT, From A10

Now, with regard to the Ellsberg break-in. Let me explain that in terms of that, I discussed that on the telephone with Mr. Henry Petersen on the 18th of April. It was on the 18th of April that I learned that the grand jury was going away from some of its Watergate investigations and moving into national security areas.

I told Mr. Petersen at that time about my concern about security areas and particularly about the break-in as far as the Ellsberg case is concerned. And then he asked me a very critical question, which you as a nonlawyer will now understand. And lawyers will, too.

He said, was any evidence developed out of this investigation . . . out of this break-in? And I said, no. It was a dry hole. He said, good.

Now, what he meant by that was that in view of the fact that no evidence was developed as a result of the break-in, which is incidentally an illegal, unauthorized as far as I was concerned, and completely deplorable, but since no evidence was developed, there was no requirement that it be presented to the jury that was hearing the case.

That was why Mr. Petersen, a man of impeccable credentials in the law enforcement field, did not at that time, on the 18th, at a time when I told him about . . . what I'd known about the Ellsberg break-in, say let's present it then to the grand jury. Because nothing had been accomplished, nothing had been obtained that would taint the case.

It was approximately 10 days later that Mr. Kleindienst came in and said, that after a review of the situation, in the prosecutor's office in Washington, in which Mr. Petersen had also participated, that they believed that it was best that we bend over backwards in this case and send this record of the Ellsberg break-in, even though there was no evidence obtained from it, that could have affected the jury one way or another, send it to the judge.

When they made their rec-

ommendation to me, I directed that it be done instantly. It was done. Incidentally, the prosecutor argued this case just the way that I have argued it to you. And . . . whether or not it had an effect on the eventual outcome, I do not know. At least as far as we know, Mr. Ellsberg went free, this being one of the factors. But that is the explanation of what happened, and obviously you in your commentary tonight can attach anything you want to it and I hope you will be just as fair and objective as I try to be

in giving you the answer. But I know you will be, sir.

Vice President Agnew

Q. Mr. President, what is the state of your confidence in your Vice President at this point in time?

A. I've noticed some press speculation to the effect that I have not expressed confidence in the Vice President. And therefore I welcome this question, because I want to set the record straight.

I had confidence in the integrity of the Vice President when I selected him as Vice President, when very few knew him . . . as you may recall, back in 1968, knew him nationally. My confidence in his integrity has not been shaken. In fact, it has been strengthened by his courageous conduct and his ability, even though he's controversial at times, as I am over the past 4½ years. And so I have confidence in the integrity of the Vice President and particularly in the performance of the duties that he has had as Vice President, and as a candidate for Vice President.

Now, obviously the question arises as to charges that have been made about activities that occurred before he became Vice President. He would consider it improper, I would consider it improper, for me to comment on those charges and I shall not do so.

But I will make a comment on another subject that I think needs to be commented upon. And that is the outrageous leak of information from either the grand jury or the prosecutors or the Department of Justice or all three. And incidentally, I'm not going to put the responsibility on all three until I learn from the Attorney General, who at my request is making a full investigation of this at the present time. I'm not going to put the responsibility. But the leak of information with regard to charges that have been made against the Vice President and leaking them all in the press. Convicting an individual, not only trying them but convicting them in the headlines and on television, before he's had a chance to present his case in court, is completely contrary to the

American tradition. Even a Vice President has a right to some, shall I say, consideration in this respect, let alone the ordinary individual.

And I will say this, and the Attorney General I know has taken note of this fact. Any individual in the Justice Department or in the prosecutor's office who is in the employ of the United States who has leaked information in this case to the press or to anybody else will be summarily dismissed from government service. That's how strongly I feel about it. And I feel that way because I would make this ruling whether it was the Vice President or any individual.

We have to remember that a hearing before a grand jury and that determination in the American process is one that is supposed to be in confidence. It's supposed to be in secret, because all kinds of charges are made which will not stand up in open court. And it's only when the case gets to open court that the press and the TV have a right to cover it. Well, they have a right to cover it. But I mean have a right . . . it seems to me to give such broad coverage to the charges.

Consider Resignation

Q. Mr. President, at any time during the Watergate crisis did you ever consider resigning? And would you consider resigning if you felt that your capacity to govern had been seriously weakened? And in that connection, how much do you think your capacity to govern has been weakened?

A. The answer to the first two questions is no. The answer to the third question is that it is true that as far as the capacity to govern is concerned that to be under a constant barrage 12 to 15 minutes a night on each of the three major networks for four months tends to raise some questions in the people's mind with regard to the President. And it may raise some questions with regard to the capacity to govern.

