

Document 9

Conversation Between President Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and Between President Nixon and Secretary of State William Rogers, respectively, 17 October 1971

[Source: National Archives, Nixon White House Tapes, Conversations 11-102 and 11-105]
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This excerpt of a telephone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, who was in Hawaii on the first leg of his return trip to Beijing, dealt with the prospects for lining up enough votes in the United Nations in support of the United States' important question resolution to require a two-thirds vote to expel Taiwan. Of the countries mentioned, Argentina, Ghana, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela voted in favor of the important question resolution; Britain, Canada, Ireland, Kenya, and Pakistan opposed it; and Austria, Belgium, Iran, Italy, Morocco, the Netherlands and Turkey abstained.

Nixon: I've been looking incidentally, at the—I just looked today, been studying that paper on the, the uncommitted nations on the Taiwan thing. And it would seem to me that if Bush and Rogers could work—they could enlist almost, you know, people like Connally¹ if they want to on matters in [inaudible]. At least half of those countries just haven't any goddamn business to be fooling around with that.

Kissinger: We have moved a number of them already, Mr. President. For example, Indonesia is going to vote with us.

Nixon: Yeah. But I was thinking, for example, I just looked over it again now—now the Panamanians, now dammit they just have gotta—

Kissinger: They almost certainly will—

Nixon: The Panamanians, the ah—certainly you've spoken to the Israeli. It's ridiculous—

Kissinger: To the Israeli—

Nixon: The Israeli can't expect us to stand with them and be the only one and then for them to desert us on this.

Kissinger: Exactly.

Nixon: And, ah, good god, Venezuela—hell we've helped them on their oil thing, now they've just got to play along here. We'll remember. It's, it's—that's the kind of game that they ought to be playing. I trust that that's what they are doing.

Kissinger: Yes.

Nixon: I think I'll—

Kissinger: We sent messages yesterday to Morocco, Austria, Argentina—

¹ Secretary of the Treasury John Connally.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: And, ah, I forget there was a fourth country—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: Italy.

Nixon: Well, Italy may be tough.

Kissinger: And, ah, there are three more on [inaudible] and we've already sent messages to Ireland and the Netherlands. And Ireland almost certainly is going to come back to us.

Nixon: Well, I talked today to—well, not to Dick—to John Morris—but his brother Dick had talked to him—he says Ireland was leaning the other way. And I said well for [inaudible] and they're bitching because of that airline thing, you know.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: Which seemed to me to be a—frankly I don't see why we did that, but ah, that's, ah—we seem to be a sort of a—I mean a pretty small thing for us to try to—

Kissinger: It was sort of a petty thing to do.

Nixon: To irritate the Irish about, but ah—I guess Flanigan² is handling that and he said that—

Kissinger: Flanigan felt very strongly about it.

Nixon: What, to do it?

Kissinger: That we should do it.

Nixon: I know, I know, but ah, I'm just not sure we should have.

Kissinger: Yeah.

Nixon: But, ah, be that as it may, looking at the Irish, why the hell should they go with the English, rather than us? That's what it gets down to on this.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: And—

Kissinger: The latest tally which I got today is that we're now four votes ahead.

Nixon: Well—

Kissinger: That [inaudible] fifth memo you have is about a week—is about from last June.

² Assistant to the President Peter M. Flanigan.

Nixon: I'm going to get—I'm going to get Haig—get Haig and Rogers and Bush³ and just the four of them—three of them and just go over 'em country by country with them—to see if they are actually doing everything they need to do. I'm not going to get involved but I'm certainly going to—there isn't any reason why on some of these things we can't be pretty tough. Don't you agree?

Kissinger: I agree completely.

Nixon: I mean in terms of saying, well now—to Venezuela, you just—and Panama. But on those African countries, good god, Kenya and the rest. They have no reason to—Ghana. Now what the hell would Ghana be there against us?

Kissinger: The major thing would be that you should be [inaudible] out of it in a way that they can ascribe to you.

Nixon: I'm going to do that. But I think I can, can—might indicate some ways that our people can be rather strong, and ah, in lining up some votes. Maybe the, it's ah, because we just shouldn't lose some of those countries, Henry, that's all there is to it.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: Most of those—most of those on the list I saw—the uncommitted list where it indicated we had 52 certain, they had 56 certain.

Kissinger: Now it looks like 59 to 55.

Nixon: Yeah, well—

Kissinger: 'Cause Indonesia had switched, and we picked up some of the others.

