

Conversation Number 344-14  
June 22, 1972, 9:40-11:25 A.M.  
Executive Office Building  
President and Haldeman

[The conversation opens with a short discussion about the First Family appearance at the National Education Association celebration. The president thinks that since Tricia's wedding, a year earlier, the family has been "extremely effective" and a political "weapon." Haldeman agrees that the more they do the better they have become and the more their celebrity has grown. Less than three minutes into the session, the president turned to Watergate.]

PRESIDENT: Well, I was just getting ready for the press conference. One thing, let me ask this. In, in the handling of the, ah, in the handling of the, ah, bugging thing, I'm going to, ah, vigorously say [unclear] right where [unclear regarding Mitchell], I, I'm not going to add to that. The question they'll ask, "Was there any White House involvement?" And the way they've [referring to the staff's briefing book] prepared it sounds like a lawyer's answer. [Reads to Haldeman:] Nothing has happened to reduce confidence, my confidence in members of the White House staff. Well, that too much of, ah, an obvious, in my opinion. Ah, I think I should be stated there's no White House involvement. Or at least, or is that—

HALDEMAN: I'm just trying to think of whether—

PRESIDENT: I don't know what, it may be that their, their concern is that there is?

HALDEMAN: No. The only question is whether that technically put you in a, ah—

PRESIDENT: A position of comment, commenting on it?

HALDEMAN: Well, no, in a, ah, spot on, it, a sense that, that, on a, on a direct basis White House involvement, I think you're absolutely clean.

PRESIDENT: Hum, hum.

HALDEMAN: There's no question. The only, see, if you can get it in the sense of, that, Ziegler, that Hunt was, that Hunt was a consultant to the White House. [Telephone rings.]

PRESIDENT: At the time he did it?

HALDEMAN: No, no.

PRESIDENT: [Answers telephone.] Yeah. Ziegler. [Hangs up receiver.] Well—

HALDEMAN: That's the only line to the White House. You got, ah, just, now there are other people that are former White House people, who could at some point become

involved.

PRESIDENT: Or maybe I could say— [Telephone rings.]

HALDEMAN: But they weren't, they aren't White House now.

PRESIDENT: [Answers telephone. *Telephone Conversations No. 25-116 is inaudible, so only EOB room record of conversation.*] Yeah. Hello. Hi Ron. Ah, you know we're not going to go forward until 3:00, which is my advice. Ah, let me ask one question. Ah, that, ah, that, [unclear on the bugging subject] my thinking, my, my intention is to say, well, Mr. Ziegler - hypothetically [unclear] and I am not going to add to anything you've said. [This is on the record.] Now, the only thing I would say, the only question they can press on is whether there's anyone is involved from the White House staff. But I think I should say no. But I don't know, if, I notice you say we, nothing happened here to lose confidence in my staff. Well, that's bluff, that's my point. I don't want to say that. If you, is that what you've been saying? Or— yeah, I know but he's not at the White House anymore. No. Yeah, that's right, that's right. No, no. Fine, fine. I'll just say Mr. Ziegler's covered that. How's that? I think I should just leave it, then you don't have any story, anything bigger. Okay, then we'll leave it on that. Yeah, yeah, well, I don't think I'll get into it though. What do you think? You want me to? No, no. But it's a nice thing to have if you'll have time to say more. Well, I know, I know. Maybe you don't want to do it [unclear] spend too much time.] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I suspect [unclear.] Okay, thanks Ron. Bye. Hangs up receiver.]

[To Haldeman:] Well, I think I'll just say Mr. Ziegler's covered that. 'Cause he said he'd been asked for Colson's involvement. He said he was asked about Hunt and he said he left the White House three months ago. He said he was asked about Colson the first day, he checked with him, he was not involved. I'll say Mr. Ziegler has covered that. Okay? It keeps me from getting into it, and then they bring up another story, the president says White House not involved.

HALDEMAN: Denies White House involvement.

PRESIDENT: Denies, yes, that's right.

HALDEMAN: That's the one that—

PRESIDENT: [Cross talking.] Denies, or the president's concerned about this.

HALDEMAN: They're playing this thing so irresponsibly—

PRESIDENT: What?

HALDEMAN: They're playing it so irresponsibly in the attempt to make a White House thing out of it. [Unclear.] The *Post* story today, which you probably saw the headline says, "White House aide disappears."

