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RECORDING OF THE
MEETING BETWEEN THE
PRESIDENT AND JOHN
DEAN ON APRIL 16,
1973, FROM 4:07 TO
4:35 P.M.

ITEM 23.1

SONY CORP.
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE WATERGATE SPECIAL PROSECUTION FORCE
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23.1

PRESIDENT: Hi, John.

DEAN: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT: Well, what's it been today?

DEAN: Yeah. I've been, uh, spent most of the day, uh, trying to put together a statement. I think that you could come out, having (inaudible) the people have done, and working (inaudible)...

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) working (inaudible)

DEAN: I think we're all kind of driving at the same point, uh, I'm working on a draft (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: I must be (inaudible) and so forth. Looking at it (inaudible).

DEAN: Uh, I, I'm thinking of calling Dick Moore in on it, Dick has been...

PRESIDENT: Good.

DEAN: working on these other things, and uh...

PRESIDENT: What would be best, rather than to (inaudible).

DEAN: Put them together or...It's got a strong thrust that puts you way ahead of court in trying to fix...

PRESIDENT: It might be best to even dig without it.

DEAN: Well, this has, this has been such a tough question in here, and I'd really like to (inaudible) is the degree of buying votes right at this hour. Now there's one paragraph...

PRESIDENT: That's a very tough question.

DEAN: But it's a kind of, this is also the question of...I had one paragraph in here where it says what you're doing as a result of what's come to your attention and kinda goes through what Petersen is saying. In fact...And one of the points is that you've decided all members of the White House staff will be called before the grand jury effective immediately. They'll be on administrative leave until such time as the grand jury completes its work. Now here's the, uh...

PRESIDENT: How about a paragraph? (inaudible).

DEAN: In this connection, I have not even spared (inaudible) my closest staff advisors, and included in that are H.R. Haldeman, uh, John Ehrlichman, (inaudible), John Dean, Counsel to the President. Now, you can do that or you could leave that out and let them guess who...is under consideration.

PRESIDENT: Anybody called before the grand jury.

DEAN: That's right. (inaudible)

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) on, uh, the Haldeman, Ehrlichman. But then, the other thing, the landslide, it's tough for them.

DEAN: I know, I know.

PRESIDENT: As far as that's concerned. (inaudible) Ehrlichman.

DEAN: I have a, I have a . . .

PRESIDENT: (Inaudible) He right now, but that the trouble with that is that I just talked to Petersen. Here's... Petersen business... there's nothing on your letter. We think it's possibly better, it's better to get the letter, get the letter, and get the, get the, this out. Uh, I said well, uh, what, what do you think about it. I, I said there should negotiate with your attorney.

DEAN: Uh, huh.

PRESIDENT: I said well I don't want to interfere with the negotiation or with the right (inaudible). He didn't think that, that a lot clearer, but he did not recommend it.

DEAN: Uh, huh. He's a bandplayer, though.

PRESIDENT: However, of the, of the prosecution, it would not be harmful to an individual, you know. We have the resignations in hand for one thing, we have access to the testimony we can present.

DEAN: Uh, huh.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) the point (inaudible) see what you had in mind.

DEAN: I had a letter...

PRESIDENT: But that's his point, though.

DEAN: I have a letter, uh, to the White House today, uh, I wrote a letter, uh, to...I thought, I thought was fair.

PRESIDENT: Fair to everybody?

DEAN: Fair to everybody.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) any of the (inaudible)?

DEAN: Any of the (inaudible). I, I wrote uh, "Dear Mr. President, you have informed me that Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman have verbally tendered their request to be given an immediate and indefinite leave of absence from the staff. By this letter I wish to also confirm my similar request that I be given such a leave of absence from the staff." That doesn't raise anything.

PRESIDENT: Raises a (inaudible).

DEAN: Well, uh, no, I, I think that, uh, I think there is, I think there is...the problem...

PRESIDENT: You don't want to go if they stay.

DEAN: That there is a problem for you of the scapegoat conspiracy that you...

PRESIDENT: That's right, sorta like Magruder and people with commitments.

DEAN: That's right...Uh, you know, everybody is to, is appearing before the grand jury...

PRESIDENT: Humph.

DEAN: This does not impute guilt to anybody. Uh...