Nixon: But it should be on the basis, in my view, that we just go to these countries and say, look here, you're interested in a lot of things from us—now this is a small thing we ask and, ah, we just think that you ought not to be against us. And also, there's another very powerful argument here. Ah, I notice Greece is on the list. Now, and Turkey—Greece and Turkey are out of their damn minds to go that way. Because the Congress—the Cong—let me say this—

Kissinger: [Inaudible]

Nixon: What's that?

Kissinger: We've sent a message to Turkey that even mentions you.

Nixon: Yeah. Look at Greece and Turkey in terms of the Congress. Their only supporters in the Congress are supporters of Taiwan. You know?

³ Kissinger's Deputy Alexander Haig, Secretary of State William Rogers, and U.N. Ambassador George Bush.

Kissinger: What we should do with Greece is to send a message through Agnew⁴ to take it up when he's there.

Nixon: Yeah. Well, I'll push that out tomorrow. And just indicate that it'll have a hell of an effect in their support in the Congress. And it will, there's no question about it.

Kissinger: Mr. President, out of the White House, because State sure as hell is going to leak it.

Nixon: Oh, I know, I won't get it out of the White House, but I meant I want them to do it—I want State to get—

Kissinger: No, but what I mean there we could actually do a back channel to Tasca⁵ to give to Agnew.

Nixon: Yeah, well, I know, I know what you mean—don't worry, I'm not going to get involved in it myself, but I'll see that it's done in a way that, ah, State and others don't miss any bets here in really twisting arms. Because it isn't—I mean—we've made all the public—both Rogers and Bush have made their public statements, and they're strong enough. Now it's really a question of just privately telling these countries—now, you're gonna go with us, [or] you're gonna be on the other side?

Kissinger: [Inaudible].

Nixon: Well, in any event, we'll keep it going on some of these things, and I hope that the count—that Bush's count is an accurate one. Do you think it is?

Kissinger: Ah, it's hard to tell.

Nixon: Can't tell whether they're telling him something and telling somebody else something else?

Kissinger: Right. Or how they're counting this.

Nixon: Uh hum.

Kissinger: I think—

Nixon: I suppose the British—the British are probably—they're going to play it very hard the other way just to prove that—you know—

Kissinger: That's one of the troubles.

Nixon: They want to get to Peking.

Kissinger: That's one of the troubles.

Nixon: That's right.

⁴ Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, who was traveling in the region at the time.

⁵ Henry J. Tasca, U.S. Ambassador to Greece.

Kissinger: They're actually lobbying against us.

Nixon: I know they are, and I know that you've talked to Cromer,⁶ but probably isn't going to do any good.

Kissinger: Well, he promised me they'd stop it.

Nixon: Yeah. Well, they don't really have to go that far.

Kissinger: No.

Nixon: And, ah, they've got—look, for example, they've got everything from Rhodesian chrome to South Africa to everything else where we try to be nice to them.

Kissinger: That's absolutely right.

Nixon: And that's—that's my view on this. This is something they don't—I think what it is of course is they're sort of trying to—they look at us going to Peking and I suppose they say well, we'll get there first. Uh?

Kissinger: Well, except they haven't got their orders.

Nixon: Well, I know—I don't think they're going to gain anything with Peking by doing it.

Kissinger: [Inaudible].

Nixon: Well, I'll see that the thing is handled properly in that way. OK. You take off for Guam tomorrow?

Kissinger: I take off for Guam tomorrow, Mr. President.

Nixon: Good. Uhum. Uhum. Well, OK, I probably won't be talking to you again—you go on and have a good day at the beach. OK?

Kissinger: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for calling.

Nixon: Fine, bye.

Immediately after the above conversation, Nixon initiated the following call to Secretary of State William Rogers, to discuss further the efforts to line up support for the U.N. strategy.

[Excerpt; the first part of the conversation dealt with baseball and bowling and was not transcribed.]

Nixon: I was wondering if you and Bush and Haig might—the four of us could have a talk sometime this week. No hurry, just to look over those votes, you know, on the U.N.

⁶ George Rowland Stanley Baring, Earl of Cromer, and British Ambassador to the United States, 1971-74.

thing. Ah, it seems as I looked at the list—the uncommitted list—that, my god, when you see countries like Venezuela and Panama and others that we've—and Greece and Turkey, [inaudible] which we are life and death. I mean, they've just got to give us a vote on a thing like this, you know, it's just—

Rogers: [Inaudible].

Nixon: And I know you that you're doing all you can. I should stay out of it, I think—you know what I mean, I should—I've done what I—as you know, remember [inaudible] I received the Senator—the Congressmen, and that was a hell of a list, 350 people.

Rogers: Uh hum.