But I also know this: I was elected to do a job. Watergate is an episode that I deeply deplore, and had I been running the campaign rather than trying to run the country, and particu-

larly the foreign policy of this country this time, it would never have happened.

But it's all water under the bridge. It's gone now. The point that I make now is that we are proceeding as best we know how to get all those guilty brought to justice in Watergate. But now we must move on from Watergate to the business of the people. And the business of the people is continuing with initiatives we began in the first administration.

We've had 30 minutes of this press conference. I have yet to have, for example, one question on the business of the people, which shows you how we're consumed with it. I'm not criticizing the members of the press, because you naturally are very interested in this issue.

But let me tell you, years from now people are going to perhaps be interested in what happened in terms of the efforts of the United States to build a structure of peace in the world. They are perhaps going to be interested in the efforts of this administration to have a kind of prosperity that we haven't had since 1955. That is prosperity without war and without inflation. Because throughout the Kennedy years and throughout the Johnson years whatever prosperity we had was at the cost of either inflation or war or both. I don't say that critically of them. I'm simply saying we've got to do better than that.

Now, our goal is to move forward then. To move forward to build a structure of peace. And when you say, have I . . . do I consider resigning? The answer is no, I shall not resign. I have 3½ years to go . . . or almost 3½ years, and I'm going to use every day of those 3½ years trying to get the people of the United States to recognize that whatever mistakes we have made, that in the long run this administration by making this world safer for their children, and this administration by making their lives better at home, for themselves and their children, deserves high marks rather than the low marks. Now whether I succeed or not we can judge then.

Upholding Oath

Q. Mr. President, as long as

we're on the subject of the American tradition, following up Mr. Rather's question, what was authorized—even if the burglary of Dr. Fielding's office wasn't—what was authorized was a 1970 plan which, by your own description, permitted illegal acts, illegal breaking and entering, mail surveillance and the like. Now, under the Constitution you swore an oath to execute the laws of the United States faithfully. If you were serving in Congress, would you

not be considering impeachment proceedings and discussing impeachment possibility against an elected public official who had violated his oath of office?

A. I would if I had violated the oath of office. I would also, however, refer you to the recent decision of the Supreme Court, or at least an opinion even last year which indicates inherent power in the presidency to protect the national security, in cases like this.

I should also point to you that in the three Kennedy years and the three Johnson years through 1966, when burglarizing of this type did take place, when it was authorized on a very large scale, there was no talk of impeachment. And it was quite well known. I should also point out that when you ladies and gentlemen indicate your great interest in wiretaps, and I understand that, that the height of the wiretaps was when Robert Kennedy was Attorney General in 1963. I don't criticize it, however. He had over 250 in 1963, and of course the average in the Eisenhower administration and the Nixon administration is about 110. But if he'd had 10 more and as a result of wiretaps had been able to discover the Oswald plan, it would have been worth it. So we'll go to another question.

Finest Public Servants

Q. Mr. President, do you still consider Haldeman and Ehrlichman two of the finest public servants you have ever known?

A. I certainly do. I look upon public servants as men who've got to be judged by their entire record, not by simply parts of it. Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman

for 4½ years have served with great distinction, with great dedication, and like everybody in this deplorable Watergate business, at great personal sacrifice and with no personal gain.

We admit the scandalous conduct. Thank God there's been no personal gain involved; that would be going much too far, I suppose. But the point that I make with regard to Mr. Halde- man and Mr. Ehrlichman is that I think, too, that as all the facts come out, that — and when they have an opportunity to have their case heard in court, and not simply to be tried before a committee and tried in the press and tried on television— they will be exonerated.

'Hush Money'

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us your recollection of what you told John Dean on March 21 on the subject of raising funds for the Watergate defendants?

A. Certainly. Mr. Halde- man has testified to that, and his statement is accurate. Basically what Mr. Dean was concerned about on March 21 was not so much the raising the money for the defendants, but the raising of money for the defendants for the purpose of keeping them still—in other words, so-called "hush money."

The one would be legal—in other words, raising a defense fund for any individual, as you know, is perfectly legal and is done all the time. But if you raise funds for the purpose of keeping an individual from talking, that's obstruction of justice. Mr. Dean said also on March 21 that there was an attempt to, as he put it, to blackmail the White House—to blackmail the White House by one of the defendants. Incidentally, that defendant has denied it, but at least this is what Mr. Dean had claimed. And that unless certain amounts of money were paid—I think it was \$120,000 for attorneys' fees and other support—that this particular defendant would make a statement, not with regard to Watergate but with regard to some national security mat- ters in which Mr. Ehrlich-

man had particular responsi- bility.