PRESIDENT: Put it this way: I think rather (inaudible for 10 seconds). Perhaps I did. But I can say this: if I, if you are, you (inaudible). We already, we already have said that.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: In this case, and uh...

DEAN: The only man you're dealing with is Petersen and the only role I had was to help fill in any information I have. The idea was that the public relations was the problem, but you know, you know where...

PRESIDENT: But you could say, you could say that, uh, John, say the President (inaudible). (inaudible)?

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: And, uh, that, uh (inaudible)

DEAN: I don't know what I could add (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) Uh, Hunt and Colson, Hunt, uh...

DEAN: That's right. That goes on ahead of breaking.

PRESIDENT: And Magruder (inaudible).

DEAN: Mitchell (inaudible) not (inaudible). I wasn't counting on that, you know.

PRESIDENT: Yes, I do. We have maybe you, Magruder, uh, Magruder's lawyers, uh, Magruder bearing hard on the Ervin Committee and on Sirica. (inaudible). On the other hand, (inaudible) while I trust...I may ask for a (inaudible). But I've asked...I don't, I don't want to go, uh, I don't want to go talking to anybody else, like, uh... (inaudible) would prefer Hitler.

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: But I mean, uh, other, uh (inaudible).

DEAN: (inaudible) investigative work.

PRESIDENT: Well that's right (inaudible) is not coming to, uh, go before the grand jury...

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: (Inaudible).

DEAN: (inaudible) that off 3 weeks ago.

PRESIDENT: Good (inaudible) March 21st. We'll have to check back and see. (inaudible) Haldeman (inaudible) and I've talked to (inaudible).

DEAN: (inaudible) be the best deal (inaudible) problem for the White House. I see no technical problems.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) good. (inaudible) problem less than Haldeman (inaudible).

DEAN: It's the thought of having to be the first to testify is very painful for me.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) told the truth.

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: Well, I thought that you and Mitchell had taken a (inaudible). Well, I say I think they won't disclaim the fact that...at least it's clear, uh, the fact that, uh, however, uh, (inaudible) good lawyer and...I will (inaudible) that, that... One thing that Petersen did raise with me was this: he said (inaudible) negotiate with regards to Haldeman, which... Apparently he said now Haldeman, Haldeman (inaudible) know? Does Ehrlichman know? Does Dean know? And he said "No." (inaudible).

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: And he said, uh, I said when he told me...He said the danger of testifying, of Hunt testifying to his(inaudible) conversations with Liddy, he came over to Haldeman after that meeting (inaudible) and told him about the plan. Which is the whole thing. (inaudible) you're right. So, he doesn't plan to deal with...well, actually Haldeman then did know...

DEAN: No, I, I, I disagree with that interpretation, what...you see...

PRESIDENT: My point is, I want...

DEAN: I didn't know...but, I, I...

PRESIDENT: My point is this...

DEAN: My impression was...

PRESIDENT: If that was the case you see, John then, uh, I, uh, I would have to, then I would have to, uh (inaudible) differently on you John.

DEAN: No, I, I've always looked at it exactly that way, because Bob had told me he didn't know. Now I know I didn't know, because I feel that, uh...

PRESIDENT: What about this? This conversation and, uh (inaudible) and about the discussion (inaudible).

DEAN: I...

PRESIDENT: Does Bob know this? Did Bob, is it possible he talked to him?

DEAN: I think what happened, I think what happened is that, uh, everyone assumed that John Mitchell would never approve anything like this. I disapproved it. I told him I was not going to have any further dealings with Liddy or anybody over there on this, and I did...

PRESIDENT: Yeah, yeah.

DEAN: And I didn't have the foggiest notion what they were doing.

PRESIDENT: That's what you told me. You know, we went, uh, through a whole (inaudible). I didn't know. (inaudible).

DEAN: Well, I hope that...Bob tells me he did not have knowledge. Now the question is, the other thing is, I cannot begin to describe, I couldn't describe 20 minutes after the meeting, uh, what Liddy was presenting. It was the most spectacular sales pitch you've ever seen. In codes and charts, it was right out of James Bond.

PRESIDENT: Operation.

DEAN: That's, well, that's what I'm told now. Later, after the facts he called me, I don't remember. I, I told Bob, I said they're talking about bugging, they're talking about kidnapping, they're talking about, about mugging squads to take people down to the San Diego dock (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: We just know that will be a (inaudible).

