



TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A TELEPHONE
CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND H.R.
HALDEMAN ON APRIL 15, 1973 FROM 3:27 TO 3:44

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UNIDENTIFIED: Okay, be right there. Okay Buddy.

OPERATOR: Yes, please.

PRESIDENT: Haldeman, please.

OPERATOR: Thank you.

HALDEMAN: Hello.

OPERATOR: Mr. Haldeman, here you are.

PRESIDENT: Hope you're enjoying this lovely day.

HALDEMAN: Uh, I'm afraid not. Got to get out and take a look at it. It really looks beautiful outside.

PRESIDENT: Right, you're right, uh, are you working on your statement?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, and I, uh, talked to Bill...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, he...

HALDEMAN: and haven't been able to reach

PRESIDENT: I, I, I've, I got that message from Bill.

HALDEMAN: Did you talk to him?

PRESIDENT: John Ehrlichman's got it. Apparently he talked to you or to Bill, I don't know which.

HALDEMAN: Rogers. Well, I gave him a, I gave John a very quick rundown, but Bill wanted to think about it...

PRESIDENT: Oh.

HALDEMAN: and uh, and, uh, talk some more and I think he has gone out to play golf or something. He doesn't seem to be around now,...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: so he...

PRESIDENT: His idea being that...

HALDEMAN: will call me later this afternoon. Uh, (clears throat) his view--he he said it really depends on what the Grand Jury does. He,, in other words, he doesn't come on strongly that we should go up there. Uh, he has some real reservations about whether we should. I think you got a real problem in this, in the judicial pro--, proceeding, uh, with possibly prominent people under indictment and all that, and trying to run a Congressional investigation at the same time. And the problem we've had up to now is the feeling that that nothing has been, is being done. This whole feeling is going to change and if something is being done you'll have to start doing everything and, uh, he said if we can work out some safe guards that Congress would live up to, via capitulation and all that, maybe we should consider going because people do want things cleared up. Uh, he said, I, I really, I think the Committee is handling themselves poorly and, uh, I, I think that, uh, if the Grand Jury is gonna come out fairly soon with their indictments, I would strongly vote the other way. I would hang, hang tight for an offer to go up and speak to the

HALDEMAN: Committee in Executive Session,
con't but I wouldn't go up on camera. He said, I
think your court room rules, is, is a
basically a sound proposition...

PRESIDENT: All, alright

HALDEMAN: and that people will see that.

PRESIDENT: Uh, huh. Well maybe I'll, I just told
Ehrlichman the contrary (laughs) but I can
change my mind. Uh, Ehrlichman, uh, had
talked to Moore and Moore says, "Well, hell,
everything is, uh, the shit really hits the
fan on this thing here that there is going
to be so much flying around ain't going to
make any difference" because Moore, Moore
tends to (unintelligible), good God no.

HALDEMAN: I don't think that is necessarily true
either.

PRESIDENT: Moore, I, I think is...

HALDEMAN: If that is true then, why go up on
television?

PRESIDENT: It just makes it worse doesn't it? (Pause)

HALDEMAN: So

PRESIDENT: His point, I guess, think that Moore's point
is at least have the President be
forthcoming. But what does that do? Be
forthcoming and let them kill us, uh...

HALDEMAN: That's right, and, and., Roger's view is if you (clears throat) at least his preliminary view and he wanted to think about it some more, but was that if indictments come down at high levels...

PRESIDENT: Yes

HALDEMAN: then you have been forthcoming. You have said all along that you'd cooperate fully with the Grand Jury. Now if you cooperated with them, which you said you were doing, and nobody said you weren't, and they produce results, that's what the people are after. The people's concern is that nothing--that everybody is just sitting here doing nothing about the Watergate, which is what they think 'cause they haven't seen any result out of the Grand Jury...

PRESIDENT: Well, we're going to have some.

HALDEMAN: and a lot, so uh, and he, he also made the point, he said if, if, I said--well if we may be able to get a. a victory here without having to pay the price, in the sense that if we, we agree to go up and, uh, the Grand Jury comes down with the indictments that they'll probably turn off the hearings for a time anyway. Then there'll be no...

PRESIDENT: Yeah

HALDEMAN: trials and that sort of stuff. And, uh.-so we would have appeared to be forthcoming but we wouldn't maybe have to go. And he said, "Well, I don't agree with that because," uh,...

PRESIDENT: He said?

HALDEMAN: Bill said, "I don't agree with that"

PRESIDENT: Uh., huh.

HALDEMAN: because he said--they will, he said he thought, he thinks it is inevitable that they have to stop the hearings if there are indictments at a high level.

PRESIDENT: Right, right. I agree with that.

HALDEMAN: He says they can't go on with those hearings while...

PRESIDENT: Yeah

HALDEMAN: while those people are hanging trial-pending trial.

