



NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF

Tape Subject Log (rev. 10/08)

Part of a conversation among President Nixon, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, John N. Irwin, II, John B. Connally, Melvin R. Laird, John N. Mitchell, Winton M. ("Red") Blount, Rogers C. B. Morton, Clifford M. Hardin, James T. Lynn, James D. Hodgson, Elliot L. Richardson, George W. Romney, John A. Volpe, George P. Shultz, George H. W. Bush, John D. Ehrlichman, Clark MacGregor, Dr. Edward E. David, Jr., Raymond K. Price, Jr., Ronald L. Ziegler, Alexander P. Butterfield, Robert J. Brown, Robert J. Dole, Arthur J. Sohmer, Donald E. Johnson, and Malcolm R. Lovell, Jr. in the Cabinet Room between 8:04 am and 9:43 am on April 27, 1971.

Conversation No. 55-3

President: You want to cover this situation with regard to, uh, the, uh, policies next week.

Unknown: Yes, sir.

President: The department [unintelligible].

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

Unknown: Well, it's sort of a, sort of a continuing [unintelligible].

Unknown [P]: We've been visiting one of the residence of the Secretary of Defense this week.

Ehrlichman: No, they have [unintelligible].

[Laughter.]

Ehrlichman: [Unintelligible] on for May, they have, uh, uh, the Attorney General's, uh, place of business on a little later in the week. Uh, this of course refers to the, the rolling

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demonstration that we're gonna have over a period of the next week or ten days. The, uh, uh, the largest problem that we foresee is Monday and Tuesday of next week, where, uh, they threaten to, to accomplish one of two things: either by blocking twenty-one important, uh, bridges and intersections to bring the Government to a stop or else force the Government to overreact. Uh, uh, the, uh, publicity and the handouts and so on are very plain as to what they do intend, and I think it's, uh, plain to each one of you, uh. It involves basically, uh, put-putting seven or eight hundred people in at key intersections and having them lie down and, uh, uh, passively resist arrest and so on. Uh, uh, the, uh, Chief of Police here is a very talen--, uh, talented and, uh, uh, common-sensed individual who, uh, uh, feels that with resources that he has available, uh, he can handle this problem and keep the traffic flowing with a minimum of dislocation. Which is not to say there might not be some dislocation, but, uh, that, uh, uh, uh [unintelligible]. At seven a.m. on Monday morning he's gonna be ready, willing, and able. Uh, rather than to declare martial law or ca-call out the troops to string barbed wire or anything o' that kind, uh, the feeling is that we ought to go along with Chief [Jerry V.] Wilson's --

President: Good.

Ehrlichman: -- uh, estimate of the situation and let him, uh, handle things in the ordinary police way on Monday morning. That doesn't appear to be something that, uh, overtaxes the resources of the Washington police. If it happens, we'll use some other, some other measures, uh, but uh, uh, preparations will be made for that kind of an eventuality, should, should it become necessary, but the feeling is, that, uh, uh, it's, uh, pretty much a consensus around Government with those that are knowledgeable with these kinds of things is that we ought to simply not comment on this. We ought not to speculate that this is gonna be a particular problem. Uh,

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the press is gonna be looking for some sort of angle to play; that the Government is, uh, all upset, it's wringing its hands, that it's putting mattresses in its halls, letting people sleep in, and this kind of thing, and I think that a, a calm, deliberate sort of a, uh, uh, steady course is, is obviously the one to pursue. Uh, uh, taking it just as a police matter of people obstructing the streets, why, obviously the police would be expected to assist in clearing the streets, but beyond that there's no special, no special response.

President: I would only add one thing: the veterans constituted a special problem last week and, uh, we tried to handle that problem in a way that, uh, wou--, [unintelligible] leave an impression of repression and so forth. [Unintelligible] the Bonus Marchers, General [Douglas] MacArthur [unintelligible] was then a colonel [unintelligible]--

Unknown: I think he was a major.

