

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

* * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.

[?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.

.... To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.

... When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.

_____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.

[] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as [Meeting appears to be breaking up] or [Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F1

September 30, 1962

/Begins mid-conversation. Continues conversation from belt 4E./

Barnett¹: . . . and trying. . . . And they're trying in every way, uh . . .

JFK: Well, we can't consider moving Meredith as long as the, you know, there's a riot outside, 'cause he wouldn't be safe.

Barnett: Sir?

JFK: We couldn't consider moving Meredith if you c-, if we haven't been able to restore order outside. That's the problem, Governor.

Barnett: Well, uh, I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. President.

JFK: Yeah.

Barnett: I'll go up there myself . . .

JFK: Well, now, how long will it take you to get there?

Barnett: . . . and I'll get, uh, a microphone and tell 'em that, uh, you have agreed to re-, to, for 'em to be removed . . .

JFK: No. No. Now, wait a minute. How long . . .

Barnett: . . . [words unintelligible] . . .

JFK: Wait a minute, Governor.

Barnett: [Yes?].

JFK: Now, how long is it going to take you to get up there?

¹ Ross R. Barnett

Barnett: 'Bout an hour.

JFK: Now, I'll tell you what y-, if you want to go up there and then you call me from up there. Then we'll decide what we're gonna do before you make any speeches about it.

Barnett: Well, all right. Well . . .

JFK: No sense in, uh . . .

Barnett: . . . I mean, whatever you, if you'd authorize . . .

JFK: You see, if we don't, we got an hour to go, and that's not, uh, we may not have an hour.

Barnett: Uh, this, this man . . .

JFK: Won't it take you an hour to get up there?

Barnett: . . . this man has just died.

JFK: Did he die?

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: Which one? State police?

Barnett: A state policeman.

JFK: Yeah, well, you see, we gotta get order up there, and that's what we thought we're going to have.

Barnett: Mr. President, please. Why don't you, uh, can't you give an order up there to remove Meredith?

JFK: How can I remove him, Governor, when there's a, a riot in the street, and he may step out of that building and something happen to him? I can't remove him under those conditions. You. . . .

Barnett: Uh, but, but . . .

JFK: Let's get order up there, then we can do something about Meredith.

Barnett: . . . we can surround it *[Phone rings in background.]* with plenty of officials.

JFK: Well, we've gotta get somebody up there now to get order and stop the firing and the shooting. Then when, you and I will talk on the phone about Meredith . . .

Barnett: All right.

JFK: . . . but first we gotta get order.

Barnett: I'll, I'll call and tell 'em to get every, every official they can.

JFK: That's right and then you and I ...

Barnett: *[Words unintelligible].*

JFK: . . . will talk when they've got the build-, when they get order there, then you and I'll talk about what's the best thing to do with Meredith.

Barnett: All right then.

JFK: Well, thank you.

Barnett: All right.

[Phone hangs-up.]

Voice 1: *[Ready? or It's ringing?].*

[Fifty-five seconds of machine noise.]

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F2

September 30, 1962

[Phone rings]

Lincoln²: Hello?

Rosenthal³: Is Burke Marshall there, please?

Lincoln: Uh, who's calling?

Rosenthal: Jack Rosenthal. Or is the attorney general there?

Lincoln: *[Speaking away from the phone.]* Jack Rosenthal. *[Speaking to Rosenthal.]* He'll call you back.

Rosenthal: Well, let me just give you a message for him.

Lincoln: Okay.

Rosenthal: Would you tell him that a reporter for the London Daily Sketch, whose name is Paul Guihard, G-U-I-H-A-R-D, was killed in Oxford just now? His body was found with a bullet in the back, next to a women's dormitory.

Lincoln: Okay.

Rosenthal: Thank you.

[Phone hangs up.]

² Evelyn Lincoln

³ Jack Rosenthal

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F3

September 30, 1962

Voice 1: [Waiting?].

/Begins in mid-conversation.]

Vance?: Yeah, see the problem is one of [light?] getting in there, and they're just going to get in wherever they can on the campus.

RFK: Yeah, and then they're, uh, but, uh, we could use at least a couple hundred right there.

Vance?: Yeah, well . . .

RFK: I don't know how, what. . . . They don't have transportation in from the airport.

Vance?: No. They will land on the campus. These are their instructions. Wherever they can get in, Bob.

RFK: Okay.

Vance?: Right.

RFK: But when, how long before they'll be there?

Vance?: Uh, well, they left, uh--take a look at my watch--must be about, uh, I would guess ten or fifteen minutes ago. And it was supposed to take about an hour. Bob, I don't want to guess . . .

RFK: No.

Vance?: . . . at the thing because I don't know precisely.

RFK: Okay. All right.

Vance?: Right.

RFK: *[Thanks?].*

[Phone hangs up.]

