

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY STAFF
FOR THE
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
OF A RECORDING OF A MEETING BETWEEN
THE PRESIDENT AND JOHN DEAN
IN THE PRESIDENT'S EOB OFFICE
ON
APRIL 16, 1973 FROM 4:07 TO 4:35 P.M.

July 3, 1974

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OFFICE ON APRIL 16, 1973 FROM 4:07 TO 4:35 P.M.*

PRESIDENT: Hi, John.

DEAN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: Well, did you have a busy day?

DEAN: Yeah, I've been, uh, spent most of the day
on trying to put together a statement -I
think that you could come out. Apparently
some other people have done the working

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: [Unintelligible] I have been working with
them. Apparently we're all kind of driving
at the same point. Uh,

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: I was working on a draft when you called.

PRESIDENT: Good. I've got to see Rogers in two or
three minutes, so, uh [unintelligible].
Thought we'd have it ready for
[unintelligible] for Christ's sakes when I
haven't heard.

*The quotation marks used in this transcript
are for convenience and do not indicate
verbatim quotation by the speaker.

DEAN: Uh, I, I think I was -calling Dick Moore in on it, 'cause Dick has been working

PRESIDENT: Good.

DEAN: on some of these others

PRESIDENT: Good.

DEAN: and, uh

PRESIDENT: What would be best, rather than give it in a few pieces though, why don't you, uh

DEAN: Put one together.

PRESIDENT: All right.

DEAN: It's got a strong thrust. It puts you way out front.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible). You get, finally get the lead statement out of it.

DEAN: Well, this is, this is the, there's a tough question in here that I'd really like to drive it home,

PRESIDENT: Yeah sure.

DEAN: is the degree of biting the bullet right at this hour. Now there's one paragraph

PRESIDENT: There are the questions of timing.

DEAN: Questions of timing, but there's just also the question of -I have one paragraph in here where it says what you're doing as a result of what's come to your attention

and some of it goes to the Petersen thing
and, and the fact--

PRESIDENT: Uh huh. Uh huh.

DEAN: One of the points is that you've advised all
members of the White House Staff who'll be
called before the Grand Jury that, effective
immediately, they'll be on administrative
leave until such time as the Grand Jury
completes its work. Now here's the, uh,

PRESIDENT: Um huh.

DEAN: tough paragraph, if you go this far: "In
this connection, I have not even spared in
this decision my closest staff advisors and
included in this action are H. R. Haldeman,
Assistant to the President, John Ehrlichman,
Assistant to the President for Domestic
Affairs, and John Dean, Counsel to the
President."

PRESIDENT: Um huh.

DEAN: Now, you can do that or you can leave that
out and let them guess who is on
administrative leave.

PRESIDENT: Anybody called before the Grand Jury.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible)

DEAN: [Unintelligible] that no man--

PRESIDENT: bite the, the bullet on, uh, Dean, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman. So then -now the other thing -the Garment line. Have you talked to Len?

DEAN: No, I haven't.

PRESIDENT: Well, I'd like you to talk with him.

DEAN: All right.

PRESIDENT: His line, he says that particularly Ehrlichman.

DEAN: I have a, I have a

PRESIDENT: Say he should just resign, right now. But the trouble with that is that I just don't think Petersen -Here's -Petersen says, incidentally, on your letter, he thinks it's probably better, just better to get the letter, to get a letter in hand, to get the, to get where you can sit down, uh, and I said, "Well, uh, what, what do you think about it?" I, I -He said, "There's still negotiating with your attorneys."

DEAN: Um huh.

PRESIDENT: And I said, well, I don't want to do anything to [unintelligible] negotiation or jeopardize the rights [unintelligible] defendant. He feels that the, that [unintelligible] wasn't clear, but he is not recommending it.

DEAN: Um huh.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]. He says, stand clear. However, of the probable prosecution, that it would not be harmful to an individual, you know, if, if we had the resignations in hand, so at least, you know [unintelligible] I put them on leave, for [unintelligible].

DEAN: Um huh.

PRESIDENT: Well there you have -- Well you have--Let me s--, let me

DEAN: Well,

PRESIDENT: see what you had in mind.