DEAN: Yes, sir. We just, we just absolutely, you know, uh, now...

PRESIDENT: Including who will testify to that.

DEAN: That's right, absolutely.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible).

DEAN: That's correct. He said I don't know and I have reason to think...I had thought, and he's never told me to the contrary, that nothing happened from the time of that meeting, we're still meeting, don't do anything about it.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: Stay away from it, don't talk to them, uh, Liddy agreed not (inaudible) Liddy. What I remember "I'm never going to talk to you about this kind of work." What I thought was that inaction would result in their, their recollecting...

PRESIDENT: That's you. And as for me, it's off my hands, definitely.

DEAN: Yup. Now this is...

PRESIDENT: But my point is this...

DEAN: I don't know, who (inaudible)

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) the whole Mitchell confusion.

DEAN: (Inaudible) I don't have the recollect. . .

PRESIDENT: Magruder do it.

DEAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: (Inaudible)

DEAN: I

PRESIDENT: (Inaudible) in your statement is that, uh, Ehrlichman. . .

DEAN: Ehrlichman.

PRESIDENT: I wish you would call all of them (inaudible) bring them down to (inaudible) White House and Haldeman. That's just what he says. He said that's an oddity.

DEAN: That's right. That's (inaudible). Bob and I have gone over that as to the fact that he recalls my coming, and he said "oh, you can tell me anything you like."

PRESIDENT: There's (inaudible) intriguing (inaudible) being cooked up. Well, do you want to go get, uh, get together. I'll work on this statement that you read when you came in wanting a conference.

DEAN: Uh, (inaudible) prosecutors can testify administrative leave that are gonna go before the grand jury.

PRESIDENT: Bill Rogers we're gonna have him (inaudible) convicted and I think then everybody can say...

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: And another, the, uh, another item, the, uh...

DEAN: (inaudible)

PRESIDENT: I'll get in touch with (inaudible). I don't (inaudible). I tried to talk, uh, about the committee, uh, to the committee (inaudible) negotiate with (inaudible).

DEAN: Yeah.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible). He said that in the other case, uh, he didn't think that the (inaudible).

DEAN: They're taking in important people.

PRESIDENT: Humph?

DEAN: They're gonna take...

PRESIDENT: I know. We would know what (inaudible).

DEAN: I don't think we'd ever get any of these guys in the grand jury or in the (inaudible) or local court there.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible). I believe the true story but, I tell you, what about Magruder, you, Haldeman, Ehrlichman? Magruder, I believe. I'd like to call them (inaudible).

DEAN: He won't talk to me on the phone. I don't understand that. (inaudible) Testimony before the grand jury.

PRESIDENT: This is it (inaudible).

DEAN: I (inaudible) the public statement by naming any individuals. (inaudible). Prejudice the rights of that individual. That's why I don't think that...I, I can't foresee what's the point of saying (inaudible) any individual.

PRESIDENT: You see, I think my own...the letter should cover it. (inaudible) we should expect that (inaudible) will be called before the grand jury.

DEAN: I know he won't.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) tried to cooperate. How about trying that (inaudible)? Here at the White House (inaudible) called before the grand jury and questioned.

DEAN: (inaudible) prosecution (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) either somebody's wash, or, or the like (inaudible) may have (inaudible) here.

DEAN: I see. I was down (inaudible) opportunity, uh...

PRESIDENT: (inaudible)

DEAN: (inaudible) Magruder. It is, it has been for...

PRESIDENT: We always find (inaudible).

DEAN: It depends on Magruder.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible). He said that Haldeman's position remains (inaudible).

DEAN: On the other hand, now look at where he is. Now, if you can accept that (inaudible) keeping out of (inaudible), and starting a chain going that we didn't want, because we couldn't give him up. Ah, it, it ah...isn't, unfortunately, the source of the problem. It's, it's my part which, which is, think about it, uh...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: (inaudible)

PRESIDENT: (inaudible)

DEAN: That's right. We were, uh, working on...

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) a law office.

DEAN: And then we bailed him out. And that's why you have a problem ahead of you for the whole White House.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible). Mitchell just said he'd quit going upstairs, to Mitchell. Your conversation with Magruder...