My reaction, very briefly, was this: I said, "As you look at this," I said, "isn't it quite obvious, first, that if it is going to have any chance to succeed, that these indi- viduals aren't going to sit there in jail for four years; they're going to have clemency. Isn't that correct?" He said, "Yes."

I said, "We can't give clemency." He agreed.

Then I went to another point.

I said, "The second point is that, isn't it also quite ob- vious, as far as this is con- cerned, that while we could raise the money"—and he indicated in answer to my question that it would prob- ably take a million dollars over four years to take care of this defendant and others on this kind of a basis—the problem was, how do you get the money to them? And also, how do you get around the problem of clemency, because they're not going to stay in jail simply because their families are being taken care of.

And so that was why I concluded, as Mr. Halde- man

recalls, perhaps, and did tes- tify very effectively: One, when I said, "John, it's wrong. It won't work. We can't give clemency, and we've got to get this story out, and therefore I direct you, and I direct Halde- man, and I direct Ehrlichman, and I direct Mitchell to get together tomorrow and then meet with me as to how we get this story out." And that's how the meeting on the 22d took place.

Coordinating Defense

Q. Mr. President, earlier in the news conference you said that you gave Mr. Halde- man the right to listen to one tape because you wanted to be sure that "we are correct." I think I'm quoting you correctly. Now you have indicated that you still feel that Mr. Halde- man and Mr. Ehrlichman are two of the finest public servants that you've ever known. You have met with their lawyer at least twice that we know of. Are you and Mr. Halde- man and Mr. Ehrlichman co- ordinating their and your defense; and if so, why?

A. No. No. As far as my defense is concerned, I make it myself. As far as their defense is concerned, their lawyer has demon- strated very well before the committee that he can han- dle it very well without any assistance from me.

Agnew Resignation

Q. Mr. President, to follow up a question on the Agnew situation, you have said in the past that any govern- ment official who was in- dicted would be suspended and if anyone was convicted he would be dismissed.

Should Vice President Agnew be indicted, would you expect him to resign or somehow otherwise stand out temporarily until cleared?

A. Mr. Theis, that's a perfectly natural question and one that any good newsman as you are would ask. But as you know it's one that would be most inappropriate for me to comment upon. The Vice President has not been indicted. Charges have been thrown out by innuendo and otherwise which he has denied to me personally, and which he has denied publicly. And the talk about resignation even now... I'm not questioning your right to ask the question, understand. But for me to talk about it would be totally inappropriate and I make no comment in answer to that question.

Executive Privilege

Q. Mr. President, looking to the future on executive privilege. There are a couple of questions that come to mind and...

A. I thought we got past that.

Q. Well, we have... where is the check on authoritarianism by the executive? The President is to be the sole judge of what the executive branch makes available and suppresses? And will you obey a Supreme Court order if you are asked and directed to produce the tapes or other documents? For the Senate committee or for the special prosecutor? And if this is not enough, is there any limitation upon the President

short of impeachment to compel the production of evidence of a criminal nature?

A. Is there anything else?

Q. No, I would think that that would be enough.

A. No, I was not being facetious. But I realize it's a complicated question. The answer to the first question is that the limitation on the President on almost all fields like this is of course the limitation of public opinion and of course congressional and other pressures that may arise.

As far as executive privilege is concerned, in the Watergate matter and I must say the ITT file and so forth, this administration has, I think, gone further in terms of waiving executive privilege than any administration in my memory. Certainly a lot further than Mr. Truman was willing to go when I was on the other side, as you recall, urging that he waive executive privilege.

Now, with regard to what the Supreme Court will do, or say, the White House press secretary, assistant press secretary Mr. Warren, has responded to that already. I won't go beyond that, and particularly I won't make any statement on that at this time while the matter is still being considered by Judge Sirica.

I understand his decision will come down on Wednesday and then we will make determinations. But as far as the statement that Mr. Warren has made with regard to the President's position of complying with a

definitive order of the Supreme Court is concerned, that statement stands.

Exploit Watergate

Q. Last week in your speech you referred to those who would exploit Watergate to keep you from doing your job. Could you specifically detail who "those" are?

A. I would suggest, where the shoe fits, people should wear it. Ah, I would think that some political figures, some members of the press perhaps, some members of the television perhaps, would exploit. I don't impute, interestingly enough, motives, however, that are improper, because here's what is involved. There are a great number of people in this country that would prefer that I do resign. There are a great number of people in this country that didn't accept the mandate of 1972. After all, I know that most of the members of the press corps were not enthusiastic. And I understand that about either my election in '68 or '72. That's not unusual.

