

The
PRESIDENTIAL
RECORDINGS

JOHN F. KENNEDY

➔➔➔➔ *THE GREAT CRISES, VOLUME TWO* ➔➔➔➔

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 21, 1962

Timothy Naftali and Philip Zelikow
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Philip Zelikow and Ernest May
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President Kennedy: That poll shows Judd ahead.³⁷

Sorensen: [*Unclear*] the firsthand meeting [*unclear*].

Unidentified: [*Unclear*.]

President Kennedy: If Judd gets to 43 percent . . .

Sorensen: Yeah, [*unclear*] and Andersen's pulled up an old [*unclear*].³⁸

Unidentified: [*Unclear*.]

Unidentified: That just seems ridiculous.

Heller: Did Hubert say that he was doubtful about that poll?³⁹

President Kennedy: Which one?

Heller: This . . . you haven't [*unclear*] this poll, this last one?³⁹

President Kennedy: Yeah, well, no . . . I think we'd better, I don't think they've got much of a poll. I just think the problem is that . . . oop, turn that up, will you? Just turn them up.

The President turned off the machine.

The Secretary of the Treasury stayed behind to continue the discussion with the President and Walter Heller. The President had some time for more telephone calls, then he went to the pool at 7:03 P.M.

Tuesday, October 9, 1962

The President left only one recording from this important day. An hour before he was to sign a piece of pork barrel legislation to satisfy a difficult and powerful congressman, the President called Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield for mutual congratulations on the approval of a compromise version of the foreign aid bill providing for a \$300 million increase over the amount voted by the House.

37. Walter H. Judd was a Republican U.S. representative from Minnesota and keynote speaker at the 1960 Republican National Convention. Judd, in what was considered a mild upset at the time, lost in the 1962 election to Democratic state senator Donald M. Fraser.

38. This is mostly likely a reference to Elmer Lee Andersen, governor of Minnesota, then running for reelection in 1962. His reelection bid resulted in the closest election in Minnesota history with a loss to his opponent by 91 votes.

39. Hubert H. Humphrey was a U.S. senator from Minnesota.

40. A University of Minnesota professor of economics before joining the Kennedy administration, Walter Heller was particularly interested in this Minnesota congressional race.

9:54 A.M.

Are you sure you don't want to witness this—this extraordinary action as I'm bulldozed and bludgeoned and beaten into being the greatest friend of the fish . . . ?

Conversation with Mike Mansfield and Mike Kirwan¹

Congressman Michael “Big Mike” Kirwan had raised the hackles of Senator Wayne Morse by removing, in conference committee on the Interior and Other Agencies Appropriations Bill, several large public works projects destined for Morse’s Oregon. His sole reason, publicly announced, was that Morse had refused to support his \$10 million national aquarium proposal for the same bill. Recognizing both the capricious nature of Kirwan’s maneuvers and also the importance of pleasing the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, who was also a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, Kennedy asked Senator Mansfield and Senator Robert Kerr of Oklahoma to help him settle the Kirwan-Morse dispute. President Kennedy confers here with Mansfield before speaking to Kirwan in an effort to conclude a settlement agreeable to Kirwan, Morse, and the President himself. And though the President signed the Aquarium Bill later that morning, as he promises here, and Kirwan dutifully restored Morse’s public works projects in the Supplemental Appropriations Bill, the national aquarium project itself, planned for the Hains Point area of the nation’s capital, remained dependent on congressional funding that was ultimately never provided.

Mike Mansfield: [*Unclear*] it’s for you, Mike Kirwan and I.

President Kennedy: Right.

Mansfield: I told Mike to put the Oregon items back.

President Kennedy: Right.

Mansfield: And, he would appreciate it—if you’re going to do it—he asked [*unclear*] that you sign the Aquarium Bill as soon as you can.

President Kennedy: Right. In other words, you would not wait on it?

