

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE
PRESIDENT AND HENRY PETERSEN IN THE OVAL OFFICE ON APRIL
19, 1973, FROM 10:12 TO 11:07 A.M.

IN-CAMERA SUBMISSION APRIL 30, 1974
U.S. v. EHRlichman

4/19/73 President/Henry Petersen Oval Office 10:12-11:07 a.m.

Mr. Petersen is here.

PRESIDENT: Fine. I'll be finished --ulould you tell him that (unintelligible) You know I'm sorry. I keep thinking (unintelligible)

PETERSEN: Morning, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Come on in (unintelligible) wanted to get you back in the court room. I wanted to tell you -(unintelligible) which I think probably should be (unintelligible) in this whole thing.

PETERSEN: Yes, I need to know.

PRESIDENT: Well, the problem basically is this. This-is the Ellsberg case. You remember our late,dear departed friend, Edgar Hoover You will recall -you know how he handled the Ellsberg case. Personally, it involved Marx. He was one of his closest friends. Marx. Not the Marx Brothers, the toy makers.

PETERSEN: Um.

PRESIDENT: Marx's daughter is married to Ellsberg and Hoover just kicked and churned and said, "I'm just not going to investigate this thing. I can't do it." (Unintelligible) This is at least what we got through Mitchell. Under the circumstances, Henry, an investigation was undertaken with a very, very small crew at the White House. That's where the Hunt group -nothing in terms of break-ins or anything was approved. But seeing what these crazy bastards have done since, and seeing what -now the investigation also and this is the hopeful thing as far as the prosecution,.they didn't do a damn bit of good. I mean all they got, they got mostly what appeared in the papers

PETERSEN:

RESTRICTED-"D"

PRESIDENT: What I think is this. None of it will win in the prosecution. Then after that finally Hoover got into it. Now, when Hoover got into it it should now be wiretapping.

PETERSEN: Oh?

PRESIDENT: He said there was no question about that. I don't know who he wiretapped. But I mean that national security taps were used at that time and then as you know with the hullabaloo that arose out there we knocked off all of those taps (unintelligible). I am quite aware of the fact that we do a lot of business in this field.

PETERSEN: Yes sir, yes sir. And I don't know ---

PRESIDENT: I just want you to know. I just -want you to know that my purpose--

PETERSEN: Yes sir. We could hardly be called illegal in this field--

PRESIDENT: My purpose in the Hunt thing in calling you is simply to say it is, it was a national security investigation. It is not related in any way to the Watergate thing.

PETERSEN: Correct.

PRESIDENT: And that the purpose of it was

PETERSEN: Well, is there any other -you know I can't stay away from that which I don't know.

PRESIDENT: Certainly. Did Hunt do anything else?

PETERSEN: Is there any other national security stuff that we could --

PRESIDENT: Yes.

PETERSEN: -inadvertently get into through Hunt.

PRESIDENT: Yes, you could get into other things. For example, Hunt -Hunt involved in bugging, apparently. He tried, for example, on one occasion, he was --it was basically (unintelligible) Ellsberg period, you know, this place was leaking like a sieve, and you remember Kissinger's National Security people.

PETERSEN: Yes, sir. I do.

PRESIDENT: We had a horrible time and frankly the country was in jeopardy because I -it was imperative that our situation with foreign governments and -a lot of others that I'd get Hoover in and say, "Damn it, we've got to (unintelligible)." (Unintelligible) for myself. You know how Hoover was. You know, but he hated to get into anything involving press. So when you -I think though, quite candidly, Hoover for years -you should know this--bugged the-- **RESTRICTED-"B"**

PETEMSEN: I remember the situation, but I don't (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: I can't tell you --

PETERSEN: I remember the entire thing, I remember. I know who you mean but I can't recall his name, either.

PRESIDENT: **RESTRICTED-"B"**

And I know that when I first came into office he used to send that stuff over here by the carload. He used to love that sort of thing. That we discontinued also. We discontinued that.

PETERSEN: Well, I should say, Mr. President, just coincidentally that since they transferred the Internal Security Division to me, uh

PRESIDENT: You have (unintelligible)

PETERSEN: Yes. And I-I. But I'm also

PRESIDENT: I don't know

PETERSEN: The authority runs from you to the Attorney General.

PRESIDENT: Certainly.

PETERSEN: The way some of it is being exercised is only (unintelligible)

PRESIDENT: What?

PETERSEN: The way some of it is being exercised is only (unintelligible). I just set up. I just set up.

PREDIDENT: I don't want the damned thing (unintelligible) you understand. I understand it's been knocked off. I want some -I don't want (unintelligible) understand you're going after gangsters or other things like that. It just isn't worth it.