PRESIDENT: Yeah

HALDEMAN: Until they have been tried and sentenced, you cannot go ahead with the hearings.

PRESIDENT: Uh, huh.

HALDEMAN: Now, on that basis, you don't know how long that is going to take.

PRESIDENT: Klein--Kleindienst, just talked to him. He said it will take four or five years.
(Laughs)

HALDEMAN: Why in the world does he say that?

PRESIDENT: Well, the trials, the ap--, appeals, he, it has to go to the Supreme Court, shit, you know we're, Mitchell gonna

gonna fight and these other guys, what the hell?

HALDEMAN: On that basis, you got the judicial process running, who, who are these people. And that's what Bill feels strongly on this.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, but what about the other things they want to get into?

HALDEMAN: If they can separate them, that's fine. But they are the ones who have said they are totally tied together.

PRESIDENT: Um, huh. Yeah I one thing too about the other things. They, they're going to be denied some of their principal witnesses. I mean, Mitchell will not testify. He will never go up there, you know,...

HALDEMAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: before the Committee. And, uh, and, and Magruder. He won't go up.

HALDEMAN: Nope. Now you are getting the White House people going up and not the other people.

PRESIDENT: Uh, huh.

HALDEMAN: Where are you on that?

PRESIDENT: Uh, huh.

HALDEMAN: And that's just the question, Bill said, don't make a commitment now...

PRESIDENT: Um, huh.

HALDEMAN: You may have to meet...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: in October or something, you know, when this thing runs itself out.

PRESIDENT: But he did think we could make the Executive Session commitment?

HALDEMAN: Yes,

PRESIDENT: Puts us in a good forthcoming position.

HALDEMAN: That's, that's his point, that that is your, that's a, a very sound offer to, just as your offer to cor--, to, uh, uh, work with the Grand Jury was a sound offer that produced results. You say, we'll, we'll be perfectly willing to work with the Senate, and, and, uh...

PRESIDENT: You indicated to Bill there would be indictments at high level?

HALDEMAN: I said there are going to be indictments and it's gonna, it looks as if they are going to be bringing indictments and, and other (unintelligible) up over at the Committee.

PRESIDENT: What did he say?

HALDEMAN: He didn't say, he didn't react at all, but a little later he said, "Well, if Mitchell is indicted, or something, you know." I didn't say that, but he did.

PRESIDENT: Okay.

HALDEMAN: And, uh,

PRESIDENT: Well, you know, in a way--I mean, I re--reading the Johnson/Witcover piece in the Washington Post, we are so low now we can't go any lower. Huh?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, true.

PRESIDENT: What did you think of that?

HALDEMAN: I don't know.

PRESIDENT: Are they right? Not when they say that there's the over riding concern today for Watergate. There will be (laugh) when it comes out the obstruction and all that bullshit, but...

HALDEMAN: Yeah. They, you can get that out by, I mean, you know, if you get hold of a guy on the way of the Watergate, and say now if, if President Nixon did the Watergate would you still vote for him and, of course, held say No.

PRESIDENT: I wonder if they will use the Gallup Poll tomorrow if the damn thing comes out?

HALDEMAN: Well, let's see, I haven't seen the Gallup release, so I don't know that it went out, but I often don't get it until after it...

PRESIDENT: We did have...

HALDEMAN: comes out.

PRESIDENT: We did have a hard figure on that didn't we?

HALDEMAN: He said it was a hard figure. 60 33.

PRESIDENT: (Sighs) Anyway, we are glad to have that.

HALDEMAN: So, what does Kleindienst think now? Is he...

PRESIDENT: Well, he's for a special prosecutor.

HALDEMAN: So is Bill.

PRESIDENT: Bill is?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Who has he got in mind?

HALDEMAN: He didn't have any in mind and I didn't get into that question with him.

PRESIDENT: I've, I've really come to that conclusion, too, John, uh, Bob, I feel...

HALDEMAN: Oh, really?

PRESIDENT: For a reason. That's, really, this is not to prosecute the case.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: A special prosecutor, to look at the indictments to be sure that the indictments run to everybody that they need to run to...

HALDEMAN: I-see

PRESIDENT: so that it isn't just the President's men (unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: A review of the, in other words, he is above Silbert rather than replacing Silbert?

PRESIDENT: Oh no, no. Silbert runs the case and that's all. But he is just in there for the purpose of examining all this to see that the indictments cover everybody.

HALDEMAN: Uh, huh. Well that does protect you a lot, because if they don't, if they don't, indict some of us then you got, you got a cover up problem.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: If you, if you have that guy then...

PRESIDENT: then he

HALDEMAN: you have a basis...

PRESIDENT: then he goes out and says, "I have examined all of this, and now let's stop all this crap. These men are not guilty and these others, are now, are not indictable and these are."

