

Conversation 422-22

Portion of a conversation between
The President and Brent Scowcroft

The EOB Office
March 22, 1973
Unknown between 10:35-10:56am
10 minutes

The National Archives has prepared the following transcript and does not guarantee its accuracy

“_____” refers to unintelligible portions.

[National Security review portion begins on page 4]

CONVERSATION 422-22

RN: " _____office, ah, I would like for you to, ah, get a hold of the Gergen, er, Buchanan shop over there and tell them that you're_____. I would like from the POW letters and messages--their statements and messages pulled out, and about the ten most powerful things that were said. Not about the President. _____. Ah_____ country. Ah, I'm not interested, I, ah, I don't, I don't, need from them, the, ah, I don't need from them what they said about the bombing, ah, you know what I mean, ah, that is, is the bombing worth_____ I mean their, ah..."

BS: "Sort of the patriotic_____."

RN: "Well, the peace with honor theme basically. In other words, thanks for bringing us back on our _____ on our feet rather than on our knees. It's that kind of thing, ah,_____statements particularly. In other words, love their country, proud of service, ah, we did what was right, and we are proud of what we did, thank you for bringing us back. _____ the very best, all of them_____said about that, understand? I don't need, ah, I don't want, I'm not looking for things that praise the President _____ issued by the White House. Or self-serving but I want_____ I guess you, you could get a hold of Gergen though?"

BS: "Right, he's been, he's been collecting all the..."

RN: "Can't you say to him, now put in your best people on, Andrews, _____. I want you to put two or three guys on it. _____ get it by--today is Thursday and I want to have it by Saturday _____. Ok, now with regard to where we stand...oh, hold on a minute."

[Telephone conversation--not recorded on WHT taping system]

RN: "I forgot to ask you, are we announcing the, ah, the ah, POW party today? Or..."

RN: "Yeah, well, could I, could I suggest that, ah, Ron_____. Be sure to inform, you know, the _____. Alright. Fine, fine. Have it announced later with the number of names that are coming. You'll say that _____ and so forth. Yeah... yeah...White House dinner...White House dinner...served for everybody. Ah, make it for _____. I, I don't want to, I don't, I don't feel _____ myself that we ought to invite the Cabinet officers. I think it should just be the Secretary of State...right...Secretary of Defense, and the, ah, the ah, the Chiefs, the Chiefs of the Armed Services. _____ will be honored. And then you'll have the Congressional _____ okay? Fine. So you'll follow through on that. _____ good."

[End of telephone conversation]

[Begin declassified national security withdrawal]

RN: "Well, with regard...to our, ah, Laotian situation, is there anything new in terms of those nine POWs?"

BS: "Ah, no there isn't. There's a little flurry apparently in Saigon this morning that, ah, we didn't accept, ah, withdrawal, by the 25th in terms of a _____ prisoners of war. _____ not come out."

RN: "We've put it on the basis that we want all of them."

BS: "That's right. That's right."

RN: "Ah, I want to be sure we aren't, ah-- It would leave me in a very bad wicket. We'll just have to continue to work _____ to do it _____. We said we will not leave until all prisoners are released _____ including the nine in Laos."

BS: "That's right, that's right."

RN: "Is that the basis we put it on?"

BS: "That's right."

RN: "So, what's _____ talking about? The press is getting after him _____."

BS: "Well...well, they, they are complaining now that we..."

RN: "_____."

BS: "That's right, that's right."

RN: "Well, how do we, how to _____."

BS: "Well, I think what needs _____. You see, the specific agreement on the release of the Laotian ones is, is more of our understanding and..."

RN: "I know. It's not in the agreement."

BS: "That's right."

RN: "Alright."

BS: "But, ah, ah..."

RN: "Not even a written_____? I think it's a protocol."

BS: "Yes, yes, yes it is a..."

RN: "It's a protocol"

BS: "It is. Well it's not a not a protocol but it's a written understanding..."

RN: "It is a written..."

BS: "_____ to understand..."

RN: "That's right. I _____."

BS: "But, ah, I'm going through...ah, Henry, I'm sure in his press conference said that we have assurances on this and that this is one of the, ah, preconditions for the whole thing."

RN: "Right."

BS: "I think that we can use that."

RN: "Be sure you get that, get that out."

BS: "That's right _____."

RN: "Because, anyway, they wouldn't be out by the 27th. But they are not necessarily going to

return the prisoners _____."

BS: "No, they haven't. They have not set a time and a date yet._____."

RN: " _____offer..."

BS: "That's right, that was an offer contingent upon our complete withdrawal."

RN: " _____."

BS: "We, we said we'd withdraw in terms of the agreement and that all U.S. prisoners in Indochina."

RN: " _____ right. We'll stick to that for all the reasons I've mentioned _____ we've got to do that _____."

BS: "That's right. Unless they-- we'll have to word it some way so we don't disclose the understanding as such, but I'm sure Henry covered that in pretty good detail."

RN: "Yes, we have _____."

BS: " _____."

RN: "You better get it from Ziegler."

BS: "I, I will. They are getting it out right now as a matter of fact."

RN: "And that's all there is to it _____."

BS: "And, I wouldn't, I wouldn't plan--we would say publicly that, in fact, our men will all be out by _____ the 27th at 9:00 pm. We'll just say they'll be out."

RN: "Well, _____."

BS: "Yes."

RN: "You see here is the problem that I have. What I would like to do, that I, I had tentatively planned is that I want a statement at, at the, the magic hour that all Americans are withdrawn, all prisoners are returned. I want to say something. I would like to say that nine o'clock we've _____ confidential _____ ambassador's telephone call _____ staff." _____ So that's what are goal is. Now, if we can't work that out, if they screw around, make _____. The statement cannot be made until all POWs are out and troops are withdrawn."

BS: "Right."

RN: "Ah, and as far as the Laotians are concerned _____ the Pathet Lao, they're just, they're just playing tough _____."

BS: "They're just...yes, as a matter of fact they, the Pathet Lao negotiators have gone back to [San_____]. Ah, and apparently, they are not going to resume discussions _____ that's just the way it's _____ that said that _____."

RN: "Uh huh."

BS: " _____."

RN: "Would this indicate we would, we want to reconsider, or _____."

BS: "Uh, I think it's _____. It really wasn't based on internal, uh, Lao developments, uh..."

RN: "Right. Although we were saying there is the possibility _____ July 3rd _____ that day."

BS: "That's right."

RN: " _____ on that _____."

BS: "That's right."

RN: " _____ that seems reasonable, wouldn't you say?"

BS: " _____ that's ah, _____ factor in the decision
_____."

RN: "My major problem on _____ not the _____ on this
horrible _____ or something _____ [machine malfunctions] _____."

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