Nixon: But you've made, you've made a strong public statement, and taken the leadership on it—you've also got the, ah—George has and I think if we can, ah—I think getting me involved puts in too direct a deal, particularly when we're working up to Peking in too direct a case—I'm just, you know, they'll try to play it as if we're playing it against Peking, which is really not the case. But do you think a meeting would be useful, just to—

Rogers: I think it would.

Nixon: Just to, just to—

Rogers: I think it would be useful and I think it would be helpful if Ron Ziegler⁷ could say something to the effect that, ah, of course the President of the United States supports the efforts that have been made by the Secretary of State and Ambassador Bush, or something like that. There is a feeling that maybe, ah, maybe that's not the case. I don't think you should actively get involved.

Nixon: Uh hum.

Rogers: But I think it might make the difference between winning and losing if you could say something.

Nixon: Yeah, I see.

Rogers: Have Ziegler say something.

Nixon: Yeah. Well, we could get a, get a question planned, and that I've—

Rogers: Matter of fact, the Chinese Ambassador—the foreign minister from Taiwan came in to see me the last day up there and made that, made that request. And said a lot of people think that the President is—doesn't have his heart in it, but you're working hard but they're not sure that the White House and so forth. And I said that's not true, of course, as you know the President—

⁷ Presidential Press Secretary Ron Ziegler.

Nixon: I think it's a level of visibility, but I think a Ziegler statement I think would be very appropriate. As I say, as you know I did receive those—that group of Congressmen, that got some, quite a bit of play.

Rogers: That's right.

Nixon: And, ah—

Rogers: I think if you could do something like that for us, if we lose it, you could later on say that you—

Nixon: Yeah. Well, I think—I don't want to lose it, though. I think it's—you ought to be fighting this battle and then having the right wing take off from the United Nations and everything else it'd be a hell of a thing.

Rogers: That's right.

Nixon: And—

Rogers: It's awfully close.

Nixon: And it's close enough that it could be won, it seems to me now.

Rogers: I think we should make every effort.

Nixon: It's close enough that it could be won because—as I said, if you look at some of these votes, it just shouldn't be on the other side.

Rogers: That's right.

Nixon: Because they depend so much on us. I mean, good god, Israel—Israel—we're their only friends. They shouldn't vote against us on this.

Rogers: Well, I think they've got to vote with us. If they don't vote with us—

Nixon: Well, that's the problem—they need to be told that quite directly, it seems to me.

Rogers: Well, Henry told them, I've told them.

Nixon: I know, I know.

Rogers: And you know—

Nixon: I know, I know. Well, I think maybe some of that will—I would hope would come through in the end, but ah—how hard are the British lobbying against us?

Rogers: Oh, they've been—they were bad at first, but I think it was the lower level—I had George talk to the Ambassador up there, and he promised us that he'd get everybody turned off and I think they've been better lately. What they do, though, is in a soft voice they say, oh the United States is not going to win, and that's harmful as hell.

Nixon: Yeah.

Rogers: But I think they've been a little bit better lately.

Nixon: Uh hum, uh hum.

Rogers: But, I'm not sure there is anything else we can do.

Nixon: Yeah, well—

Rogers: You talked to Alex Home⁸ about it.

Nixon: Sure, sure, sure.

Rogers: The Italians are the ones that, ah, could make a big difference. If they vote with us, it could make a very significant difference.

Nixon: Well, is there, ah, now I mentioned I of course [inaudible] tomorrow, but ah—

Rogers: I think maybe you should send an oral note—oral [inaudible] letter, you know, statement, to Turnbull.

Nixon: That's the Ambassador?

Rogers: That's him. They'll make a difference in Turkey, and possibly in Iran, and ah, they can make a difference in Argentina.

Nixon: Yes, I see.

Rogers: Because they're in the process of trying to improve their relations with the PRC.

Nixon: Sure, sure, well everybody is.

Rogers: [Inaudible].

Nixon: They think we're trying to improve our relations, therefore they think they ought to get in ahead of us. I understand that.

Rogers: That's right. Now, the one nation that deserves a hell of a lot of credit is Belgium.

Nixon: Is that right?

Rogers: Oh, they're trying to improve their relations—in fact, they're having discussions now about renewing diplomatic relations with Communist China, and they're going to vote with us on both. Harmel⁹ is such a fine gentleman.

Nixon: Oh yes.

⁸British Secretary of State Sir Alexander Douglas-Home.

⁹Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel.

Rogers: Very helpful. [Inaudible]. They're really—Belgium and Luxembourg are the only two NATO countries that are with us.

Nixon: Is that right?

Rogers: Well—

Nixon: I'll be darned.