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: We are thinking about that. We haven't decided it yet. But I, I lean toward it now or, in order to just--we've got to-get into the proper position there.

HALDEMAN: Well, that would make, make sense, you know, rather than, uh, having, uh, Sneed take over.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, because he's compromised too, that, I can, I can do things for him in the future, see?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I can for anybody, but...

HALDEMAN: Yeah, but he is your appointee which is a little different. (Pause) Although any Special Prosecutor is your appointee.

PRESIDENT: Yeah. It is a little different if he is outside the--Get this Wright from Texas, that's the guy I sort of lean to, uh, I mean the Dean of the Texas Law School.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, um huh, well, I don't know. There, there, there did, did does (unintelligible) have any reading on timing on indictments?

PRESIDENT: No, so...

HALDEMAN: Because that is...

PRESIDENT: He thinks a lot of the damn stuff may leak though with Magruder running around, and...

HALDEMAN: Yeah

PRESIDENT: Apparently Strachan told an interesting thing to Ehr-, Ehrlichman which, on Magruder, which makes, makes the point that I'm, I'm, you know that, two weeks ago Magruder talked to Strachan, and

tried to get Strachan to concoct with him the story that he, Strachan, did walk across the street with Magruder and tell him that he, Magruder, to go forward with the operation.

HALDEMAN: Which Strachan claims isn't true apparently.

PRESIDENT: No. My point is, my point is, though, that, you don't see, the the, the devastating thing this is to Magruder, to his credibility?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. Magruder...

PRESIDENT: And I said to John, "Why the hell is he trying to do this?" Because Magruder's defense is that he's just doing it because it's pressure from higher up. See?

HALDEMAN: Yep.

PRESIDENT: You see the point?

HALDEMAN: Yep.

PRESIDENT: And Magruder--so I'm not so sure that a hell of a lot of Magruder's stuff, even on Mitchell, may be s-open to serious question. Serious question.

HALDEMAN: Okay. But, but, but, yeah, on some things I*think that is true.

PRESIDENT: Some things, I think Mitchell is still in it. But, I...

HALDEMAN: But I don't see how you can, if, if they...

PRESIDENT: But I mean, for example, anything Magruder says about you, for example, if he does, uh, you know what I mean. Uh, I, I, I think, Bob, your analysis of Magruder once, that he is a guy that doesn't know the truth., is really true.

HALDEMAN: I really believe that, I...

PRESIDENT: And I think he's, he's, now he's lied so much is he going to lie again, uh, he, uh, and work with his attorneys to get himself separated from all this thing, and so forth. I-think Strachan will be m--, will be a God damned believable witness when he goes down there. I really feel he will be.

HALDEMAN: He will if he stays to the truth.

PRESIDENT: If he just tells the truth.

HALDEMAN: Doesn't try to tangle those things up at all.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: Hmm, yep that's (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: But you see Strachan was trying telling Ma--, Magruder, Strachan, I mean, Str--, Magruder was telling Strachan, "Look this should be the story that I would like to tell."

HALDEMAN: Yeah, it is kind of ridiculous. Why would Strachan agree to that?

PRESIDENT: Well, even though...

HALDEMAN: Strachan...

PRESIDENT: No, no, no, he, he would then implicate Strachan, but at a very, he that, he's at the same level, too, see, so it won't hurt him.

HALDEMAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: The point of that would be simply that Strachan, uh, and, and, and he said Magruder told him about his family and his concerns and all that, you know...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Made a great plea about how his personal problems were so serious...

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: and he said, "Please, now, let's go along on this story."

HALDEMAN: Yeah

PRESIDENT: So, uh, that's interesting.

HALDEMAN: Well, you see Magruder was bouncing around in, in desperation, telling all different kinds of stories to different people.

PRESIDENT: That's right. Remember you told me that...

HALDEMAN: Trying to tie...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: Something together and, and I, I think what happened is he ran that string out and finally just gave up, realized that wouldn't work and decided to tell the truth, but in the process he doesn't really know what the truth is. He has made up so many different stories, and I can understand that.

PRESIDENT: Right

HALDEMAN: It's hard for me to remember that, what's true, having just heard all of these other people's stories, it is hard to sort stuff out and, if you start lying yourself.

PRESIDENT: Bill may have a point there. That if you get a, you know I've, I've sort of had this, and I don't think Ehrlichman and apparently Moore particularly didn't agree with it, but, uh, but, uh, I said look, if they've got a hell of a big fish, that is going to take a lot of the fire out of this damn thing on the cover up and all that sort of crap. Uh, good God, if they get their, the President's law partner and Attorney General, uh, you know.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: I don't know, do you agree or not? Am I--?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. That's what I felt that people are, people want something to be done to explain what to them is now a phony looking thing.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: This will explain it.

PRESIDENT: It will explain that they did it, and, of course, the cover up comes in and they did that too.