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: The fact that, uh (inaudible) support (inaudible) Mitchell (inaudible).

DEAN: Well Mitchell, Mitchell was making heavy comments about, you know, your promise to Liddy, whether the White House will have a bigger problem than you will. Plus, uh...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: whatever they have done over here would be quite embarrassing during the election, also.

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

DEAN: And I suppose that's the reason that (inaudible) satisfied that the Ellsberg office.

PRESIDENT: The photographs.

DEAN: That wouldn't have been very good. (inaudible). Poor Bud Krogh, ah...is just miserable, just in knowing what he knows...

PRESIDENT: You mean the Ellsberg?

DEAN: (inaudible) the whole thing up. There's no reason they should. The only evidence that they have, that they're not...that's one of the reasons why we're arguing against (inaudible) special prosecutor. Special prosecutor (inaudible) evidence to prove it.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible)

DEAN: Let's, let's see. I think there's one of the doctor's office.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) we couldn't stop their (inaudible)

DEAN: That's not their case.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) is to discuss (inaudible).

DEAN: That's right. And I prefer, you know, prefer talking, uh (inaudible)

PRESIDENT: (inaudible)

DEAN: Absolutely!

PRESIDENT: We've got to, got to (inaudible)...

DEAN: They've pulled it out it's like, uh, (inaudible) bring them down with, uh (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: That's where it hurt that we (inaudible) their terms imposed on. (inaudible). But the way you handled it (inaudible) very important. (inaudible) virtually my department.

DEAN: Dean couldn't get there too fast.

PRESIDENT: I know that. I didn't have the power to compel Mitchell or Magruder to tell me what is happening.

DEAN: You see in my book the acid test is, uh, (inaudible). Besides, then, uh, at the very outside, talked about around here before I got in to see you, uh, for many many months, that, that you know. I said the containment theory is not working anymore, so we might as well forget it.

PRESIDENT: Right. That's what you came in to see me. Fine. Fine work.

DEAN: Finally, I came in to see you. And that's when we thought we didn't have to (inaudible). Last night he told (inaudible). "John," he said "you've got to be talking to the President." (inaudible). They've got subpoena power, immunity power, and they're going to break one (inaudible) and I've always thought it was a domino situation. Once one goes, and that's exactly

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what's happened here to the President.

PRESIDENT: McCord (inaudible).

DEAN: McCord (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) all the way around. The secretaries,
and so forth. . .

DEAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible)

DEAN: (inaudible) how you want to handle Ehrlichman, Haldeman,
Dean. (inaudible).

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) part of the question is that. Under the
circumstances (inaudible)...

DEAN: (inaudible) I think, uh, first of all, there is, there's
the potential, there are prima facie situations right now.

There are very difficult uh, uh, proof
contests which you made aware of. Ah...that, thereby
make it necessary for you to make a judgment of those
people who need the facts until their, their name is...

PRESIDENT: The day it's necessary for me to relieve them of their
duties in this case.

DEAN: That's right. (inaudible) make it quite clearly that
you...

PRESIDENT: (inaudible) which I have done. (inaudible) I don't
know (inaudible) that would depend. But whether you
can say what's it all (inaudible).

DEAN: I know. That's the tougher question because, one, that's
putting you in the position of being the...

PRESIDENT: The judge and trier of facts before...

DEAN: Before all the facts are in necessarily... That's really
my problem on it. I mean, I...

PRESIDENT: Well, this poll says that, this poll says that and
that's the way to do it.

DEAN: Well, maybe that's the way this ought to be handled,
so we could say I have certain information about, uh,
allegations have been made about certain, some publicly,
some haven't become public yet. But I am not in a position
where I can make an assessment...

PRESIDENT: Granted all the facts aren't in yet, but you really think John, don't you, that ah...(inaudible)?

DEAN: (inaudible)

PRESIDENT: (inaudible). As a matter of fact, (inaudible). Right?

DEAN: Yup.

PRESIDENT: (inaudible). Would you say that (inaudible)?

DEAN: Right.

PRESIDENT: And, uh, did the (inaudible)?

DEAN: I think this is going to end (inaudible)
 [Approximately 35 seconds of no conversation]

PRESIDENT: Bull!