

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF**Tape Subject Log***(rev. 10/06)*

Part of a conversation among President Nixon, John N. Mitchell, and John D. Ehrlichman in the Oval Office between 11:03 am and 11:16 am on April 20, 1971.

Conversation No. 484-2

President: Now, what about the Vietnam veterans? What are they up to?

Ehrlichman: Four o'clock today, under the, under the, uh, court order, uh, we have the right to go in and bust 'em out of there.

President: What're they doin'?

Ehrlichman: [Unintelligible].

President: Sit down.

Ehrlichman: Now --

President: Oh, [unintelligible].

Ehrlichman: -- I'm --

President: [Unintelligible]

Ehrlichman: I'm, I'm concerned this way.

President: What way?

Ehrlichman: We're coming on this Saturday --

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President: Oh.

Ehrlichman: -- and, uh, I would prefer --

President: Leave 'em there.

Ehrlichman: -- to slide by.

President: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Mitchell: Let me, let me point out why this is goin= on, Mr. President.

President: Okay.

Mitchell: Rennie Davis and terrorist groups are asking for permits to go into Rock Creek Park --

President: Yeah.

Mitchell: -- and this, with any numbers down there and with their pot and the rest of it, it'd be a hell of a problem.

President: Yeah.

Mitchell: And of course they're, whether it's the Mall or Rock Creek Park or whatever it is, it's the same situation, and the only legal approach we had to it was this particular proceeding in order to get this order. Now, there aren't so many veterans down there that it's going to make a hell of a lot of difference, and, uh --.

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President: This is their last day, isn't it?

Mitchell: No --

President: [Unintelligible].

Mitchell: -- no, they're staying through Saturday.

President: Oh, they're gonna stay on? Well, leave 'em there.

Mitchell: Well, uh, let, we, we can't get a court order and then ignore it --

President: Well --.

Mitchell: -- so we=re gonna have to fudge it some way by havin= the police go in and invite 'em out and so forth without, uh, rousting 'em out or tearin' 'em out. Now, this is a matter of time and I --.

President: John, ignore it as much as you can [unintelligible].

Mitchell: Well --.

President: You know, of course --.

Mitchell: Course, we will, but as I said, it's not with the veterans, it's this terrorist group that's comin' in.

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- President: Let 'em go, let 'em tear up Rock Creek Park and throw a few rocks into Georgetown.
- Mitchell: Well, it'll be a little worse than that.
- Ehrlichman: Uh, John, do ya know what's happening? [Unintelligible] comin' on TV, and McGovern's getting up and saying, "I'm proud of you. You, you're the finest body. I'm, wonderful to be associated with you." Then they cut to these guys, and they're shaggy, and they're scratching themselves, and they got girls runnin' around in there, and it's, it's, I mean, they're runnin' themselves --.
- President: They get that on TV? [Unintelligible].
- Ehrlichman: Oh, yes, sir.
- President: How=d they look on TV?
- Ehrlichman: Terrible. Unclean.
- Mitchell: [Unintelligible] awful. In addition to that, the story --.
- President: Obviously. Uh, is the story finally getting out? I've understood that a lot of 'em are not veterans.
- Mitchell: Yes, this is the story --.
- Ehrlichman: They were coming out. There was a thing that they, Star did a story last night about wine, women and song and about, ya know, all this stuff. Uh, I, I really think --.

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President: John, [unintelligible] let me ask you for once, don't call about the court order to the police. Just, just find a way to, uh, have, have, have the police around or something, but for Christ's sakes, leave 'em there. Let, let, let them [unintelligible] you. Can you do that?

Mitchell: Well, we, Mr. President, if we do, it's just going to compound our problem with this terrorist --.

President: Compound?

Ehrlichman: Could you --

President: [Unintelligible] compound?

Ehrlichman: -- could you rationalize and jus' say, "Well, this is so near the end of their three days --

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: -- or four days --

President: Yeah.

Ehrlichman: -- that, uh, take, but of course say from time to time for us, 'n' we thought --

President: [Unintelligible] planned --?

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Ehrlichman: -- some damn thing and, and, uh, start by, say this doesn't constitute precedent. Uh, uh, in other words we take, uh, the, the Supreme Court will go ahead, and, and, uh, hear the issue out and, uh, become --.

President: One thing, one thing: no one of them is to be seized physically. Don't let anybody get a picture of everybody being picked up bodily, of anything being moved bodily. If they're invited out, it's fine. I think if you could go in and say, "Gentlemen, here's a court order," and serve it on 'em and if they don't follow it, then you've got to consider what you'll do. Uh, can you do it that way?

Mitchell: Well, we can do it any way you say.

President: That's what I [unintelligible].

Mitchell: [unintelligible] compound the problems that are ongoing, but, uh --.

President: All right, I, I think in this instance, I just, the worst thing that could happen to us now is to pick up some poor guy --.

Ehrlichman: We [unintelligible] what are now pretty cracked --.

President: Horrible people, [unintelligible].

Mitchell: Uh, [unintelligible] I saw Kleindienst last night. Ramsey Clark is their lawyer --

President: Yeah.

Mitchell: -- and I said, "You get Ramsey Clark to go down there and tell 'em to get the hell

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out," and he said, "That's his [unintelligible] --

President: Yeah.

Mitchell: -- [unintelligible]."

President: Yeah.

Mitchell: Ramsey Clark --.

Ehrlichman: He said he would stay the night, he said he'd stay the night, and we'll see about it tomorrow.