President: A major. So anyway, he went in and cleaned them out and ordered em [unintelligible] punishment. Uh, that was avoided. Uh, Chief Justice, as you know, did instruct the, uh, the Supreme Court did arrest some. We did not arrest some. We got an order to. At the time to haggle around with the lawyers and so forth. [Unintelligible]. They decided to call in a paddy wagon particularly after the Chief Justice [unintelligible]. That was basic. Uh, we can second-guess that thing and say, well, maybe we should've, should've acted harder and tougher, but in view of the fact that the, the veterans as far as they were concerned, except for their obstructions in the Court building, did not engage in [unintelligible] violent or destructive actions, uh, gave us a very difficult problem and particularly

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because they were veterans. And we of course knew from studying their activities and, uh, their attitudes that, uh, they were looking for a confrontation. They wanted arrests and so forth. They got it at the Supreme Court. Uh, now let's, let's understand, however, the attitude, this is, I, I don't want to get into questions here [cough]. John did not intend to convey this, that the attitude here should be, "Come on, you kiddies, uh, you know, don't, uh, tear up the joint and so forth." [sigh] worry about that. You're not dealing, you see, with veterans, and you're not dealing here this week with teenagers and others who joined in the demonstration on, on Saturday. This very large and for the most part peaceful demonstration, except for tearing fifty flags up at the Washington Monument and burning them [unintelligible] these kids [unintelligible]. So, [clears throat] we come down to this point. You're dealing here with tough, hard-core radicals. Now, these tough, hard-core radicals are, are going to try to get a confrontation. They will, of course, try to put it in terms of dialogue and incidentally if, if you [unintelligible] naturally, should, should try to conduct a dialogue and you become [unintelligible], ya know? Do you agree?

Unknown: Yes, Mr. President, about the cool talk.

President: So, no public disturbances may, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, I mean, concern about it -- make no public statements. Nobody can make any public statements at all about it, uh, because they want that --

Unknown: Yes, sir.

President: But it, it's very important in terms of each department that in the case of meetings

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that the law not be violated, that we not have to take a permissive attitude. By that, uh, by a permissive attitude I mean an attitude which allows them to go beyond what, uh, any reasonable person would think, uh, peaceful or so-called the kind of peaceful demonstrations [unintelligible] you allow. Now that's a matter of judgement in each case. Uh, it's a technical violation of the law. Suppose they gang up on the Malls and yell a few obscenities and the rest, they've touched no property. If, on the other hand, they come in and start breaking up the mimeograph machines, then that's a problem. Then they should be arrested -- no ifs, and, but, or maybes. Let's be sure that we don't have any of this [unintelligible]. Now, for example, uh, uh, where I think the line is drawn. That shows you how difficult it is yesterday in the Senate. Uh, you cannot discover this in the *New York Times*, and you will not get the full story in the *Washington Post*. [Unintelligible] here [unintelligible] the wire copies of what happened yesterday, I got it from Russell [B.] Long and a couple of senators. Uh, they, they, everybody knew what was gonna happen: they went to the Senate gallery, which they had a right to do; they began to shout to try to keep the Senate from conducting its business, which they had no right to do. At that point, uh, Senator [Hubert H.] Humphrey's in the chair. Senator [John G.] Tower got up and asked that the gallery be cleared, which is the standard procedure. If there is a disturbance in the gallery, you always clear all the galleries. Senator Humphrey said, "No, only those who are demonstrating or not conducting themselves properly should be removed." Uh, then [unintelligible] began and there were shouters from all four corners of the Senate galleries apparently [unintelligible]. Tower again asked the galleries be cleared. Senator Humphrey again made the same ruling. At that point, uh, he found it necessary to leave the chair for some reason and he asked, uh, Senator [James Lane] Buckley to take the chair.

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[Laughter] Buckley [unintelligible], the presiding officer of the Senate, was [unintelligible]. At this point they began to shout, uh, uh, ob-obscurities and everything [unintelligible] so generally throughout the galleries that Senator [Robert C.] Byrd of West Virginia, the Democratic whip, got up and asked that the galleries be cleared. Senator Buckley ordered the galleries be cleared. Senator Humphrey, uh, then got back into the Senate and, and asked that, that the order be rescinded so that, uh, only those that remained [unintelligible]. Senator Byrd objected, said, "No, the gallery should be cleared." So the ruling was made that the gallery be cleared, and then those [unintelligible] not participating or had not participated and did not intend to participate in continued disruption would be allowed to re-enter after the ruling was made. [Unintelligible]. It was a tough one, tough for Humphrey n' tough for Buckley.