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F4

September 30, 1962

/Phone rings/

/Item begins with an unrelated fragment, perhaps on another telephone line or off the phone in the room, and then begins to record the main conversation./

Voice 1: He treated a number of other people. I asked him how many doctors he had, and how many . . .

/Recording abruptly switches to conversation below./

Barnett⁴: . . . [words unintelligible] . . .

JFK: Yeah.

Barnett: . . . and I, he, uh, he said that what we were talking about we wouldn't have any trouble. Do it, uh, tonight, you know.

JFK: Yeah. Well, the, uh, our people say that it's still a very, uh, /strained?/ situation. They wouldn't, uh, feel that, uh, they could, uh, take a chance on taking him outside that building. Now if we, can we get these fellows? I hear they got some high-powered rifles up there that have been shooting sp-, sporadically. Can we get that stopped? How many people have you got there? We hear you only got fifty.

Barnett: Well, I have approximately two hundred there now, Mr. President. That's not that . . .

JFK: You got two hundred?

Barnett: Sir, about two hundred.

JFK: 'Cau-. . . . Yeah.

Barnett: Uh . . .

⁴ Ross R. Barnett

JFK: Well, now let me get in touch with my people.

Barnett: . . . and we don't have but, uh, two hundred and ten of twelve, uh, patrolmen, you see.

JFK: I see. Well, now, let me get my people back again.

Barnett: I'm doing everything in the world I can.

JFK: That's right. Well, we've got to get this situation under control. That's much more important than anything else.

Barnett: Yes. Well, that's right. I . . .

JFK: Now, let me, uh, let me talk to my people, and let me tell, find out what the situation is there.

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: They called me a few minutes ago and said they had some high-powered rifles there. So we don't wanna, uh, start moving . . .

Barnett: Mr. President . . .

JFK: . . . anybody around.

Barnett: . . . peop-, people are wiring me and calling me saying, "Well, you've given up." I said, I had to say, "No, I'm not giving up, not giving up any fight."

JFK: Yeah, but we don't want to . . .

Barnett: "I never give up. I, I have courage and faith, and, and we'll win this fight." You understand. That's just to Mississippi people.

JFK: I understand. But I don't think anybody, either in Mississippi or any place else wants a lot of people killed.

Barnett: Oh, no. No. I . . .

JFK: And that's what, Governor, that's the most important thing. We want . . .

Barnett: . . . I'll iss-, I'll issue any statement, any time about peace and violence.

JFK: Well, now here's what we could do. Let's get the maximum number of your state police to get that situation so we don't have sporadic firing. I will then be in touch with my people and then you and I'll be talking again in a few minutes about, see what we got there then.

Barnett: All right.

JFK: Thank you, Governor.

Barnett: All right now.

JFK: I'll be back.

/Phone hangs up.]

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F5

September 30, 1962

JFK: Hello.

Voice 1: Just one moment, sir.

Voice 2?: There you are, sir. There's the president.

JFK: Hello. Hello.

Barnett⁵: Uh, Mr. President?

JFK: Yes, Governor.

Barnett: I, I just talked with Colonel Birdsong⁶ ...

JFK: Right.

Barnett: . . . who is our director of the highway patrol . . .

JFK: That's right.

Barnett: . . . and he assures me that he has approximately one hundred and fifty men there now.

JFK: Now, we got a report that they're all in their cars two or three blocks away.

Barnett: I told 'em, just like you asked me, to get moving.

JFK: I see. Now, can you get them so that we stop this, uh, rifle shooting? That's what we gotta stop.

Barnett: Well, he says he's doing all that he can. He says there're strangers in there.

⁵ Ross R. Barnett

⁶ T.B. Birdsong.

JFK: I know it, well that's what we hear.

Barnett: And, uh, he's calling for fifty more, and that'll, that'll put it up around two hundred.

JFK: Can they get those students to go to bed?

Barnett: Well, he says he's trying to, and, uh, I don't think it'll be long before he can get them all to bed.

JFK: Okay. Will you stay at . . .

Barnett: Maybe not, I can't tell . . .

JFK: Well, let's stay right at it. We, we ought to be, uh, that's what we gotta do before . . .

Barnett: Uh, he's . . .

JFK: . . . we can, uh, do anything.

Barnett: . . . he's reporting, uh, constantly to a gentleman who has control of the activities of the troops there.

JFK: Yeah.

Barnett: And, uh, he understands that he's doing all he can.

JFK: Well, I think that it's very important, Governor, aside from, uh, this issue, we don't want a lot of people, uh, killed, just because they, particularly, uh, evidently two or three guardsmen have been shot. And, of course, so-, our marshals and then that state trooper, so we don't want . . .

/Recording ends abruptly.]

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F6

September 30, 1962

Voice 1: Yes, please?

Marshall⁷: Uh, this is Burke Marshall.

