



## “We Weren’t Killing Dominicans”

**Date:** 1965-05-05

**Conversation:** WH6505-05-7582

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** George H. Mahon

**Start Time:** 11:55

**Duration:** 01:27

**Place:** Oval Office

SCENE SETTER: As he urged House Appropriations Committee chair George H. Mahon [D–Texas] to pass a \$700-million supplemental aid request for Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, President Johnson said that he had intervened in the latter to save American lives.

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**President Johnson:** But we’re not going to be like a mother, sit there with all of our children being lined up and shot! And at five o’clock, we were told they were marching 100 policemen down the street, put them against a wall to shoot them. [*Mahon acknowledges.*] If they’re doing that to their people, what would they be doing to ours?

**George H. Mahon:** That’s right.

**President Johnson:** Now, as it is, they’ll say, “Well, you ought to have done so-and-so. As I look back, you ought to [have] called a meeting of the United Nations or the OAS [Organization of American States] and had them debate for a while longer.” If I had done that and 100 had been killed, they’d have said, “Why didn’t the idiot take precautions and *then* call the meeting?”

**Mahon:** That’s right.

**President Johnson:** So either way you go, you got it. And—But the point is this: we haven’t killed anybody, and they haven’t killed a single civilian up to now. And we have saved—they had 1,500 to 2,000 Dominicans in the streets smelling dead.

**Mahon:** Yeah.

**President Johnson:** But there[’s] not an American, because we surrounded them, we put our people around them, we put—cut off the zone, and we have not lost an American life as of yet. Now, the snipers picked off six of our Marines from top of buildings. But we weren’t killing Dominicans. We were there protecting Americans and 36 other countries. And we haven’t lost a life, which is the most phenomenal thing that you ever heard of.

**Mahon:** That’s right.

**President Johnson:** And I told [Robert S. “Bob”] McNamara after the order was issued, I said, “Now, let’s don’t get some wild bully or some captain that’ll start shooting up the street when they invade on him. Let’s get the best man we got in the United States Army, send him, put him in charge, and tell him to use a cool head. And his job is not to kill anybody, but to keep any of our people [from] being killed.”

**Mahon:** Yeah.

**President Johnson:** Now, that’s it.

*End of excerpt.*

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