Vice President: Didn't it go to a vote, Mr. President?

President: What?

Vice President: Didn't they appeal the ruling [unintelligible] it went to a vote in the Senate?

President: Probably. But my point is, it's real tough ruling for the whole, uh, it shows you the kind of decision [unintelligible], but that, uh, but the main point is that, that, uh, don't give them the opportunity for confrontation. On the other hand, remember, we are not dealing this week with peaceful demonstrators; we're not dealing this week with veterans; we're dealing this week with activists who have indicated -- and, John, correct me if I'm wrong -- that they not only want a

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confrontation but they want to raise hell if they can get away with it.

Ehrlichman: They might be arrested according to their literature, and they, uh, they counsel their people if they are arrested not to post bail, but to, uh--

President: C-c-clog the jails.

Ehrlichman: -- clog the jails n' move the, move the activity right into the jails.

President: On the other hand, on the other hand, let's don't get, I don't think we should leave the impression that if they go too far, if they go too far and, and really grind, a, a Government building to a halt, that, that our attitude, well, we can't arrest them because that's what --

Unknown: No.

President: -- they want. Now see, that's, that's the dangerous thing here.

Ehrlichman: What I meant to indicate there was Chief Wilson is ready, willing, and able to respond, uh, and that the, uh, level of response will be at the District Police and Park Police level rather than at, uh, at any higher level. At least some [unintelligible] --

President: [Unintelligible], we're not, we're not mobilizing defense forces.

Mitchell: Can I ask a question on that?

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President: What are they?

Mitchell: The National Guard will be in training.

Unknown: [Unintelligible] the National Guard go in with sufficient training.

Mitchell: The, the police haven't reacted to the, uh, destruction of the, uh, benches, the burning of the pieces of benches. There was a picture in the *[Washington?] Star* of a whole line of benches where they had torn the seats out and burned them all.

Unknown: I don't know --

Unknown: It's the kind of thing they ought to be arrested for.

Unknown: N' there's that and there's --

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

Unknown: [Unintelligible] below fifty degrees.

Unknown [Dole]: Then you have to be real careful bout that, you know. They throw bricks through, I've got some bay windows in my house and they throw bricks through em. Uh, about a week ago they went through and of course yesterday they were out there with the hoses and every other damn thing.

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Unknown: I think they really wanna be arrested.

President: That's right.

Unknown: Well, why not arrest em?

Unknown: They're, well, it's up to the Maryland Police to arrest them. I can't arrest them.

Mitchell: Uh, I know they want to be arrested, but, Mr. President, I don't think that's any reason for not arresting them. I think if you destroy these cadres that are, that, uh, commit the criminal actions and we put em in the jails and get em off the streets, it's gonna make, uh, [unintelligible] --

Unknown [Dole]: [Unintelligible] you keep all four networks away from the homes. I can understand why they can cover public buildings and so forth, but this idea that they can set out on my house every time anything goes on -- the four television networks and they have thirty-five to forty newspapermen there -- to let em know that they, uh, they do it every week, and, uh --

President: Networks, uh, the networks [unintelligible] make a, a, uh, fifteen-second mention of the Senate disturbances yesterday, because, uh --

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

President: -- that helps, that helps, uh --

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Unknown [Dole]: But I, I don't think most Americans, uh --

President: [Unintelligible] would not like that, they wouldn't like that.

Unknown [Dole]: -- might create a cold feeling in this [unintelligible] and, uh, I, I do feel that a public building is a little different proposition, but when you ask why the Maryland Police don't do anything about it, that's really up to them. It's up to the Montgomery County Police, not to us, to do that.

Unknown: Mr. President --

President: Go ahead.

Unknown: -- I would like to answer the Vice President's question.

President: Go right ahead.

