

**Date:** 1972-06-23

**Time:** 10:04-11:39

**Participants:** Richard M. Nixon, H. R. “Bob” Haldeman

**Location:** Oval Office

**Tape:** 741-002

SCROLLER TITLE: The Smoking Gun

SCENE SETTER: When the White House released this transcript in August 1974, it contradicted President Nixon’s claims that he had not interfered with the FBI investigation of the Watergate break-in. Large numbers of congressional Republicans promptly switched from defending Nixon to calling on him to resign or face impeachment by the House and conviction by the Senate.

**H. R. “Bob” Haldeman:** —on the investigation—you know, the Democratic break-in thing—we’re back in the problem area because the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] is not under control, because [L. Patrick “Pat”] Gray doesn’t exactly know how to control them.

And they have—their investigation is now leading into some productive areas, ’cause they’ve been able to trace the money, not through the money itself, but through the bank, you know, sources [*President Nixon acknowledges*]—the banker himself. And it goes in some directions we don’t want it to go.

Also, there have been some things, like an informant came in off the street to the FBI in Miami [Florida] with—who is a photographer or has a friend who’s a photographer, who developed some films for this guy [Bernard L.] Barker. And the films had pictures of Democratic National Committee letterhead documents and things. So he’s got—there’s things like that that are going to—that are filtering in.

[John N.] Mitchell came up with yesterday, and John [W.] Dean [III] analyzed very carefully last night and concludes—concur now with Mitchell’s recommendation, that the only way to solve this—and we’re set up beautifully to do it—in that the net—the only network that paid any attention to it last night was NBC, who did a [*President Nixon acknowledges*] massive story on the Cuban—

**President Nixon:** That’s right. [*Unclear.*]

**Haldeman:** —thing. But the way to handle this now is for us to have [Vernon A.] Walters call Pat Gray and just say, “Stay the hell out of this. This is—there’s some business here we don’t want you going any further on.” That’s not an unusual development.

**President Nixon:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Haldeman:** And . . . that would take care of it.

**President Nixon:** What’s the matter with Pat Gray? You mean, he doesn’t want to?

**Haldeman:** Pat does want to. He doesn’t know how to, and he doesn’t have any basis for doing it. Given this, he will then have the basis. He’ll call [W.] Mark Felt [Sr.] in, and the two of them—and Mark Felt wants to cooperate, because he’s ambitious.

**President Nixon:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Haldeman:** They'll call them in and say, "We've gotten a signal from across the river [*President Nixon acknowledges*] to put the hold on this." And that'll fit rather well, because the FBI agents who are working the case, at this point, feel that's what it is: this is CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. [*A telephone rings in the background.*]

**President Nixon:** But they're tracing the money to whom?

**Haldeman:** Well, they haven't—they've traced it to a name, but they haven't gotten to the guy yet.

**President Nixon:** Who is it? Is it somebody here?

**Haldeman:** [Kenneth H.] Ken Dahlberg.

**President Nixon:** Who the hell is Ken Dahlberg?

**Haldeman:** He's a—he gave 25,000 [dollars] in Minnesota, and . . . the check went directly into this guy Barker.

**President Nixon:** Well, maybe he's a . . . Well, he didn't—I mean, this isn't from the Committee [to Re-Elect the President], though, is it? From [Maurice H. "Maury"] Stans?

**Haldeman:** Yeah. It is. It was . . . It's directly traceable, and there's some more through some Texas people in—that went to the Mexican bank, which they can also trace through the Mexican bank. They'll get their names today. [*President Nixon acknowledges.*] And . . .

**President Nixon:** Well, I mean, there's no way that—I'm just thinking if they don't cooperate, then what do they say? That they were approached by the Cubans? That's what Dahlberg has to say, and the Texans, too. [*Unclear.*]

**Haldeman:** Well, if they will. But then we're relying on more and more people all the time. That's the problem. And it does stop if we could—if we take this other step.

**President Nixon:** All right, fine. All right.

**Haldeman:** And they seem to feel the thing to do is to get them to stop.

**President Nixon:** All right, fine.

**Haldeman:** And they say the only way to do that is a White House instruction, and that it's got to be to [Richard M. "Dick"] Helms and . . . what's his name? Walters.

**President Nixon:** Walters.

**Haldeman:** And the proposal would be that [John D.] Ehrlichman [*clears throat*] and I call them in—

**President Nixon:** All right, fine.

**Haldeman:** —and say—

**President Nixon:** How do you call them in? I mean, —well, we protected Helms from one hell of a lot of things.

**Haldeman:** That's what Ehrlichman says.

**President Nixon:** And, of course, this is a . . . [E. Howard] Hunt will—that'll uncover a lot of—he had a lot of [unclear] when you open that scab, there's a hell of a lot of things. And then “we just feel that this would be very detrimental to have this thing go any further, that this involves these Cubans, and Hunt, and a lot of hanky-panky that we have nothing to do with ourselves.”

Well, what the hell, did Mitchell know about this thing [unclear]?

**Haldeman:** I think so. I don't think he knew the details, but I think he knew.

**President Nixon:** He didn't know how it was going to be handled, though, with Dahlberg and the Texans, and so forth? Well, who was the asshole that did [unclear]? Is it [G. Gordon] Liddy? Is that the fellow? He must be a little nuts.

**Haldeman:** He is.

**President Nixon:** I mean, he just isn't well screwed on is he? Isn't that the problem?

**Haldeman:** No, he was under pressure, apparently, to get more information, and as he got more pressure, he pushed the people harder to move harder on—

**President Nixon:** Pressure from Mitchell?

**Haldeman:** Apparently.

**President Nixon:** Oh, Mitchell, Mitchell—isn't that the point that you made? [Unclear.]

**Haldeman:** [Unclear.] Yeah.

**President Nixon:** All right, fine. I understand it all. We won't second-guess Mitchell and the rest. Thank God it wasn't [Charles W. “Chuck”] Colson.

**Haldeman:** The FBI interviewed Colson yesterday. They determined that that would be a good thing to do.

**President Nixon:** Mm-hmm.

**Haldeman:** To have him take a—

**President Nixon:** Mm-hmm, good.

**Haldeman:** —an interrogation, which he did, and that—the FBI guys working the case had concluded that there were one or two possibilities: One, that this was a White House . . . They don't think there's anything about the Election Committee. They think it was either a White House operation that had some obscure reasons for it, nonpolitical—

**President Nixon:** Mm-hmm.

**Haldeman:** —or it was a—

**President Nixon:** Cuban—

**Haldeman:** —the Cubans and the CIA. And after their interrogation of—

**President Nixon:** Colson.

**Haldeman:** —Colson yesterday, they concluded it was not White House, so they're now convinced it's a CIA thing. So the CIA turnoff would . . .

**President Nixon:** Well, I [*unclear*] Helms [*unclear*] get that closely involved.

**Haldeman:** [speaking under President Nixon] No, sir. We don't want you to.

**President Nixon:** You call him in. Good. Good deal. Play it tough. That's the way they play it, and that's the way we're going to play it.

**Haldeman:** OK.

*End of excerpt.*

CITATION: "Richard M. Nixon and H. R. 'Bob' Haldeman on 23 June 1972," Conversation 741-002, Draft Transcript, Presidential Recordings Program, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.