

FROM THE NIXON TAPES,  
SELECTED CONVERSATIONS FROM THE PERIOD 1971/06/13-16,  
CONCERNING THE PENTAGON PAPERS.

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1971/06/13, 12:18, TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH ALEXANDER HAIG:

NIXON: Hello

OPERATER: General Haig, sir  
Ready

NIXON: Hello

HAIG: Yes sir!

NIXON: Hi Al.  
How - uh - what about the casualties last week - you got the figure yet?

HAIG: Uh, no sir, but I think it's going to be quite low - uh

NIXON: Uh-huh

HAIG: It should be as

NIXON: Should be

HAIG: [Unclear] last week or better

NIXON: Yeah, could - should be less than twenty - twenty I would think, yeah

HAIG: So [unclear] be very

NIXON: [Unclear] - when do you get that - do you - will you know?

HAIG: We don't get it officially until Monday afternoon, but we can get a reading on it

NIXON: Right, well, Monday afternoon officially, well let's wait til then - fine  
OK  
Nothing else of interest in the world today?

HAIG: Yes sir - very significant - this, uh, Goddamn New York Times expose of the most highly classified documents of the war

NIXON: Oh that - I see -

HAIG: [Unclear]

NIXON: I didn't read the story but, uh, you mean that - that was leaked out of the Pentagon?

HAIG: Sir, it, uh - the whole study that was done for McNamara, and then carried on after McNamara left by Clifford, and the peaceniks over there  
This is a devastating - uh, security breach, of - of the greatest magnitude of anything I've ever seen

NIXON: Well - well - what, uh - what's being done about it then - I mean I didn't, uh

HAIG: [Unclear]

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NIXON: Did we know this was coming out?

HAIG: No we did not, sir. - uh

NIXON: Yeah.

HAIG: There are just a few copies of this multi-volume report

NIXON: Well what about the - well what about the, uh - let me ask you this though - what about the, uh  
- what about Laird - what's he going to do about it - is, uh - now, I'd - I'd just start  
right at the top and fire some people. I mean whoever - whatever department it came  
out of I'd fire the top guy

HAIG: Yes sir - well, I'm sure it came from defense, and I'm sure it was stolen at - uh, at the time of  
the turnover - of the administration

NIXON: Oh, it's two years old then

HAIG: I'm sure it is, and they've been holding it for a juicy time, and I think they've thrown it out to  
affect Hatfield-McGovern - that's my own estimate. But it's - it's something that it's a  
mixed bag - it's a - it's a tough attack on Kennedy - uh, it shows that the genesis of the  
war - uh, really occurred during sixty-one

NIXON: Yeah - yeah - that's Clifford, [unclear, laughing?] - I see

HAIG: And - uh, it's brutal on President Johnson; they're gonna end up in a massive gut-fight in the  
Democratic Party on this thing

NIXON: Are they?

HAIG: It's - uh, there're some - uh, very

NIXON: But also massive against the war

HAIG: Against the war - uh

NIXON: It's a Pentagon study, huh

*Recorded from Nixon Library Materials at NARA, College Park, on 2001/05/30 -  
White House Tape WHT-5, Cassette 825, Conversation 5-50;  
Transcribed at National Security Archive, 05/31  
By Eddie Meadows*

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1971/06/13, 13:28, TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM ROGERS:

NIXON: Hello

ROGERS: Hi Mr. President

NIXON: Hi Bill

ROGERS: [Unclear] that wedding was just great

NIXON: Well, it was - uh, the - the - gotta give Pat and Tricia the credit - they really worked - and that White House staff - weren't they great?

ROGERS: Everything - it was absolutely superb  
And I thought the press coverage was excellent - uh

NIXON: The - uh, T.V. was - uh, really - you didn't see it probably

ROGERS: I saw some of it - I thought it was [unclear]

NIXON: It was - really, really came out [unclear] - all three networks did it - just really couldn't have done better

ROGERS: I don't know how you could have done any better - I mean there were - there were no snide remarks or anything - just [unclear]

NIXON: [Unclear] really, really handled it well

BOTH: [Laughter]

ROGERS: It couldn't have been better

NIXON: Yeah

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, PERSONABLE RETURNABLE, 11S]

