

Conversation Number 343-36
June 23, 1972, 2:20-2:45 P.M.
Executive Office Building
President and Haldeman

[Haldeman spent about five minutes reporting to the president on his conversation with Helms and Walters. The conversation about the meeting began as Haldeman entered the EOB office at 2:20 P.M. The conversation transcribed below originally began at 0:26:15.0 on tape 343b.]

HALDEMAN: Well, it's no problem. Had the two of them in, and—

PRESIDENT: You scare Helms to death, did you?

HALDEMAN: Well it's kind of interesting. Walters sat there. Made the point, I didn't mention Hunt at the opening of it, I just said that, that, ah, this thing would lead in the directions that were going to create some very major potential problems, that they were exploring leads that lead back into, to ah, areas that would be harmful to the CIA, harmful to the government, there were—

PRESIDENT: [Telephone rings.] That's Chuck.

HALDEMAN: But it [telephone rings again] didn't have anything to with, with, with the [unclear].

PRESIDENT: [Answered telephone.] Hello? Chuck, I wondered if you would, ah, give John Connally a call for me. He's on his trip. I don't want him to read it in the papers before Monday about this quota thing and say, Look, ah, we met, ah, we're gonna do this, but, but, I checked, ah, I asked you about the situation, and you personally checked with the cattlemen, and made, have an understanding it's only temporary [it won't effect one way or the other]. He'll [realize] that. Okay. I didn't want him to read it in the papers. Good. Fine. [Returned telephone receiver.]

HALDEMAN: But, ah, Walters [didn't say much.]

PRESIDENT: [Unclear].

HALDEMAN: Helms did too. Helms, ah, said, well, I've had no contact with this, of course, and, but Gray called and said, yesterday, he said, ah, that he thought—

PRESIDENT: Who's that, Gray?

HALDEMAN: Gray had called, [told us what he knew], and said, ah, ah, I think, I think we've run right into the middle of a CIA covert-operation here.

PRESIDENT: Gray said that?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, and Helms said nothing, nothing we've got, at this point, and ah, ah, which is all true, because, that's what we did, or something. And Gray said, well, yeah, [it sure looks to me like we did, and Helms said nothing that we've got going] at all and, ah, that was the end of that conversation. [Unclear.] We said, well, the problem is that it tracks back to the Bay of Pigs. It tracks back to some other, if their leads run out to people who had no involvement in this except by contacts or connections, but it gets to areas that are [going] to be raised. The whole problem of this, this fellow Hunt, ah, so at that point Helms's kind of got the picture, [very clearly.] He, he said, he said, we'll be very happy to be helpful to, ah, you know, and we'll handle everything you want. I would like to know the reason for being helpful. And it may have appeared, when he wasn't gonna get it explicitly but was gonna get it through generality, he, he said fine. And ah, Walters [was ready] to do it, Walters said that. [Chuckles.] And Walters is going to make a call to Gray, I think. That, that's the way we put it, that's the way it was left, and, ah, [unclear.]

PRESIDENT: How would that work though? How would, for example, if [the judge were, brought back, a call], asked for somebody from Miami bank to be here, account for assets in the bank?

HALDEMAN: You might, have the CIA [unclear] have a problem [unclear.] The point that John made is the Bureau doesn't, the Bureau is going all on this, because they don't know what they're uncovering. Because they think they need to pursue it, ah, they don't need to, because they've already got their case as far as the, ah charges against these men, or something, so they don't need anything further on that. And, ah, as they pursue it they're uncovering stuff that's none of their business, in there.

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.]

HALDEMAN: I'm not sure exactly what. We didn't in any way, say we, we had any political interest, or concern, or anything like that. Ah, one thing Helms did raise is he said that, that Gray, he asked Gray why he felt they're going into a CIA thing and Gray said because of the characters involved and the amount of money involved. He said there's a lot of dough. [Unclear.] That probably had some suspicion in Helms [unclear].

PRESIDENT: [Unclear.] Well, we'll cross that bridge.

HALDEMAN: Well, I think they will 'cause our, see there isn't any question--

PPRESIDENT: If it runs back to the bank so, what the hell, they, who knows, we always [unclear] contributed to the CIA [unclear].

HALDEMAN: CIA gets money as we know 'cause, I mean their money moves in a lot of different ways, too.

PPRESIDENT: Yeah.

[The president proceeded to recall how the CIA, under John Foster Dulles, helped his 1960 opponent in the presidential campaign, John Kennedy. Nixon recalls how Dulles briefed Kennedy about Cuba. Haldeman observed, "At least Dulles was no more Kennedy's man than Helms is your man." When the subject of who will brief the Democratic presidential nominee arose, the president said it should be Helms. The remainder of the conversation was devoted to polling data and the potential Democratic Party nominees. The conversation originally ended at 0:33:05.0 on tape 343b.]