

WH6408-05-4693

Date: 1964-08-04

Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson

Participant: Cartha D. DeLoach

Start Time: 20:01

Place: Oval Office

SCROLLER TITLE: "The FBI Has Found Three Bodies"

SCENE SETTER: Federal Bureau of Investigation assistant director Cartha D. "Deke" DeLoach phoned President Johnson to let him know that agents had discovered three bodies presumed to be those of civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, who had been missing since mid-June. Although the Bureau had not identified the bodies, found in an earthen dam near Philadelphia, Mississippi, Johnson wanted to notify the families prior to any announcement of the discovery, as "that kind of eases it a little bit."

Cartha D. "Deke" DeLoach: Mr. President?

President Johnson: Yeah.

DeLoach: Mr. [J. Edgar] Hoover wanted me to call you, sir, immediately and tell you that the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] has found three bodies six miles southwest of Philadelphia, Mississippi, the—six miles west of where the civil rights workers were last seen on the night of June 21st. Now, a search party of agents turned up the bodies just about 15 minutes ago while they were digging in the woods and underbrush several hundred yards off Route 21 in that area. We're going to get a coroner there right away, sir, and we're going to move these bodies into Jackson, Mississippi, where we hope they can be identified. We have not identified them as yet as the three missing men, but we have every reason to believe that they *are* the three missing men. They were under a—they were at the site of a dam that had been constructed near Philadelphia, Mississippi. [*President Johnson acknowledges.*] I wanted to let you know right away, sir.

President Johnson: When are you going to make an announcement?

DeLoach: Within ten minutes, sir, if it's all right with you.

President Johnson: All right. How are you going to make it? Where? From there? From—

DeLoach: I plan to make it from Washington. Here, sir.

President Johnson: All right. All right.

DeLoach: Just indicate that the FBI has found three bodies but not identified them.

President Johnson: [*Exhales heavily.*] OK. If you can hold it about 15 minutes, I think we ought to notify these families.

DeLoach: Well, Mr. President, the only thing I'd—suggestion I'd have there is: Do you wish to do that prior to the time that they're identified? We think they're the ones, but—

President Johnson: Well, I think we could tell them that we don't know, but we found them, and that kind of eases it a little bit.

DeLoach: Yes, sir. All right, sir. Shall I wait till I—

President Johnson: Yeah, I'll get right back to you.

DeLoach: Very good, sir.

End of excerpt.

CITATION: "Lyndon B. Johnson and Cartha D. 'Deke' DeLoach on 4 August 1964," Conversation WH6408-05-4693, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition [Lyndon B. Johnson: Civil Rights, Vietnam, and the War on Poverty]*, ed. David G. Coleman, Kent B. Germany, Guian A. McKee, and Marc J. Selverstone] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4000958>