HALDEMAN: Yep, and it all makes sense, it, it's logical, believable, because it's true.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: And, and there it is and, and I, I can't, it seems to me that there is at least the strong possibility, if not probability or certainty, that the public reaction is going to be, well, thank God that's settled; now let's get away from it. Rather than the reaction of, "Oh ho, ho, here is something pretty bad; let's, let's spend...

PRESIDENT: Yeah

HALDEMAN: a lot more time looking into it."

PRESIDENT: Yeah. That's right. Well

HALDEMAN: Well, I think people want solutions; they don't want ongoing problems.

PRESIDENT: You know it's some of the so-called people polling, and, people don't they say that they, that Watergate, didn't you say that Gallup.sai-, uh, well, are that it, it doesn't, it, it, it's a concern, it worries them, and so forth-considered it a caper, and they want the God damned thing explained.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Um, huh.

HALDEMAN: They want it explained and they want, they want to get off of it. To--, there isn't...

PRESIDENT: Kleindienst also comes in with the idea that I should, he thinks, sometime I've got to go out and make a Checker's Speech at 9:00 o'clock at night, some--, I said,...

HALDEMAN: Oh, Jesus.

PRESIDENT: "Now, Dick, I'm not going to do that."

HALDEMAN: Um, huh. I sure do.

PRESIDENT: I said, "I'm not going to, I'm not going to. I am not going to elevate it that way. If its going to be elevated, if it, let the press elevate it. I'm gonna say it before, the press. I'll go out in the press room and, you know."

HALDEMAN: Yeah. I, I would, unless there is, I think the, that, there is nothing now that indicates doing that.

PRESIDENT: But, but when the shit hits the fan, I mean, I've sh--, I'm, I'm going to have to say it's correct but that shows that our judi--, judicial system is uh, we, uh, we got to be, you know. The Special Prosecutor thing helps in another way that, just gets, gets-one person between me and, uh, the uh, whole thing. You see, the Dean report now has been totally discredited and, um, you see.

HALDEMAN: Yep.

PRESIDENT: (Laughs)

HALDEMAN: That's right, and that, I, I think, is a darn good reason for it, especially if it can be done. I, I hadn't thought about it, or understood it at the level you're now talking about, and that would seem to me exactly what you are after.

PRESIDENT: Not somebody to prosecute Mitchell. I won't have that. That's...

HALDEMAN: That...

PRESIDENT: not be done.

HALDEMAN: That's, that's the other problem. What do you say when they indict...

PRESIDENT: Well, I, well

HALDEMAN: Mitchell, and they don't, and Mitchell doesn't plead guilty? You obviously can't say, I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT: Oh well, we will just, uh, we'll just say that, they, say, I will not comment on the case. I'm, I'm, well that's, we'll have the men work up a statement. (Laughs)

HALDEMAN: Yeah, I won't comment and I have full confidence...

PRESIDENT: Yeah

HALDEMAN: That, that, in the...

PRESIDENT: Yes.

HALDEMAN: American judicial process.

PRESIDENT: In the process and I...

HALDEMAN: It will bring the...

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: Guilty parties...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: to account and...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: clear the innocent parties.

PRESIDENT: He has pled innocent and I think he should have every opportunity to that case. I'm, I don't know whether I,...

HALDEMAN: You could...

PRESIDENT: I don't know whether I can say I am confident in his innocence...

HALDEMAN: No, that's what I was just...

PRESIDENT: Cause they'll ask that key question.

HALDEMAN: going to say, you just, you cannot...

PRESIDENT: No, it isn't, it is not, it is not proper for me to comment on that because there has been an indictment. It is not proper for me to comment, except that...

HALDEMAN: Then you just...

PRESIDENT: He is a fine man, he is entitled to it and I think we should not judge this case until it has been heard in the judicial process.

HALDEMAN: You don't want to get into the position that Hiss's character witnesses got in.

PRESIDENT: That's right. I can't do it. I know.

HALDEMAN: You can, you can, what you can do is express your faith in the system.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

HALDEMAN: In fact, you know there is a lot to be gained from this...

PRESIDENT: Yeah

HALDEMAN: if the God damned system comes out right.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: In...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: In restoring people's faith in the system, rather than in the jackass...

PRESIDENT: Committee...

HALDEMAN: uh, kangaroo court.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, well, okay. Uh, incidentally, I wondered if you would talk to, uh to John Ehrlichman, uh, uh, I'll, I will get him but when you talk to him...

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HALDEMAN: I will be talking to him soon.

PRESIDENT: Uh, be sure to tell him that I think, we ought to, that Bill's, uh, the way I hear Bill's thing spelled out, that I think it makes a hell of a lot of sense. Okay?

HALDEMAN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: Alright.

HALDEMAN: Alright.

(REEL ENDS)