Mitchell: I would like to answer the Vice President's question this way: when they were burning park benches, there were fifteen thousand people out there and they were out there over [unintelligible] the pavement. If you start arresting them and get that fifteen thousand moving, they're going to be up town here breaking the windows in the banks and the rest of it. That's why they're down there in Potomac Park.

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

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Mitchell: It'd take fifty policemen to cordon off a place there, down there, at one end of a bridge where you could use three of 'em and fifteen on the other side 'til you got 'em all contained.

President: Yeah.

Unknown: I spent a couple o' hours, Mr. President, up on the Hill yesterday and, and saw these people and they're a buncha silly kids. They don't even know that they're doing. [Unintelligible] just lookin' around for, uh, for, for that television camera to catch 'em and then confrontation, and the more we can leave 'em alone -- uh, that's the last thing they want, is to be left alone.

Unknown: Yeah.

Mitchell: Well, let me point out that you've got all the hard-core radicals in the country in town here from the Rennie Davises all the way on down and if they can find any way to tear up this place they're gonna do it.

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

President: I agree. I agree with you both [unintelligible] right now.

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

President: You cannot, because when I met at the [unintelligible] vandalism and I think we have to move because otherwise we will be, we'll just have the burden of saying

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that we had or we're gonna have a generally permissive attitude [unintelligible].

Richardson: In, in, in, in the case of HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare], Mr. President, we've denied [unintelligible].

President: We, we don't have a, uh, majority, Bob --

[Laughter]

President: [Unintelligible].

Unknown: [Unintelligible] part of the problem --

[Laughter]

President: You handled it very well then.

[Laughter]

Unknown: We need a, we need to get, we, we were, if they sit down in the cars or, an', an' just won't move and appear to be intending just to, to, uh, occupy some part of the premises, we thought what we would do is [unintelligible], is to get the police to lug them out and dump them in the sidewalk, uh but if, they take any action that amounts to, to, uh, destruction or any form of violence they would be arrested as well.

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President: That's true, that's the reason why, yeah.

Ehrlichman: It would be very helpful to us, you see, if you would ask one of your administrative assistants to keep us advised, n' if you have any action right at the time let John [W.] Dean[, III] here, uh, the Counsel to the President, know, uh, what's, what's happening in your particular situation.

Unknown: [Unintelligible] do anything to the Treasury [unintelligible].

Unknown: Try to get to know their itinerary.

Unknown: Internal Revenue Service [IRS] [unintelligible].

President: That's the IRS.

[Laughter]

Unknown: I have the, uh, unusual distinction of being a target for the Gay Liberation Front.

[Laughter]

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

Unknown: [Unintelligible] food stamps all [unintelligible].

[Laughter]

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Unknown: [Unintelligible] down there who isn't [unintelligible].

Unknown: Damn right, [unintelligible] taking care of those families [unintelligible] food stamps which, uh, the gays, the veterans [unintelligible].

Unknown: That's right, that's the issue.

Unknown: [Unintelligible] pillow talk.

[Laughter]

Unknown: Mr. President, Mr. President.

President: Do you think nine million, oh, wait a minute --

Unknown: Fifteen thousand of them will be in town Monday [unintelligible].

Unknown: At the same time these other guys --

President: Yeah.

Unknown: Anyway they won't [unintelligible].

Unknown: They're playing it close to [unintelligible], yes, sir.

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President: [Unintelligible] contribute [unintelligible].

Bush: Mr. President, this week in New York, we had a tough one. A policeman defused a bomb at the Amtorg Building, fifty-nine minutes before a sixty-second, a sixty-minute clock had run out.

President: Gee

Bush: And, uh, they've escalated this --

President: Yeah.

Bush: It was un-un-unrelated from this thing here.

President: That the Jewish Defense League thing?

Bush: Yes, sir, and it's getting worse.

Unknown: That's right.

Bush: And [unintelligible] Iraqis and we're having hell -- trying, the Undersecretary and I are --

President: You can see why I want to put the UN [United Nations] on the road.

[Laughter]

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Unknown: It'd be nice --

Unknown: I'd like --

President: Geneva's a very nice place.

Unknown: [Unintelligible].