Rogers: Well, we're trying to get Greece and Turkey but I mean, Belgium and Luxembourg are the only two that are helpful.

Nixon: We better get Greece and Turkey—I swear to god. Would it be, would it be useful to have Agnew?

Rogers: [I] Asked him, and he said he would. But he [inaudible].

Nixon: I tell you, in the morning, well when we meet, maybe you just get a message to him and tell him we've met and that this is of the highest priority. The thing that I think ought to be—I think with Greece and Turkey, what they must remember is that their, frankly only, supporters in our Congress are the people that would be out of their minds if they vote against Taiwan. You see?

Rogers: That's right.

Nixon: Now that's a very potent point, you know—there's a hell of a lot of people who want to cut off aid to—certainly Greece.

Rogers: That's right.

Nixon: Don't you agree?

Rogers: I think Greece is probably going to be with us. Turkey is a tough one. Ah—

Nixon: Why are they leaning the other way?

Rogers: Well, they are a little bit closer of course to China.

Nixon: Yeah.

Rogers: And they are in the process now of establishing diplomatic relations with them.

Nixon: Well, they can do that too—but, ah, this isn't gonna, this isn't gonna harm that.

Rogers: Well, they don't think so, though. They look at countries like Canada, and Italy—

Nixon: Yeah.

Rogers: And they say well, why the hell is Canada and Italy and these other countries that are doing this and why do you expect us to? Why, I mean Italy is a good example—that's

why Italy is important because they see the analogy with Italy and, ah—but I think we've got—I think we've got to get Turkey. If we could get Turkey and Argentina—

Nixon: Now what is our—how do we work in Argentina? Lodge¹⁰ I suppose.

Rogers: Well, I think there again that a message from you to the President—I think he leans in our direction; their foreign minister, he leans the other way.

Nixon: Uh hum.

Rogers: Ah—

Nixon: In other words, use the oral message technique.

Rogers: That's right. To both Argentina and Italy. Ah, Mexico is also troublesome, but I would—

Nixon: Yeah, I suppose they'd be tough.

Rogers: Well, damn it, their president is a nice fellow, had a long talk with him in front of his foreign minister, and his foreign minister is sort of an insipid little guy.

Nixon: Yeah.

Rogers: And, ah, I must say that I came away ahead—the President was quite impressed and went out of his way to say “you know I didn't really have a clear understanding of it before” and so forth. I think I've got him on our side in terms of not voting against us—I think they may abstain, but we need their vote on this important question. That's the key vote, of course. And right at the moment, ah—

Nixon: What is the date of the vote now, do you anticipate?

Rogers: I think it's going to be about the 28th.

Nixon: Uh hum, uh hum.

Rogers: So, we've got a little time.

Nixon: Yeah.

Rogers: It's almost too—

Nixon: Never much.

Rogers: That's right.

Nixon: Never enough, never enough.

Rogers: Well, you'd like then to see—

¹⁰ Henry Cabot Lodge.

Nixon: Well, let me, let me see what I have tomorrow, when I get with Haldeman¹¹ to see what we've got—the time, and then I'll get in touch with you as to when we can—you know, sit down and—we need to take a half hour to look over the things to see which ones—but in the meantime, I think you ought to—let's get a—you ought to get some—when does Agnew get to Greece? Is he there now?

Rogers: He's there now. I think that Turkey—he's left Turkey so the tough one—I I think he's gonna do what he can, I think that—

Nixon: I would think he would because he believes it.

Rogers: Oh sure, sure. And I had a—

Nixon: And you've already told him that.

Rogers: Oh yes.

Nixon: All right, well then he'll do it. I don't think you need to do anything more with him, but—do you?

Rogers: No, I don't think so.

Nixon: Is Martin¹²—is he adequate to do the job on Colombo—he could go in, he could talk to him quite firmly, couldn't he?

Rogers: Ah, yes, sure, sure. He's on pretty good terms with him.

Nixon: Uh hum. What we might do with him, is just—I—we, we didn't send one to Italy yet, and I know there were some oral messages went out.

Rogers: They went to Ireland and, ah—Iran is another one—the Shah should be with us. But he's playing sort of a mixed up game too.

Nixon: Sure. [Inaudible]. OK, well, we'll see you tomorrow.

Rogers: Bye, Mr. President. Thanks for calling. Bye.

In a later conversation (Conversation 12-116, October 25, 1971, not transcribed) Nixon suggested that U.S. aid decisions should mesh with the U.N. vote—the U.S. government would provide aid to those who supported the United States, and the Chinese could help those who didn't.

¹¹ White House Chief of Staff H.R. "Bob" Haldeman.

¹² Graham A. Martin.