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Or "White House aide missing" or un-accounting, or something.

PRESIDENT: Then, you go into it, you have to read down ten paragraphs to find out, it's a former White House aide, he's left.

HALDEMAN: Yeah. He was also a former aide to Averill Harriman. It doesn't say Harriman aide disappeared.

PRESIDENT: Somebody ought to call them on it.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, it's—

PRESIDENT: I know you are. [Cross talking.] Let me say, let me say this though [unclear] except for the *Post*. I tell you though I don't think this is the big thing story in the country in some way.

HALDEMAN: It's not.

PRESIDENT: I didn't, I haven't read the New Summary today. In fact, I don't want to get it cluttered up with these people at the press conference. Let me tell you something about this—

HALDEMAN: It was completely off the TV.

PRESIDENT: Let me tell you something about this. I just have a hunch that your first reaction was correct. But, you know, it's a Washington son-of-a-bitching story. The American—

HALDEMAN: Plus, what's happened to it is, it's so fucked up that everybody's laughing about it.

PRESIDENT: Well, the point is [unclear] the *New York Times* is off on this crazy God damn kick, that this Association for the Americas is a right-wing, anti-Castro group, in Cuba, in Miami, I mean. And connected to the bank there.

HALDEMAN: Well, I think that, its, its, [cross talk] the Cuban thing is built—

PRESIDENT: Let me ask you this. I have very strong feelings because of the personal thing, because he's taken such a horrible beating, that Rebozo ought to sue Anderson. Now here's why. The reason for it, he was not involved in this. No way.

HALDEMAN: No.

PRESIDENT: Huh?

HALDEMAN: No, but Anderson didn't say he was.

PRESIDENT: It doesn't make any difference.

HALDEMAN: Well, if he sues, that's gotten no play except the Anderson broadcast, and what Anderson said is true. That's the best defense against libel, and Anderson's smart enough to know that.

PRESIDENT: Bob, you can libel by innuendo, and I read that damn thing. That is libel. I could prove it; I could win that case any damn day. It's an indication that Rebozo was tied up with this group that broke in, you know, I mean, that's conspiracy. I'm thinking also of putting them off on another trail. They sued somebody, Rebozo sues them.

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Fire away—

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure we need it now. We're, we're in pretty good shape. We got, today's news is all good. In the first place, we got Judge Richey for the civil case. The civil case is kind of worrisome.

PRESIDENT: Yes, he's a good judge.

HALDEMAN: Well, the Democrats outsmarted themselves. They made a fatal legal error.

PRESIDENT: What was that?

HALDEMAN: They filed the suit on behalf of all Democrats, thereby disqualifying any, the Democratic judge from hearing it.

PRESIDENT: Aaah!

HALDEMAN: He was a party to the cause.

PRESIDENT: I get you. [Said with a chuckle of delight.]

HALDEMAN: So the next judge up was a Democratic judge and would have been the one assigned to the case. He had to disqualify himself on, on technical grounds, because he's part of the party to the crime, or the pleading. And then one who was after that was Judge Richey, who's a very solid and very good—

PRESIDENT: Well, I know him.

HALDEMAN: —And for us. And according to Rogers, programmable, and knows exactly what's going on. Ah, Richey's played it just beautifully—

PRESIDENT: Well, he's a—

HALDEMAN: They intended to—

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.]

HALDEMAN: They intended to move immediately on depositions, that was their tactic.

PRESIDENT: Goddamn. [Hushed.]

HALDEMAN: So Edward Bennett Williams was in yesterday afternoon, and stomping, and banging the walls in Richey's chambers, and everything, and, and Richey just calmly said he was busy the rest of this week, he would put them on Monday to discuss the question of when to decide when to start the timing on setting dates for activities, and so on. In other words, he's, he's going to just let it diddle along forever.

PRESIDENT: [How long?]

HALDEMAN: And he knows, he understands it. There's no point in giving—

PRESIDENT: He also knows, he's, ah, a possibility of moving up in the world.

HALDEMAN: He'll entertain all sorts of, ah, delaying motions—

PRESIDENT: Yep.

HALDEMAN: And all that.

PRESIDENT: Another thing I think has been good, Bob, is, that, I must say [unclear, about the Republican National Committee]. They must have gotten the word, from over there, get out the thing. Our security, yes, the fact that papers are missing—

HALDEMAN: [Cross talking.] We're going to have a whole series of things.