President: Monrovia, Liberia, very nice place, here's where you should go.

Unknown [Bush?]: You know, I, I asked --

President: I'll pack em.

Unknown [Bush?]: -- I, I talked with a delegate the other night and seventy percent of em
wanted to go --

President: Tel Aviv.

Unknown [Bush?]: -- someplace else.

President: No, no, really, seriously, they, they, I really don't want to belabor this point, but I,
and I know that I raised it already, uh, with, uh, you. Some things, ya know, can't
be done because they think we're trying to get rid of the UN but it isn't that, but
an international conference in America today doesn't get too, too, you know, it

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doesn't mean anything anymore, except for the UN, you know, you think it's big deal, but I mean around the country now, you know, the UN doesn't make the news anymore, but you put an internat--, you put that UN, for example, in London, it's a hell of a big news story. You put it in, I mean, it's like taking the Cabinet around, I mean, boy, we're real big in the morning, [unintelligible] be much here [laughs] and, uh, put the UN there, you put it around, pu--, in the other places. Why it'd be a real big one. Take it, take it to Taiwan, that'd be fine [unintelligible]. Don't try [unintelligible].

[Laughter]

Unknown: The Attorney General, we have been working on legislation [unintelligible], uh, for --

Unknown: -- by the Democrats [unintelligible] --

President: Yeah, yeah, you've got to do it.

Unknown: -- and, uh, the Attorney General is about, I think, also to seek to indictments going in, but, the problem is that, uh, both the, uh, uh, New York, uh, courts and, uh, particularly the New York courts, uh, when the indictment does come along, there's very little sympathy.

President: Well, let me close by saying there's a fine line here. First, first remember the veterans are out of town and second, the group that were there Saturday are now out of town. They were a mangy [unintelligible] group of people. The people in this time, as Fred says, it's true, that they don't know what they're doin', but the

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people that are runnin' it do know what they're doin'. This, this is a highly organized, sophisticated, not this week, but next week they will get reorganized. If we get, we, we, we, it may, it may, uh, but, and so we have to ho--, draw the line and say, well, gee, what they want, uh, I mean, it's like these college presidents who say that what they really want is a confrontation, and so they let the kids take over the universities. State universities have gone to hell where that's happened. We can't go that way, we can't, on the oth--, on, because, because they say we wanna be arrested, we want a confrontation, we will let you come in and disrupt the Government -- that's where you draw the line. It seems to me is that what we do is to play this as skillfully as they do, try to keep em herded away and away from the cameras and try to avoid a confrontation, try to avoid arrests if you can't handle em n' all. But, whenever instances occur which are clearly, uh, de-destructive, or, or, or, or, or, or, or in the minds of people are going to be, uh, violations of law, then they have to be moved on. I think then they have to be, we look on our, otherwise we will be condoning, uh, the same kind of thing that we've said the college presidents shouldn't do and a lot of people shouldn't do. I think that's the problem we've got here. So don't, don't brand it just a little technical violation, a pip-squeak thing, you know, where they go up and spit in your face and the rest and then wipe it off. The other, the other thing is, uh, the other thing, they get down to the point where they're really disrupting the place, I think we've gotta move. John, do you want to say anything on the subject before we [unintelligible]?

Mitchell: Mr. President, I'm sure you're absolutely right, and unless we play it by ear, that, that this hard-core, uh, is bringing into town, from day to day, depending upon the event these other groups and they will try to lead and if they can bring em en

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masse, one of these departments with the potential for, uh, violence that they have and some of the ways that they have to bring it about, we're going to have to use the police force to take care of it, there's no question about that. There's one other thing that we have always, uh, uh, followed, the principle we've always followed, and that is to get the most force [unintelligible] it as quick as you can to put these things out before they churn up these groups and turn wild and, uh, so I would suggest that you not let this things go too far, if there's any potential for violence, that you have the police move right in and, uh, this is the way to turn it off, because it's, uh, kinda like the sheep dog drivin' the sheep. They will just whip these people up and get 'em excited and get 'em movin'. So turn 'em off before they start that. That's the best way to handle it.

President: Thanks.