NIXON: Uh, incidentally - uh, one thing I was gonna mention that - uh, we - uh, the - uh, casualties this week are gonna be less than twenty again unless they have some - something they haven't - uh - unless something has come up - unless they have some MIAs that they're putting in - in fact it could be fifteen I think

ROGERS: Is that right

NIXON: Yeah, so we're - we're now coming into that period - [unclear] which we said we would [laughter]

ROGERS: You know, I heard on the radio just a little while ago, that this is the first time that there's been no combat activity involving United States troops in - in South Vietnam

NIXON: [Unclear] day

ROGERS: [Unclear] last twenty-four hours - no combat at all

NIXON: Good - good

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ROGERS: Wasn't that good

NIXON: Well there were three days last week apparently - I - I just [unclear] talking to Haig - and he said there were three days, there were no - no - no killed in action at all

ROGERS: Isn't it wonderful

NIXON: And as [unclear] through Thursday there were only four - so, Friday, Saturday may have picked up some - but as I said they all - they sometimes pick up some who have been missing, and that they just decide that - that they're gone now, and they just let 'em go

ROGERS: Right

NIXON: Yeah, you know I was - uh - [unclear] I don't know whether you - I didn't read the piece, but Haig was - is, uh - was talking to me about it that - uh, he's - uh, that - that piece in the Times is of course a - a massive security leak from the Pentagon you know

ROGERS: [Unclear]

NIXON: It - it all is - it all relates to - it all relates, of course, to everything up until we came in

ROGERS: Yeah

NIXON: And it's - uh, it's ver - it's hard on Johnson; it's hard on Kennedy; it's hard on Lodge. Of course the [unclear] - the difficulty from our standpoint, and I suppose the Times is running it now because of McGovern-Hatfield - it's also hard on the Vietnamese, and [unclear] covert [unclear] - but apparently the - McNamara had the study made - started, and then it was continued through - by Clifford. But - uh, it's really something - they said, according to Haig, four thousand - uh, secure documents had - were - were apparently just leaked to the Times

ROGERS: Isn't it awful

NIXON: Goddamn

ROGERS: Of course McNamara looks lousy too; he comes out looking [unclear]

NIXON: Yeah, I didn't read the piece, but he looks - apparently - uh, by the time - you see the difficulty was McNamara started then Clifford got in - he makes McNamara look bad

ROGERS: Hmmm

NIXON: And - uh, trying to make him look good

ROGERS: God, they're a bunch of scoundrels aren't they

NIXON: This goddamn Clifford you know - his - his - talking around - uh, if he's got something, he ought to say - he ought to tell us

ROGERS: Well, I'll - I'll [unclear]

NIXON: [Unclear] he's going to see - uh, your fellow Wednesday, but - uh

ROGERS: Who is?

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He's going to see who?

NIXON: Clifford.  
Well I'm sure he's going to - he told - he said - said he was - uh, told the press that he was going to see Sullivan - er, uh - er, uh - may - to report to him, you know - the - [unclear, stammering] we asked for it.  
In other words we said 'look if you got anything, what is it'?  
And he said 'well I'll - I'll talk to Sullivan.'

ROGERS: [Unclear]

NIXON: Sullivan called him.

ROGERS: I - uh, Christ, I didn't know that Sullivan contacted [unclear]

NIXON: No, no - no, he did - at our suggestion

ROGERS: Oh, at our suggestion

NIXON: Oh no, sure, sure.  
Because, see, when it came up - uh, Ron - I didn't want to have any - any interest shown in the White House, so - uh, we just said well - uh, have Sullivan say 'well look, if we're negotiating here, if you've got something to pass on to Bruce, let us know.'  
But he's a [laughter]

ROGERS: Well I thought that - uh, I could take him on a little [unclear] - did Mel - was Mel on television [unclear]?

NIXON: He had - I think he was supposed to have been on one of the talk shows - but I - uh, yes I think he was - yeah, I didn't see it

ROGERS: Maybe [unclear] a chance to talk a bit tomorrow about what I should say Tuesday  
I'll take him on as hard as you want me to

NIXON: Yeah, well I would say this - that the real problem is of course how much we want to build him - but on the other hand, others may build him so that he has to be taken on - but we'll see what Mel did too - Mel may have - Mel said he was gonna do - take him on, but - uh

ROGERS: Well, I think that if I take him on, I should do it with a - with a flick of my wrist [unclear]