DEAN: I have,

PRESIDENT: Let's just talk about it.

DEAN: I have a letter, uh

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] so bad [unintelligible] a letter.

DEAN: Uh, to -what I thought, I thought was fair.

DEAN: Fair to everybody.

PRESIDENT: This is for getting [unintelligible]?

DEAN: Amy of the critics, yeah, I, I, I wrote, uh, uh, "Dear Mr. President: You informed me that Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman have verbally tendered their request to give them immediate and indefinite leave of absence from the staff. So I declare I wish also to confirm my similar request that I be given such a leave of absence from the staff." This doesn't raise anything.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] nothing.

DEAN: Well, uh, no I, I think that, uh--

PRESIDENT: I'm just [unintelligible]

DEAN: I think there is the problem--

PRESIDENT: You don't want to go if they stay.

DEAN: There is a problem for you of the scapegoat the--, theory.

PRESIDENT: Making use of it?

DEAN: That's right. That's right.

PRESIDENT: Like Magruder's been a scapegoat for Mitchell.

DEAN: That's right. Uh, you know, everybody who is appearing before the Grand Jury. Who This does not impute guilt to anybody. Uh

PRESIDENT: Put it this way, I think rather than Leonard's [unintelligible]

DEAN: [Clears throat]

PRESIDENT: And the truth of the matter, uh [unintelligible] trouble before [unintelligible]). Yes, I guess that, I can say that, that, that I, that you are -"You" is not a polite word. You've [unintelligible] responsibility. We orally have, we orally have said that

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: in this case, and that, uh --

DEAN: The only man you're dealing with is Petersen. The only role I have is to help fill in any information I can

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: to deal with the, the public relations of the problem, so that, you know, you know what

PRESIDENT: But you could say, you; could say, definitely, John you could say, "The President talked to me about it. He said [unintelligible] till it cleared up.''

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: And, uh [unintelligible] I don't know that the [unintelligible] will end. And[unintelligible] Haldeman.

DEAN: [Unintelligible] unnecessary.

PRESIDENT: And that goes out ahead of, frankly the Magruder-Mitchell head-chop business.

DEAN: That's right; what's the tiling on that? Do you know?

PRESIDENT: Yeah, we haven't made a deal with--we haven't made--any a deal with Magruder, uh, or Magruder's lawyers yet. Magruder is bearing in tight on the Ervin Committee and on Sirica. [Unintelligible] Haig. I mean, I, and I've asked you

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: from time to time your judgments, and I may ask Ehrlichman about this or that. But I meant -I, I don't want him to, I don't want him to talk to anybody else, except, you know,

except when preparing this sort of thing.

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: But I mean, uh, other, sort of, people that

DEAN: "I'm not doing any investigative work--"

PRESIDENT: Well, that's what I -people

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: should not come in to tell you that
[unintelligible] go before the Grand Jury,
for Christ's sakes, or the Attorney General.

DEAN: And I've turned that off, essentially three
weeks ago. [Unintelligible]

PRESIDENT: Good. [Unintelligible] three weeks, anyway,
have you?

DEAN: No sir.

PRESIDENT: Have them realize: March twenty-first.
We've got to go check back and see
[unintelligible]

DEAN: [Unintelligible/**REMOVED**] assess the overall
problem for the White House.
[Unintelligible] technical problems.

PRESIDENT: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. He thinks that, u
[unintelligible]. What kind of a,problem
[unintelligible] and Haldeman have.

DEAN: I think the thought of having -being the
first who testifies is very painful for me.

PRESIDENT: Just tell the truth.

DEAN: That's right. That's what I'm going to do.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: Amen.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible) when I say I'm thinking.
They don't think it's funny.
[Unintelligible/**REMOVED**]. What I really
need then, is to say -One thing that
Petersen did raise with me that
[unintelligible] bit [unintelligible] with
regard to, uh, uh, Ehr--, Haldeman push?
What I said, now, was "Hal--, Did Haldeman
have prior knowledge? Did he know, did
Ehrlichman know, did Dean know?" And you
said, "No." Beforehand.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Right. And he suggests that I say nothing.
He told me this, he says: "If Dean is
testifying" -"No, he's

not testifying to his conversations," he said that "He came over to Haldeman after that brief meeting and told him about the plan, which is the whole [unintelligible]". (Unintelligible) says, "You're right." So, his point being that actually Haldeman, then, did know.