1. Dictabelt 49.1, Cassette M, John F. Kennedy Library, President’s Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection. Mike Mansfield was Democratic U.S. senator from Montana, 1953 to 1977, and Senate majority leader, 1961 to 1977. Michael J. Kirwan was a Democratic U.S. representative from Ohio, 1937 to 1970.

Mansfield: No.

President Kennedy: Right.

Mansfield: It would make Mike very happy.

President Kennedy: Oh, good. I'll sign it this morning, then.

Mansfield: Fine [*unclear*] here—wait a minute. Good-bye. Here's Mike.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Mike Kirwan: Hello.

President Kennedy: Hello, hello.

Kirwan: Yes.

President Kennedy: How are you doing?

Kirwan: This is Mike . . .

President Kennedy: Are you sure you don't want to witness this—

Kirwan: No, no . . . no.

President Kennedy:—this extraordinary action as I'm bulldozed and bludgeoned and beaten into being the greatest friend of the fish . . . ?

Kirwan: That's . . . Do you want me to go down, then?

President Kennedy: I've eaten more fish . . .

Kirwan: What? Well, do you want me to go down?

President Kennedy: Well, why don't you come down and watch it?

Kirwan: All right. That's what I'll . . . when are you going to do it?

President Kennedy: Well, I'll do it whenever you want to be down here.

Kirwan: All right. I'll go right down now, then.

President Kennedy: OK. Right.

The President had an important meeting on Berlin scheduled with the French foreign minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, with whom he intended to share U.S. estimates of how long it would take the allies to respond to a Soviet provocation in Berlin. It would take four days, for example, to launch a battalion-sized probe on the Berlin autobahn. The two men would agree that, given the current tensions on Berlin, contingency planning had to be improved to allow for a much faster response time.²

The President also had two significant meetings on Cuba. Before lunch he met with John McCone, Robert Kennedy, Edwin Martin, George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, and Ralph A. Dungan. In the late afternoon he met again with John McCone, and included Maxwell Taylor and Roswell Gilpatric. The principal decision facing Kennedy was whether to endorse the CIA request for a U-2 flight over San Cristóbal in west cen-

2. Memorandum of Conversation, 9 October 1962, *FRUS*, 15: 351–55.

tral Cuba. The flight was to be over Cuba for only 12 minutes but would come close to some identified SAM sites. The risks were high. The last time the CIA had photographed this part of the island was August 29 and new SAM sites might have been constructed since then. The President approved this mission.³ The U-2 would make its direct over-flight on October 14.

Wednesday, October 10, 1962

John McCone made an unscheduled visit to the White House on October 10. The Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) had just met with the House Appropriations Committee to discuss James B. Donovan's negotiations with Fidel Castro on the Bay of Pigs prisoners. McCone found some congressional uneasiness about these negotiations. Newspapers on Tuesday had carried front-page stories on Donovan's mission, a potential partisan political issue. Donovan was running for the Senate against the Republican Jacob Javits in New York. It was reported that the 1,113 prisoners were expected back in Miami by the weekend.¹ The DCI also wanted to brief the President on low-level photographs of the cargoes on the Soviet merchant ships headed for Cuba. Several ships carried crates that photoanalysts believed contained IL-28 bombers. This was the first hard evidence of the delivery of weapons that might be construed as offensive in character.

Kennedy did not tape this meeting; however, from McCone's detailed summary it is clear that the President was disturbed by these new photographs.² As he had done when the first U-2 photographs of SAM sites were developed, Kennedy asked that this material be withheld from the rest of his administration. His argument was that the domestic political situation was such that any leak of the information about possible bombers would reduce his independence of action. McCone argued against strict restriction and gained the President's approval to reducing the circle of the informed to the President's key advisers and those intelligence officers required to give expert analysis.

3. Gilpatric "Notes on a Meeting with the President," 9 October 1962, described in *FRUS*, 11: 17.

1. "Final Parley Set on Cuba Captives," *New York Times*, 9 October 1962. James Donovan returned from Cuba on October 11 empty handed.

2. Memorandum on Donovan Project, Meeting 10 October 62, John McCone, *FRUS*, 11: 17-19.