Frankly, if I had always followed what the press predicted or what the polls predicted, I would have never been elected President. But what I am saying is this: People who did not accept the mandate of 1972, who do not want the strong America that I want to build, who do not want the foreign policy leadership that I want to get, who do not want to cut down the size of this government bureaucracy that burdens us so greatly, and to give more of our government back to the people,

people who do not want these things naturally would exploit any issue. If it weren't Watergate, anything else, in order to keep the President from doing his job.

And so I say, I impute no improper motives to them, I think they would prefer that I fail. On the other hand, I'm not going to fail. I'm here to do the job, and I'm going to do the best I can, and I'm sure the fair-minded members of this press corps, and that's most of you, will report when I do well, and I'm sure you'll report when I do badly.

Q. Mr. President, you recently suggested today, that if the late Robert Kennedy had initiated 10 more wiretaps he would have been able to discover the Oswald plan, as you described it, and thereby presumably prevent the assassination of the President.

A. Let me correct you, sir. I want to be sure that the assumption is correct. I said if 10 more wiretaps could have found the conspiracy, if it was a conspiracy, or the individual, then it would have been worth it. As far as I'm concerned, I'm no more of an expert on that assassination than anybody else.

But my point is that wiretaps in the national security area were very high in the Kennedy administration, for very good reasons. Because there were many threats on the President's life. Because, there were national security problems. And that is why

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in that period 1961 to '63, there were wiretaps on news organizations, on newspeople, on civil rights leaders, and on other people.

And I think they were perfectly justified. And I am sure that President Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy would never have authorized them, as I would never authorize them, unless he thought they were in the national interest.

Threats to President

Q. Do you think then, that threats to assassinate the President merit more national security wiretaps particularly?

A. No, as far as I'm con-

cerned, I was only suggesting, that in terms of those times, of those times, to have the Oswald thing happen just seemed so unbelievable. With his record, with his record, with everything that everybody had on him, that fellow could have been in the position where he was, in a position to shoot the President of the United States, seems to me to have been a terrible breakdown in our protective security areas.

I would like to say, however, that as far as protection generally is concerned, I don't like it. And my family doesn't like it. Both of my daughters would prefer to have no Secret Service. I've discussed that with the Secret Service. They say they have too many threats and so they have to have it. My wife doesn't want to have Secret Service. And I would prefer, and I recommended this just three days ago, to cut my detail by one-third, because I noticed there were criticisms of how

much the Secret Service was spending.

Let me say that we always are going to have threats against the President. But I frankly think that one man probably is as good against a threat as a hundred. And that's my view. But my view doesn't happen to be in the majority there, and it doesn't happen to agree with the Congress, so I will still have a great number of the Secret Service around me, more than I want, and more than my family wants.

Staff Investigation

Q. Mr. President, during March and April you received on your staff, on several occasions, information about criminal wrongdoing, and some indication that members of your staff might have been involved. The question sir, is, why didn't you turn this information over immediately to the prosecutors instead of having your own staff continue to make these investigations?

A. Well, for the very obvious reason that in March, for example, the man that was in constant contact with the prosecutors was my counsel, Mr. Dean. Mr. Dean was talking to Mr. Petersen. I assumed that anything he was telling me he was telling the prosecutors.

And in April, after Mr. Dean left the investigation, Mr. Ehrlichman was in charge. I would assume, and incidentally, Mr. Ehrlichman did talk to Mr. Kleindienst, that is why it was done that way.

The President doesn't pick up the phone and call the Attorney General every time something comes up on a matter. He depends on his counsel, or whoever he's given the job to, or has given that assignment to, to do the job. And that is what I expected in this instance.

Cambodia Bombing

Q. Mr. President, in your Cambodian invasion speech of April, 1970, you reported to the American people that the United States had been

strictly observing the neutrality of Cambodia. I'm wondering, in light of what we now know, that there were 15 months of bombing Cambodia previous to your statement, whether you owe an apology to the American people.

A. Certainly not. And certainly not to the Cambodian people. Because, as far as this area is concerned, the area of approximately 10 miles which was bombed during this period, no Cambodians had been in it for years, it was totally occupied by the North Vietnamese Communists.

They were using this area for the purpose of attacking and killing American Marines and soldiers by the thousands. The bombing took place against those North Vietnamese forces in enemy-occupied territory. And as far as the American people are concerned, I think the American people are very thankful that the President ordered what was necessary to save the lives

of their men and shorten this war, which he found when he got here. And which he ended.