PRESIDENT: —Also, it's true, isn't it?

HALDEMAN: Yes.

PRESIDENT: Things have been stolen.

HALDEMAN: Well, yeah. Let me put it this way.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: They're not really convinced anything has. But, they, they, there's enough, you know [cross talking.]

PRESIDENT: Well, Bob, you know damn well we were bugged.

HALDEMAN: Sure, sure.

PRESIDENT: We sweep every hotel room, that's the other thing. I, I thought that the stories this morning, even on this, the *Post*, the idea that everybody's worried about bugging, what we're doing on that, and also the fact that, ah, that Larry O'Brien says that, says that Anderson had papers from his office [stolen], well now, this puts Anderson in the bugging business.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Is that right?

HALDEMAN: Sure.

PRESIDENT: I think that's great.

HALDEMAN: And Anderson is now denying that he got the stuff, ah, from these people, but, of course, I got it from an inside source.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, see Anderson—

HALDEMAN: So—

PRESIDENT: Well, there's a little thing, see, Pulitzer Prize for that. You see, my point is I just want to see that Pulitzer Prize [story] written by one columnist.

HALDEMAN: We'll get that.

PRESIDENT: Colson's working on that.

HALDEMAN: We've got another thing going, that's taken hold a little bit, which is we've started moving on the Hill, letting things come out from there, which is that this whole thing is a Jack Anderson thing.

PRESIDENT: Oh.

HALDEMAN: That Jack Anderson did it. That's what the Hill guys think, that this is a, a, we're starting to move that around now. And we started a rumor yesterday morning, and its starting to come back already.

PRESIDENT: What, that Anderson did it?

HALDEMAN: That Jack Anderson has put all this together. He was bugging the Democratic offices and, you know, there's some—

PRESIDENT: Oh, yeah.

HALDEMAN: 'Cause these Cubans are tied to him. These are agents he's used. And now he's trying to do a diversionary cover-up by bring out this other thing, and all this stuff. So, its value, the great thing about it is it is so totally fucked up, and so, so, badly done, that nobody believe we could have—

PRESIDENT: We could have done it.

HALDEMAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: I know, I, ah—

HALDEMAN: It's just beyond comprehension.

PRESIDENT: Well it is, it sounds like a comic opera, really.

HALDEMAN: It really does, it would make a funny God damn movie.

PRESIDENT: [With a comedic voice] I mean, you know, here's these Cubans with their accents [laughing.]

HALDEMAN: Wearing these rubber gloves, standing there in their well-made, their expensive, well-made business suits, wearing rubber gloves, and put their hands up and shouting "don't shoot" when the police come in. It really is like a comic opera. Also, they have no case on Hunt.

PRESIDENT: Why?

HALDEMAN: Because there is no case on Hunt. They have not been able to make him. They can't put him into the scene at all.

PRESIDENT: We know where he was, though.

HALDEMAN: But they don't. The FBI doesn't.

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: They've pursued him and been unable to tie him in at all to the case. And, ah—

PRESIDENT: What about the disappearance? So he'll come back?

HALDEMAN: Well, they've got no warrant for him, so they don't care whether he disappeared.

PRESIDENT: He has disappeared?

HALDEMAN: He has disappeared.

PRESIDENT: Yeah, but the Hunt thing is beginning to run out [unclear].

HALDEMAN: The legal people, the FBI, who are running the investigation, have no, there's no way to fix Hunt on, on the case. They have issued no warrant for him. They don't care whether he disappears or not. The only thing there is, is his name's in the phone book, in the guy's address book. But so is the hotel clerk's name.

PRESIDENT: Is Rebozo's name in anyone's address book?

HALDEMAN: No. [I don't think so.] He told me he doesn't know any of these guys.

PRESIDENT: He doesn't know them? He does know Suarez, though. But, but, hell, Suarez is one of the biggest contractors in Florida. You know—

HALDEMAN: But he doesn't know any of the—

PRESIDENT: Suarez, I think, built that big, tall building in Key Biscayne, you know, the new condominium. I think that's Suarez.

HALDEMAN: Ah, another good break is they can't trace the currency.

PRESIDENT: They traced it to a Miami bank.

HALDEMAN: They traced it to a Miami bank, which, that's easily done. But the bank cannot trace the thing beyond that. They're not required to and they don't maintain any record of where, who, who takes it when it's \$100 bills. When it's bigger denominations, they have to keep a record, but with \$100 bills they don't. So they don't have a record.

