

DECEMBER 23, 1971 - 10 a.m.  
TELEPHONE CALL TO SECRETARY MELVIN LAIRD, Department of  
Defense

ML: Yes, John.

JE: Mel, I discovered that we didn't get our interrogation yesterday.

ML: You didn't get the interrogation as I understand it on the questions on homosexuality.

JE: Didn't get any.

ML: Yea, but, John I don't think we should go on the homosexuality thing. We can go on everything else, but I don't think we should go on the homosexuality.

JE: Why not?

ML: Cause I don't think we have any basis to even draw up a series of questions. I had them come up here and I had Fred come up here, and that Lehman party thing I just don't think we can base it on that. We have no other evidence and the interrogators tell me there is none and no...in all the questioning, and of course, we've run so many tests on this yeoman and he's of course...but there's nothing to indicate homosexuality and we have to notify them ahead of the exam as to the topics to be covered.

JE: Well, that's all right. Notify them that you are going to cover that.

ML: Well...then he will not take...if he decides not to take the test and then goes out and tells the press that that's what we're running here, I think we just get in a hell of a lot of...we blow the lid.

JE: All right, let me explain the reason for this, aside from the fact that the President has instructed me to go on this.

ML: Did he instruct you on the homosexuality?

JE: Yes sir, he certainly did. It was his idea. And here's why. Because there is no apparent motive for this fellow turning these papers over to Anderson.

Let me, let me just get at the...there's several problems here, John. When I first came over here, I suggested that we shut off this channel. For a long period of time when I was on the Defense Appropriations Committee and about 8 terms I served there and got quite involved with this thing. And the channel that had been opened all during the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations was a channel that the NSC staff had that they used directly with the Chiefs over here. It gave the Chiefs a position where they could go to the Congress on various things...on things that they shouldn't have known about within the administration. And...could get information to us on the Hill from time to time. I think the President will recall on several times I told him various bits of information and I got that information through that particular channel. So I recommended to Henry that the Joint Chiefs not be addressed separately on anything. That anything must come to me, even decision memorandums, should come to me from the President and that I disseminate those parts that are needed on a need-to-know basis throughout this building. I've never been successful on that because, you know, there's a feeling that it's to their advantage over in the National Security Council to have kind of...be able to play one against the other over here a little bit. It's a disadvantage as far as the President is concerned but there are certain advantages as far as the National Security Council staff is concerned in this whole decision-making process. That isn't the way...and because of my experience in this thing, I felt that should be shut off.

Now, this has happened on several things. There have been leaks, that I'm sure can be...probably can be traced to this. I don't want to take the action on my own to shut off any channel like that, I think it's up to me to call it to the attention and once I call it to the attention of the President, I don't think it's up to me to go beyond that. I think it's up to him to shut it off, not up to me. Quite frankly, I feel that way, John.

Yes, I follow.

You may disagree with me on that, but that's the way I feel about it. Now, getting back to this problem. I am sure that Robinson bootlegged things over here, to this building. Not to me, I never

had access to a lot of this material.

Did you ever see any of it?

ML: Never saw any of it...I never saw any of it, and it was a channel that was devised to get around the Secretary of Defense. And I never saw a single bit of it at any time. From things that are said from time to time I knew that somebody was giving them information, even ahead of the time that I got it in the decision memorandums from the President. I knew that. And I was sure that the President wasn't calling them directly and giving them this sort of information. I knew that. So, I knew that there was this channel and I knew exactly what the channel was. Now, I have no problems with investigating these people to death. I do feel, however, that this will be an embarrassment for the President, for the National Security Council, for this whole system that has been set up and has been used in the Nixon Administration. And I don't want it to break on the basis of this guy refusing to answer questions on homosexuality.

Tell me this, has Moorer come and talked to you about this in the last few days?

He talked to me yesterday.

What did he have on his mind?

Well, he told me that he didn't...he indicated to me that he had not seen the material that was in his file. Now I am just not sure about that.

He had not what?

Seen the material that was in Robinson's file or in the Admiral's file down here. He indicated that to me yesterday. Now I am not sure whether that...I just can't...I'm sure that he's gotten information that I didn't get from time to time because...

JE: But Moorer says that although his liaison people had the information, he didn't ever get it.

Right.

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..Interesting. What does he plan to do?

ML: Well, he wants to get...transfer these people.

Quick.

Quick. But Im not. .

Well, we would rather that you didn't move on that right now.  
Do you know that I've asked for Robinson to come in?

ML: Yes, and that's fine for Robinson to come in, but I just didn't  
want the line of questioning to go on the homosexual thing..

I'll take that up with the President, Mel, I see your point.

ML: If you would just look that over once again and if you could just  
listen to the way you have to prepare the man for...

I know. I know what's involved and I appreciate the hazard that  
you're suggesting and I will take it up with the President this  
morning as soon as he gets back.

ML: Ok. I'd appreciate that.

Can you tell me anything more. I know he'll ask me when I tell  
him that Moorer has been in to talk to you, he'll ask me the sub-  
stance of the conversation. Can you tell me anything more  
about it?

ML: Well, I can't tell you much more about it except that I think he is  
concerned about it. And I didn't want to get into it in too much  
detail. I said yes I know about the investigation and he was up  
here in connection with yesterday's operating orders for aircraft  
in Southeast Asia.

So he brought it up more or less incidentally?

And it came up in an incidental manner and I didn't want to get  
into it in too much detail and I said "Well, ...this is a very bad  
thing."

Did he know that I interviewed his liaison man yesterday?

ML: He knows that. Yes.

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Ok. Well, if that's all, that's fine. I'll talk to the President as soon as he gets down this morning.

But before we put this series of questions on...I think it's important. Ok?

Sure. I'll be back to you.

All right.

Thank you.

Thanks, John.