NIXON: [Unclear] more in sorrow than in anger - my view - the view being, look - uh, after all, he was in this whole thing, and he left us with - uh, five-hundred and fifty thousand men there, and so forth, and casualties [unclear] three-hundred a week - now if he's - uh, we - we - under those circumstances of course, if he's got information that - uh, he should - that - that - that it's - he owes it to pass it on - we - we're - and I think the idea too that my God, we've expl - we're exploring every possible thing - you know Bruce brings up every thing he can, every damn thing [unclear - both talking]

ROGERS: [Unclear - both talking] Well I can - I can hit him - I can hit him pretty hard if I have to - because he's - he's very vulnerable

NIXON: I don't know what he has - [unclear, both talking] probably through - don't you think, through some embassy or something - er, uh

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ROGERS: Oh I don't know  
It's a political move - that's all it is

NIXON: You think so

ROGERS: Sure

NIXON: Yeah

ROGERS: He doesn't have anything

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, NOT DESCRIBED IN FINDING AID]

NIXON: They told me that Johnson is furious at him now - Johnson was at - uh, in New York, was speaking [unclear] talking [unclear] some sort of a party he was attending, and apparently he - he said 'dammit,' he says, 'the trouble with Clifford is that if' - says 'he can - he can talk like this and go [unclear 'burning tree?'], and' he says 'the president's got to go back to the damn office, and [unclear] he ought to tell him [unclear, both talking and laughing]

ROGERS: That's really pretty good, isn't it

NIXON: That's so true of Clifford [both laughing]  
Uh, well, let's talk about it tomorrow then, and let's see what Mel said, and - uh, get a line where - uh, I'm deliberately having [unclear] - uh, Ziegler has played it, as you know, rather cool, and will continue to tomorrow - but, uh

ROGERS: Well we can decide - I don't think - and we want to be sure we don't build him up as an individual

NIXON: No, never [unclear]

ROGERS: Because he's not known in the country

NIXON: He's not known, and the story - uh, from what I have heard, is not getting a helluva a lot of attention nationally; it's more - it's more of a Washington - New York story

ROGERS: Even in Washington though, the papers are sort of criticizing him

NIXON: Yeah, I understand White took him on [laughter]

ROGERS: Well, even - even a fellow like [unclear] Roberts, who's against us took him on

NIXON: Course he was over there too - [unclear, stammering] interview, which

ROGERS: Right, which, really when you read that interview, [unclear] they've toughened their position

NIXON: Yeah, [unclear, both talking] they're saying 'look, we won't do anything unless you stop the aid'

ROGERS: That's right

NIXON: Sure  
Well, we'll see you tomorrow

ROGERS: Alright, fine, thanks Mr. President

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1971/06/13, 15:09, TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH HENRY KISSINGER:

NIXON: Hello

OPERATOR: Mr. President, I have Dr. Kissinger calling you

NIXON: OK

OPERATOR: Thank you  
[Unclear] president

NIXON: Hello

KISSINGER: Mr. President

NIXON: Hi Henry, how are things in California?

KISSINGER: Well I just got here, and I'm gonna leave - uh, very early in the morning, so I'll be back in the  
early afternoon

NIXON: Oh, I see, I see

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, PERSONABLE RETURNABLE, 57S]

NIXON: OK, fine

KISSINGER: [Unclear] I understand you've talked to

NIXON: Yeah, Haig was - I talked to him about the

KISSINGER: To Haig [unclear] I just wanted to - to check in - actually things are fairly quiet - we've got the  
casualties now

NIXON: Uh-huh

KISSINGER: And unfortunately they're higher than what I told you yesterday; they're about twenty-three

NIXON: Uh-huh

KISSINGER: But still that's a low figure

NIXON: Yeah

KISSINGER: It's just four above what we had

NIXON: Yeah

KISSINGER: They must have picked up some missing in action  
The trouble with the daily casualties is, that they don't reflect the ones that died, that were  
wounded the previous week

NIXON: Yeah, yeah  
Well on the other hand, my God - uh, Henry - nineteen, twenty-three, good heavens  
It's just - it's just - uh, just [etc., stammering] down to nothing



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KISSINGER: That's right

NIXON: I mean, that's - uh

KISSINGER: And the more I've thought about Le Duc Tho coming west

NIXON: Uh-huh

KISSINGER: Uh, I'm not saying they're gonna accept it; but if they were just gonna kick us in the teeth, they wouldn't need him there