PRESIDENT: Isn't that interesting, because hundred dollars are so common these days?

HALDEMAN: I guess so.

PRESIDENT: A lot of people carry them, I guess.

HALDEMAN: Whatever it is, they don't maintain a record. So there's no way to trace the source of the funds. Even if there were, it wouldn't be a very great problem, unless it can go two more steps, because the funds came from a, a, a money order from a South American



country. So, ah—

PRESIDENT: Did it?

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: Well, that's good.

HALDEMAN: Well, but, but if they get past it, then they might be able to get to the South American country and find out where the money order came from, and that isn't good.

PRESIDENT: Well. [Spoken with a growl.]

HALDEMAN: But, but up to that point we're all right, and they can't even go to the next place. So we're okay on that. They, they're going to continue to crank up the Cuban operation. And, ah—

PRESIDENT: How high up?

HALDEMAN: Well, the investigation's beginning to look into other Cubans, and that kind of thing. These guys are allied, in some other enterprises, you know, that we don't care about, and there's a lot of, [unclear] that leaves still a pretty good story, as long as they don't get to. See, the thing we forget is that we know too much and therefore read too much into what we see that other people can't read into it. I mean, what seems obvious to us because of what we know is not obvious to other people.

PRESIDENT: [Cross talking.] Well, the interesting thing is, Bob, is, the networks didn't play it, is that the networks main thing that, they would have played us to beat hell if they'd thought that they had something on us. But the main thing is the Cuban thing. And even though that's a hell of a story, and you say, oh shit.

HALDEMAN: Well, of course, that might help us, because what the Cubans are going to say and are starting to say is that they're scared to death of McGovern.

PRESIDENT: Are they beginning, has anybody started to say that?

HALDEMAN: Yes.

PRESIDENT: Oh, good. How did you do that?

HALDEMAN: Well, they got some Cuban to put that.

PRESIDENT: Doctor somebody.

HALDEMAN: No, they're staying away from him. I think they should stay away from him.

PRESIDENT: That's right. Just so it's done, I see.

HALDEMAN: But forgetting point, and, ah, [unclear] registered Democrats.

PRESIDENT: Good. Well, for my purposes, that's good.

HALDEMAN: So it's, ah, at this point it's looking pretty good. And, ah, the one thing they are thinking about doing, which we, we could do and it would be easy to cover it with no problem just for safety sake, is to get, get Liddy out of the country. They'll just have him go over to Europe and be checking on some of our financial contributions, the fundraising, the fundraising drive in Europe. The [unclear] Republican project.

PRESIDENT: You mean the idea being, well, they're not after him?

HALDEMAN: Not yet. But just, they figure, maybe if he's moved around. They've sent him to L.A. He's had some business there. And he can as a routine matter go to Europe, and it's just as well if something does surface not to have him around or have to move him after it does. And then they can wait and see, if we want him back, it's easy to bring him back.

PRESIDENT: How the hell can you question him, because, unless somebody talks?

HALDEMAN: If somebody talks, which is still a potential. Now, they're leaving McCord in jail, ah, to keep an eye on the other guys and maintain contact with them. And, ah—

PRESIDENT: The guy's there, they don't want to get them out on bail?

HALDEMAN: Apparently they'd rather leave them in right now.

PRESIDENT: They probably don't mind.

HALDEMAN: For a lot of reasons, they're better off in jail.

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.]

HALDEMAN: Didn't even cover it last night on NBC. [They're convinced it's a newspaper story.] Scripps-Howard, quoting unnamed sources in Miami, is saying they believe the five men [unclear word] for spying on the Democrats [were acting] out of fear that a Democratic president might cede Cuba to Castro. That's way ahead of where we had hoped to be.

PRESIDENT: But suppose the worst, though. Way out of this [unclear], it wasn't authorized, and so forth and so on. We're going to have to tighten up on this security business.

[At the end of this lengthy session, there was a brief discussion of campaign fundraising, and the unreported names. The president said the problem was almost more of a liability than a plus, and maybe they should give back the \$10 million collected before the April 7, 1972 cut-off date for reporting. He added that the Democrats who had contributed need him more than he needed them. But he was interested in helping Stans out with the problem, so no decision was made to return the money.]

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