Voice 1: Yes, sir.

Marshall: Do you think you could, uh. . . . There's a General Abrams⁸ who's in, d-, down at the, uh, Naval Air St-, Base in Memphis.

Voice 1: Uh-huh.

Marshall: U-, uh, u-. . . . *[Speaking to RFK in the room.]* Yeah, Ramsey, uh, oh well, uh, n-, uh, let's see. Well, do you want to talk to him, Bob, is that it? Well then we can't use the direct line. *[Speaking to the operator.]* Oh, uh, never mind, operator, I'll . . .

Voice 1: All right.

Marshall: . . . do it another way.

Voice 1: All right.

Marshall: Wai-. . . . Could I have Ramsey Clark?

Voice 1: Right.

[Phone clicks twice.]

Voice 2: Yes?

Voice 1?: Mr. Clark.

⁷ Burke Marshall

⁸ Creighton W. Abrams.

Nancy?: Uh, is Mr. Marshall on?

Marshall: Yeah.

Nancy?: Okay.

Marshall: Oh, uh . . .

Nancy?: Hmm?

Marshall: Nancy?

Nancy?: Yeah.

Marshall: Or Bill Geoghegan.⁹ Who's ever free.

Nancy?: Just a second.

/Pause. Unintelligible conversation in the background in room.]

Clark¹⁰: Burke?

Marshall: Oh, Ramsey?

/Phone clicks or is hung up.]

Clark: Yeah.

Marshall: Could you get General Abrams to call Bob over here?

Clark: All right.

Marshall: Because this, uh . . .

Clark: Uh, get him right away. But they haven't got those helicopters in *[Kent City?]*, he says, on theⁱ fear that they couldn't land 'em there at night. But he's gonna

⁹ William A. Geoghegan.

¹⁰ Ramsey Clark

work on the helicopters going into Oxford, see if he can, uh, do something with 'em. He's talking to, uh, Billingslea¹¹ now.

Marshall: Okay.

Clark: *[Yeah?].*

Marshall: Thanks a lot.

Clark: Okay.

Marshall: See if you can get the general to call Bob.

Clark: Right *[here?]?*

Marshall: Yeah.

Clark: Yeah.

[Phone hangs up.]

Voice 3: *[Word unintelligible. May be an echo of last Yeah.]* / Ninety-five seconds of machine noise.

¹¹ Charles Billingslea

Dictabelt 4F

Item 4F7

[October 1, 1962?]

- Abrams¹²: Mr. Geoghegan reports to me that there are *[more?]* than enough trucks at the strip, with a hundred and eighty men in the helicopters.
- RFK: You got a hundred and eighty men? Where, where are the rest of them?
- Abrams: Moving on the road.
- RFK: The, when will they be there?
- Abrams: Uh, 'bout two hours and three quarters. That would be, uh, quarter of three in the morning our time.
- RFK: Quarter of five our time? How, how, how many, how many of them are there?
- Speaker?: *[Off the phone in the room.]* Quarter of five.
- RFK: How many of them are there?
- Abrams: Uh, h-, the, uh, five hundred.
- RFK: And when do the rest of . . .
- Abrams: Behind that, behind that's another battalion, with a, marching right behind them, of six hundred and eighty.
- RFK: They're MPs?
- Abrams: MPs.
- RFK: What was the delay in getting them out of Memphis?
- Abrams: They, uh, thi-, uh, I don't know the details of it, uh, Mr. Kennedy. They, uh, this is the best response they could make, apparently, under the circumstances.

¹² Creighton Abrams

- RFK: Well, who's in charge of that?
- Abrams: Each, uh, each of those battalions have a, has a battalion commander, and, uh, the, uh, the, uh, both battalions are under the command of General Billingslea. Uh, they had a meeting over here this afternoon, which I did not attend. But they had a meeting in which they discussed all these plans.
- [Unintelligible conversation in the background in the room.]
- RFK: Well, didn't they say that they could get off with, and down there within an hour?
- Abrams: Yes, they, uh, they, uh, expected a much more rapid response than has occurred. I know General Billingslea did.
- RFK: What happened then?
- Abrams: I don't know.
- RFK: Is somebody gonna find out?
- Abrams: Yes, sir.
- RFK: [Lets his breath out.] What about the battle group?
- Abrams: Uh, we have gotten ahold of the battle group and, uh, have diverted them. We got ahold of them at [Selmer?] . . .
- RFK: When will they be down there?
- Abrams: . . . Tennessee. I don't have a new, uh, estimate on that, sir. We've, uh, it's only been within the last fifteen or twenty minutes that we got ahold of 'em, and it hasn't been recast. But, uh, I can get it very shortly.
- RFK: Yeah. Will you call me back at the White House?
- Speaker ?: [Words unintelligibly]
- [Continued on Belt 4G.]