NIXON: No, no

KISSINGER: So they're at least gonna explore

NIXON: Yeah, well I - particularly if - uh, our Chinese friends lean on him a little [unclear - he?, they?]  
will

KISSINGER: [Unclear]

NIXON: And it just m - they just might lean on him a little, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah [Kissinger talking in  
between 'yeah's - unclear]  
Well it's - uh, Haig was very disturbed by that New York Times thing - I thought that

KISSINGER: [Unclear] Mr. President, I think

NIXON: Unconscionable damn thing for them to do

KISSINGER: Unconscionable [unclear]

NIXON: Of course it's - uh, it's [etc., stammering] unconscionable on the part of the people that leaked it  
Uh, fortunately it didn't come out in our administration - uh, appar - according to Haig, it's all  
relates [sic] to the two previous administrations - is that correct

KISSINGER: That is right

NIXON: But I hope th - but - but I - my point is if - are any of the people there who participated in this  
thing - who, in leaking it, that's my point - do we know?

KISSINGER: In public opinion, it actually, if anything, will help us a little bit, because this is a gold mine of  
showing how the previous administration got us in there

NIXON: I didn't read the thing - [unclear] give me your view on that - in - in a word

KISSINGER: It just shows massive mismanagement of how we got there, and it [unclear] pins it all on Kennedy  
and Johnson

NIXON: Huh, yeah [laughing?]

KISSINGER: And McNamara; so from that point of view it helps us  
From the point of view of the relations with Hanoi it hurts a little because it just shows a  
further weakening of resolve

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NIXON: Yeah

KISSINGER: And a further big issue

NIXON: I suppose the Times ran it - uh [stammering] to try to affect the debate this week or something

KISSINGER: Oh yes, no question [unclear]

NIXON: Well - [stammering] I don't think it's going to have that kind of effect

KISSINGER: No, no because it's - in a way it shows - uh, what they've tried to do - I think they outsmarted themselves, because they had put themselves - they had sort of tried to make it Nixon's war, and what this [unclear - 'magically'?] proves is that, if it's anybody's war, it's Kennedy's and Johnson's

NIXON: Yeah

KISSINGER: So that these Democrats now [unclear - 'bleeding'? 'bleating'?] about - uh, [unclear], or - uh, what we're doing wrong, this graphically shows that - that - who - who's responsible for the basic mess

NIXON: Yeah

KISSINGER: So I don't think it's having the effect that they intended

NIXON: Well you know - uh, [stammering] it may not have the effect they inten - they - the thing though that Henry - that to me is just unconscionable - this is treasonable action on the part of the bastards that put it out

KISSINGER: Exactly, Mr. President

NIXON: Doesn't it involve secure information, a lot of other things?  
What kind of - what kind of people would do such things?

KISSINGER: [Unclear] it has the most - it has the highest classification [unclear]

NIXON: Yeah, yeah

KISSINGER: It's - it's treasonable, there's no question - it's actionable, I'm absolutely certain that this violates all sorts of security laws

NIXON: What - what do we do about it - don't we ask for an

KISSINGER: I think I - I [unclear - 'shall'? 'should'?] talk to Mitchell

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, PRIVACY, 33S]

NIXON: No, I - I think you should - you tell Mitchell that - uh,

KISSINGER: [Unclear] this is not an occasional leak [unclear] it's bad enough, but this is everything the Defense Department [unclear - 'possessed'?]

NIXON: Yeah, let me ask this - call Mitchell - I think you should talk to Mitchell and ask him about his just - just - uh, calling this - getting this fellow in - uh, on the purpose of - uh,

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this was a security leak, and we wanna know what does he have, did he do it; and - uh,  
put him under oath

KISSINGER: That's right; I think we oughta do that  
I think we ought to wait til after

NIXON: Anoth - another thing to do would be to - be to have a congressional committee call him in

KISSINGER: I think we oughta do it after Wednesday [unclear]

NIXON: A congressional committee could call him in, put him under oath you know, and then he's guilty of  
perjury if he lies

KISSINGER: But I think we ought to wait til after the vote, before they get - get it all confused

NIXON: Oh I agree; well you couldn't do it before then anyway - but you know [stammering] get it all set  
up [unclear, stammering] because you gotta have the questions, and the investigations, and  
know what it is  
Well we're not gonna get disturbed; these are - these things happen you know - Clifford pops off,  
and this guy pops off  
I would think it would infuriate Johnson, wouldn't you?