DEAN: No, I, I, I disagree with that interpretation. But,

PRESIDENT: You see,

DEAN: I didn't--

PRESIDENT: my -tell you what, I didn't know, but I, I--

DEAN: My ingression was--

PRESIDENT: If that was the case you see, John, then, uh, I, uh, I would have to s--, then I would have to, uh -he has told me something that's different from what you've told me.

DEAN: No. I, I've always reported it exactly that way, be cause Bob has told me he didn't know. Now, I know I didn't know, because I feel that--

PRESIDENT: What about this, this conversation? [Unintelligible]. He said, "I have done something about it."

DEAN: I,

PRESIDENT: Bob's [unintelligible] Bdb's responsibility to talk to him.

DEAN: I think what happened, I think what happened, Mr. President, is that everyone assumed that John Mitchell would never approve anything like this. I just assumed it. I told him I was not going to have any further dealings with Liddy or anybody over there on this and I didn't.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DEAN: And, I didn't have the foggiest notion what they were doing.

PRESIDENT: That's what you had told me, you know. We went, uh, through it over and over.

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: I, I, I didn't know. I didn't know, of course.

DEAN: But I don't think -Bob tells me he did not have knowledge. Now, the question is -the other thing is I cannot even describe, I couldn't describe twenty minutes after the meeting, uh, what Liddy was presenting. It was the most spectacular sales pitch you've ever seen, in codes and charts, and right out of James Bond.

PRESIDENT: Operation Gemstone.

DEAN: Well, that's what I'm told, now later, after the fact, they called it -I don't remember. I, I told Bob, I said, "They're talking about bugging; they're talking about kidnapping, and they're talking about, uh, mugging squads -take people down from San Diego south of the border."

PRESIDENT: Who did you told to, uh -You told Bob this?

DEAN: Yes, I did.

PRESIDENT: And he said?

DEAN: He said, "Absolutely no".

PRESIDENT: No.

DEAN: No.

PRESIDENT: So you will so testify, then.

DEAN: That's right. Absolutely.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: That's correct. But I don't know, and I assume that, uh -Bob didn't -never told me to the contrary that nothing happened from the time of that meeting where he

told me to, "Don't do anything about it and just stay away from it, don't talk to them." And Liddy agreed not to. I said to Liddy, "The last thing is that I'm never going to talk to you about this again, Gordon." What I thought was, that inaction would result in their, in their [unintelligible]

PRESIDENT: Inaction from you.

DEAN: Inaction from me. Without my hands at that stage

PRESIDENT: Yeah, but then you, then when it happened --

DEAN: I don't know

PRESIDENT: You don't even know the Mitchell thing, do you?

DEAN: Well, I, I don't have direct know--

PRESIDENT: Magruder says,

DEAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: he says that, uh [unintelligible] I, I feel that your statement is consistent with what you told me earlier.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: I wish you would tell, uh [unintelligible]. I don't really

DEAN: [Unintelligible] come down strong on --

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible) White House and Haldeman
[unintelligible]. You admit that he said, he
said, "Absolutely not," and he agreed.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: That's what, uh (unintelligible]

DEAN: And Bob and I have gone over that after the
fact, and he recalls my coming into that
office

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Uh huh.

DEAN: and telling him

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: that, about this crazy scheme that's being
cooked up.

PRESIDENT: You want to go over and get, uh, get
together, uh--

DEAN: I'll work on this statement

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: and then we'll have something.

PRESIDENT: Uh huh.

DEAN: Too much to, to put people on administrative

leave that are going to go before the Grand Jury.

PRESIDENT: Bill Rogers. They're gonna have him over there [unintelligible]

DEAN: And so I think that

PRESIDENT: Everybody's in the middle of this, John.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: None of us can really, none of us, I don't think, uh [unintelligible]

DEAN: All I'm trying to think is how to get you out in front.