PETERSEN: No. I am not talking about the national security stuff in the country. I am talking about either foreign intelligence stuff. I am holding some of them up am holding some of them up because they have to be approved by a Deputy somebody over at the State Department and we are tightening up the procedure. That's all.

PRESIDENT: The President approves (unintelligible)

PETERSEN: I understand.

PRESIDENT: I don't know about the Attorney General

RESTRICTED-"B" --now, you
have also heard about Joe Kraft.

PETERSEN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: You've read that column. (Unintelligible) was bugged, I think. But what it involved were leaks of national security documents that had gotten into Kraft's columns and so forth and so on. Nothing came of it as a result except, they, I think, fired somebody over here. Now that -now that's another thing.

PETERSEN: Right.

PRESIDENT: I just wanted you to know that they are investigating, but it is miniscule compared to what Johnson was doing. You--you know what I mean. As you know, it was very heavy during that period -very, very heavy. And as Sullivan sent a memorandum to me and it was pretty shocking. He went after Stevenson on the Democratic Committee and also bugged our plane during the campaign.

PETERSEN: I understand.

PRESIDENT: Now, my point is that that doesn't justify anything now. But in the case of the Hunt thing, you should know that when he was at the White House and he was working in the field of drugs. He worked on this particular activity and Liddy worked with him as I understand. I think Liddy did too. This -but frankly, I really didn't know this myself until this case came out. I said, "What in the (expletive removed) is Hunt doing?" I understand what he was doing and I would have approved at the time because we had nothing that we could get out of Hoover. Hoover did conduct the investigation and did a hell of a good job. Hoover did recommend the investigation to the prosecution on Ellsberg which I think is probably safe. I don't know if he will make it or not.

PETERSEN: I don't know either.

PRESIDENT: I hope so.

PETERSEN: Incidentally...

PRESIDENT: I want you to understand that I have never used the word national security unless it is. As far as Watergate is concerned, or any of that crap, you just -but when I called you the other day I said I am not going to let any stone unturned and that is what you and I have got to understand. But I am anxious to get one or two things, Henry, very important. In terms of privilege --That you -that, One. Any conversations with the President are obviously privileged.

PETERSEN: Yes, sir. I understand that.

PRESIDENT: Everybody shall have a mind and any conversations -and the in the national security area -you can ask any others around here -you ask Dean -Dean-Ehrlichman and Haldeman if Hunt was involved in the Ellsberg -and-he was involved we called it the plumbing operation. And basically it was leaks from the National Security Council which appeared in the columns and it involved only and did not involve any uh -it did not involve any uh any electronic device, evesdropping, but it involved a hell of an investigation, one hell of a lot.

PETERSEN: I indicated to you--

PRESIDENT: That's as much as I know about it at this time.

PETERSEN: I indicated to you the other day -

PRESIDENT: I don't know whether Dean -Dean may be quite familiar with this because he was very much -you know what I mean, he was sort of in charge of this kind of activity and hf~ may be familiar with it and he may not be but I have tried to get this sorted out. I have just had them on it over here, as you know, what did they do and what is there as far as I am concerned, I don't mind anything coming out, but -want anything coming out on the Ellsberg thing.

PETERSEN: Right.

PRESIDENT: We had to do it. I don't want anything coming out on what we were doing with NSC. I don't want anything coming out -what we were doing -Hoover (unintelligible) Hoover (unintelligible)

PETERSEN: (Inaudible)

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) I am hoping for the day when the man I have in mind for that job gets away from what h6 is presently doing so I can put him in but we have got to get a man in there and fast. And I am going to clean everybody out of the Bureau, at second level. Everybody.

PETERSEN: Well---He needs -he's a little ---

PRESIDENT: You know you -with a job like his. (Unintelligible)

PETERSEN: It's not a job anybody should run for, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: What is that?

PETERSEN: It's not a job anybody should ask for or run for. The responsibilities are almost as great as your Office.

PRESIDENT: You should know that I felt -that you were --you came highly commended. Mitchell said Henry Petersen is the best guy for the job.

PETERSEN: In this present difficulty, I am flattered.

PRESIDENT: Well, it's a hell of a thing--a very important thing;

PETERSEN: Mr. President, the other day I indicated that we had a problem with leaks, and as you know, we do.

PRESIDENT: It was shocking to me to see Strachan's testimony--not his latest testimony where the U.S. Attorney--

PETERSEN: Well, I think we are going to have to do something...

PRESIDENT: (Unintelligible) verbatim-verbatim
(unintelligible) legality of this thing
(unintelligible).