KISSINGER: Oh [unclear] - basically, it doesn't hurt us domestically, I think - I'm no expert on that, but  
no one reading this can then say - uh, that this president got us into trouble  
[Unclear] this is an indictment of the previous administration  
It hurts us with Hanoi, because it just shows how far our demoralization has gone

NIXON: Good God

KISSINGER: But basically - uh, I think they - the decision they have to make is do they want to settle  
with you - they know damn well that you are the one who held firm, and - and no  
matter how far they - much anyone else is demoralized doesn't make any difference

NIXON: Yeah  
Right, right  
Well you'll find things out there pleasant enough

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, PERSONABLE RETURNABLE, 7S]

NIXON: Well, that's a long trip for you, but I wouldn't - that's [unclear] - don't worry about this - uh,  
Times thing; I just think we gotta expect that kind of crap, and - uh, we just plow  
ahead - plow ahead

KISSINGER: Well Mr. President, if we succeed in two out of three as you said [unclear]

NIXON: Yeah, yeah, yeah [both talking, unclear]  
If we can - but boy you're right about one thing: if anything was needed to underline - uh, what  
we talked about Friday - uh, or Saturday morning, about - uh, about really - uh, really  
cleaning house when we have the opportunity - by God this underlines it - and - uh, people  
have gotta be put to the torch for this sort of thing - this is terrible

KISSINGER: Gosden was on that plane with me, and he

NIXON: Freeman?

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KISSINGER: Yes

NIXON: Yeah, he's a great fellow

KISSINGER: Oh, he - he worships you [unclear]

NIXON: What did he think about all this - this stuff

KISSINGER: [Unclear] what you have to put up with, he said, he could - could never imagine it  
He said well Dulles, he blamed the State Department which is wrong in this case because [unclear]

NIXON: No, I know

KISSINGER: But he said Dulles always used to say that he had to operate alone because he couldn't trust his  
own bureaucracy

NIXON: [Laughing] Yeah, I know

KISSINGER: I said well, that was good for Dulles but we pay for it now because we are stuck with the  
bureaucracy

NIXON: That's right, that's right - well I just wish that - uh, we operated without the bureaucracy

KISSINGER: [Unclear, laughing]

NIXON: We do

KISSINGER: [Still laughing] All the good things that are being done [unclear]

NIXON: Yeah, we do, we do, we do  
Well, anyway - uh, I tell you what, on the Mitchell thing, I'd just have them - have him examine  
what the options are

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, PRIVACY, 26S]

NIXON: And the di - the Times will justify it on the basis that it serves the national interest - is that  
right?

KISSINGER: [Unclear]

NIXON: My God!  
My God, you know - can - can you imagine the New York Times - uh, doing a thing like this ten  
years ago - even ten years ago [sic]

KISSINGER: Mr. President, if - and then when McCarthy accused them of treason, they were screaming bloody  
murder - [unclear] treason

NIXON: That's right  
No, whatever they may think of the policy, it is treasonable to take this stuff out and - uh,

KISSINGER: Oh, it's one thing [unclear]

NIXON: Serves the enemy

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KISSINGER: It's one - another thing to print ten pages of top secret d - documents that are only - uh, about two or three years old  
[Unclear] they have nothing from our administration, so actually - I've read this stuff - we are - we come out pretty well in it

NIXON: [Laughing] Well, somebody over there got the stuff that we got - although we - I asked Haig about that, and - uh, he says well look, our file - as far as the White House is concerned, we - we're pretty damn secure - on the other hand of course, uh, naturally whenever I've had to call Rogers and - and Mel in on some of these on Laos and Cambodia, you can be sure all that's in some file

KISSINGER: But Mr. President, all the big things you've done in the White House, and those files will leave with you

NIXON: Yeah, that's right

KISSINGER: [Unclear] to the Nixon Library

NIXON: But - but what I meant though - that's true, the files - but I mean these guys of course will have made in their own records the - they'll indicate what I've ordered, you know

KISSINGER: Oh they'll indicate what you have ordered, but they weren't in on the reason

NIXON: Yeah, well let's not worry about that

[WITHDRAWN ITEM, PERSONABLE RETURNABLE, 1M13S]

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By Eddie Meadows*