PRESIDENT: That's right. The whole point. I don't know how. It's just, uh, hard to think of it. I tried to get to talk, uh, with [unintelligible] negotiate for Magruder.

DEAN: Can't [unintelligible] -Yes, I said, "No abuse."

PRESIDENT: Right.

DEAN: [Unintelligible]

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] Magruder [unintelligible]

DEAN: They're taking him into court to do this.

PRESIDENT: Huh?

DEAN: They're going to take Magru--

PRESIDENT: I know.

DEAN: --der into court to do this.
[Unintelligible]

RESIDENT: Lou Lavelle [Phonetic] went.

DEAN: I know.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: I don't think we're going to have many leaks
out of the Grand Jury or, or the
[unintelligible] court. Local court et
cetera.

PRESIDENT: Uh, buy uh, what do you think John
[unintelligible] operating too short -by a
day.

DEAN: What about Hunt, too.

PRESIDENT: You, Haldeman and Ehrlichman. Magruder
knows. I'd like to follow that.
[Unintelligible]

DEAN: What -How can he respond to that? I don't
understand that.

PRESIDENT: Uh huh.

DEAN: [Unintelligible] his testimony before the
Grand Jury.

PRESIDENT: This testimony makes a statement
[unintelligible]

DEAN: I can't in public statement without naming any individuals. [Unintelligible] the rights of that individual. That's why I don't think that I, I can't foresee what he's going to say. [Unintelligible] naming any, any individual.

PRESIDENT: You see, I think my own (unintelligible) I requested that the U.S. Attorney call before the Grand Jury.

DEAN: [Unintelligible] all, all your staff.

PRESIDENT: I am to cooperate.

DEAN: Um huh.

PRESIDENT: How about trying that for a little [unintelligible] John? [Unintelligible] if the White House staff gets called before the Grand Jury and questioned.

DEAN: The prosecution will [unintelligible] needed somebody to wash or, or the like. They may or may not want to hear, and by the way, I would, I would bounce that one off Henry, uh--

PRESIDENT: Yeah, Ehrlichman and Haldeman and Magruder.

DEAN: It is, it has been? Or--

PKESIDENT: We can always find reasons.

DEAN: And Hunt's.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] oh, my God, we've got to leave (unintelligible) Ehrlichman and Haldeman predict, thank God [unintelligible] world. They were on top; they're shot down.

DEAN: That's right. [Unintelligible]. The other thing that always worried um is not getting shot down, but not giving out enough, and starting a, a chain going that we didn't want, because we didn't give enough. Uh, would, uh -[coughs][Unintelligible] unfortunately, the source of the problem, and it's just, it's mind boggling but you think about it, uh--

PRESIDENT: And--

DEAN: He didn't care

PRESIDENT: All across [unintelligible]

DEAN: That's right Lord knows. Lord knows [unintelligible]

PRESIDENT: And after he didn't turn it off--

DEAN: And then we bailed him out, and that's why we have a problem.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] and then you said the whole White House at least, uh, up to you, and Ehrlichman, Haldeman after regretfully dealing with the fact. We've just got to keep the thing from going upstairs, to Mitchell, I mean, your conversation with Magruder

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: The fact that, uh, you're supposed to support him--everybody--

DEAN: Uh huh.

PRESIDENT: and therefore Mitchell and [unintelligible]

DEAN: Oh, Mitchell, Mitchell was making heavy comments about, you know, if Hunt and Liddy blow, the White House will have a bigger problem than he will, sort of things.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: Whatever they had done over here would be quite embarrassing during the election, also.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: And I suppose there's some truth in that. No hard facts. Just [unintelligible] Ellsberg's office, and things like that.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] that wouldn't have been very good.

DEAN: You know, uh, you know, poor Bud Krogh, uh, is just miserable, knowing what he knows.

PRESIDENT: Meaning Ellsberg?

DEAN: Yeah, he's --

PRESIDENT: Yeah, well [unintelligible]

DEAN: Hopefully not. There's no reason it should be. The only evidence that they have which they must That's one of the reasons I have argued against a special prosecutor. The special prosecutor is going to run across evidence that's screwy. [Unintelligible] that picture, that picture in front of the doctor's office. [Unintelligible] can't get into that.

PRESIDENT: This is not their ca-that they're--

DEAN: That's not their case. It just got forced on them.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

DEAN: When I was first, you know, first talking, uh, with regard to [unintelligible]

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: they wanted to just, just, just the original time run these guys through the Grand Jury, with immunity, and see what came out.

PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]
DEAN: Uh, let us fight our battle with the Senate.
PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible]
DEAN: Absolutely.
PRESIDENT: We've been through this particular
[unintelligible]
DEAN: They pulled it out inch by inch, uh, and
it'll just, uh, it'll bring you down with it
in this [unintelligible] committee.
PRESIDENT: Well, it hurts, as you say.
DEAN: [Unintelligible]
PRESIDENT: It won't pull us down. [Unintelligible], We
can wait and handle it in the
[unintelligible] court.
DEAN: We never--
PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] virtually nine months.
[Unintelligible]
DEAN: Dean couldn't get there with the facts.
PRESIDENT: [Unintelligible] they'll ask.
DEAN: I didn't have the power to compel Mitchell
or Magruder

to tell me what had happened. I just surmised that had happened.

PRESIDENT: The (unintelligible]

DEAN: I've been, uh, to be very honest, I've talked about it around here before I got in to see you for many, many months. Uh, I said, you know, I said the containment theory is not working anymore so you might as well forget it.

PRESIDENT: Right. That's what you came in to see me? Fine.

DEAN: Fine. It works. Finally, I started coming in to see you and that's when we started getting action.

PRESIDENT: I have no right [unintelligible]

DEAN: Then I was told by all of those after joining this, that'd be talking surrender. I'm not talking surrender. I'm talking realistically. [Unintelligible] investigation going. They've got subpoena power, immunity power, and they're going to break somebody up there, just as pure -And, uh, I've always said that it's a domino situation--One, one goes -and that's exactly what's happened here, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: The poor guys.

DEAN: The poor men and the [unintelligible] all the way around.

PRESIDENT: Secretaries, [unintelligible]

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT
& DEAN: [Unintelligible]

DEAN: How do you want to handle it: Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Dean?

PRESIDENT: That's a good question. [Unintelligible] the biggest part of that question is when, under the circumstances it's, uh--

DEAN: Here's the argument I, I've been meaning to tell you: First of all, there is, there's, there is potential There are prima facie situations right now that are very difficult in, uh, to prove in context that -been made aware of. Uh, does that thereby make it necessary for you to make a judgment that those people should leave the staff until their, their name is cleared?

PRESIDENT: It makes it necessary for me to relieve them of any duty if this peaks.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Which I have done. It makes it necessary for me to [unintelligible] Haldeman turn it down, which I end up.

DEAN: But that I don't know --

PRESIDENT: I'm happy to discuss it with him, but whether, you just say let's go all out and tromp their ass. I do not--

DEAN: That's the tougher question, because one, that's pitting you in the position of being the, the judge and trier of the facts.

PRESIDENT: Before--

DEAN: Before all the facts. are in, necessarily.

PRESIDENT: That's really my problem on that. I mean, I so this fellow says that, and this fellow says that that's I the thing that concerns me.

DEAN: Will, maybe that's the way this ought to be handled, publicly. Say, "I have certain information about -you know, allegations have been made about persons, some publicly -some have not become public yet-- but I am not in a position where I can make any"

PRESIDENT: Yeah. Yeah.

DEAN: "judgements, because all the facts aren't in yet."

PRESIDENT: But you really think, John, don't you, that, uh, you [unintelligible] in the meantime--

DEAN: Okay.

PRESIDENT: Your statement, this statement is terribly important. And, then frankly, something very shortly beforehand [unintelligible]. Right?

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: I'll talk to you on Thursday. [Unintelligible] Thank you.

DEAN: Yes sir.

PRESIDENT: Would you say that you [unintelligible] move, uh [unintelligible] in this area?

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: And, uh [unintelligible].