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258. Conversation Between President Nixon and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Camp David, September 24, 1972, 11:37–11:52 a.m.[1](#) [2](#)

Camp David, September 24, 1972, 11:37–11:52 a.m.

Kissinger: We have a problem in Uganda and I—

Nixon: Yeah?

Kissinger: The problem is this. The British are very worried that there may be a massacre of 7,000 —

Nixon: British?

Kissinger:—British they've got there, and they're scattered all over the country.

Nixon: Of course.

Kissinger: And they would like to have some secret talks with us about some logistics help.

Nixon: Sure. We'll have them.

Kissinger: They've tried it earlier this week and State has turned them down—

Nixon: Screw State! State's always on the side of the blacks. The hell with them!

Kissinger: Well, I—

Nixon: No.

Kissinger: I knew this would be your reaction—

Nixon: Well, I just can't understand why we haven't had them before. You know, like that thing on Burundi.

Now I want State's ass reamed out on that for not—

Kissinger: Right.

Nixon:—for not—Henry, in the whole Burundi business—I've been watching it in, in the press. Did you know, State has not sent one memorandum over to us on it?

Kissinger: Absolutely.

Nixon: Or have they? Have there—or have you had something that I haven't seen?

Kissinger: No, no. They have not.

Nixon: Well, how do you feel about it?

Kissinger: Well I—

Nixon: Don't you really feel—I mean, and just be—let's be totally honest. Isn't a person a person goddammit? You know, there are those that, you know, they talk about Vietnam, these people far away that we don't know. And you remember that poor old Chamberlain talk about the Czechs. That they were far away, and "we don't know them very well." Well now, goddammit, people are people in my opinion.

Kissinger: Well, it's not only that—

Nixon: I don't mean our national interests gets involved. But every time, every time that anybody else gets involved—you know, every time that—one other individual or us, and you have a little pressure group here, State goes up the wall. But I'm getting tired of this business of letting these Africans eat a hundred thousand people and do nothing about it.

Kissinger: And it's—and when they have—and all these, these bleeding hearts in this country who say we like to kill yellow people—

Nixon: That's right.

Kissinger: We have—there hasn't been as many killed in the eight years of the war as were killed in three months in Burundi.

Nixon: Henry, the whole point is—and also—well it's, it's the thing that Agnew stuck to [laughter], stuck to McGovern where Agnew pointed out—now, now they're talking about how many we have bombed in the North. And I've told your staff to get the figures for me. How many, how many South Vietnamese or anti-communist North Vietnamese have been killed by the North Vietnamese government? Civilians—how many? It's unbelievable.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: Nobody gives a damn.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: And, and that's what it's—they, they're involved in. I know what the Uganda thing is. What it is—it's just like Burundi. The State—Newsom's attitude—the attitude of State is to be for whatever black government is in power. Is my—right or wrong?

Kissinger: One hundred percent right.

Nixon: And that was—and that, basically Henry, was the problem on Nigeria. Now frankly, I was on the side of the Biafrans then. Not just—not because of Catholics. And you were too. Not because of Catholics but—State was on the side of the Nigerian government. Why? Because they said, well, "all the other governments would come apart." Well frankly, I'm almost to the opinion myself—and this is far down the road, we need a new African policy. But first of all, we shouldn't have 42 ambassadors to these goddamn countries. In the second place—I mean, you know, at the same level as anybody else—in the second place, my own view is that some federations down there are what are needed, or something. I don't know. But, but we can talk about that later. But at the present time, looking at Uganda, of course we've got to help those 7,000 people. I asked Rogers about this when we met with Bush.

Kissinger: Yeah.

Nixon: You—were you there?

Kissinger: Yes, I was there.

Nixon: Well you remember, I said, “what about this?” He said, “well we’ve got a plan to evacuate the Americans.” Well now, that’s a fine howdy do. What the hell are the damn British going to do? 7,000 of them. They’ll be murdered.

Kissinger: Well, what, the way—

Nixon: Isn’t that really the problem or not?

Kissinger: That is exactly the problem.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: And, and the British are in the bush. All of ours are in Entebbe. And actually, they haven’t turned against ours so much yet, but they—

Nixon: No.

Kissinger:—have turned against the British.

Nixon: No. I understand.

Kissinger: Now—

Nixon: Well, who—

Kissinger:—I would recommend, Mr. President—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger:—that in order to keep this thing from turning into a, a huge leak, is that—

Nixon: Right.

Kissinger:—to send a Defense Department man over—a civilian, not a military guy.

Nixon: Well, we’ve got anybody we can trust?

Kissinger: Well, that can even leak, if necessary, and say all he’s empowered to discuss is the logistics -

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger:—in—if there has to be a joint evacuation. Now, no one can blame us for that. Then we can tell the British we can use that as a base. If they have further requests, to take them up here in Washington.

Nixon: Well, good. Good. Let me, let me, let me put it another way. Why don’t we have Goodpastor, from his place—I mean, just go over and, and—

Kissinger: But I worry—

Nixon:—and put it at a—I don't care whether it's at a high level. You mean you'd—they'd start killing, is that it?

Kissinger: One is, they might start killing. Second, we might get a tremendous uproar that we are planning a military campaign.

Nixon: Okay. Okay.

Kissinger: While we can achieve most of it by using—in fact, we can achieve all of it—and we can alert Goodpastor to start looking to his assets. That we can do on an independent—

Nixon: Well, I think you should take—tell Goodpastor—look, NATO's sitting over there on its ass doing nothing anyway. Why don't we tell Goodpastor to, to get all the assets for the purpose of evacuation that we can have? Right?

Kissinger: Right.

Nixon: In other words, NATO assets. Let's let the NATO countries do it.

Kissinger: I think that's a good idea. We can get Goodpastor to pay a visit. He—it's—

Nixon: I just kind of feel that's a good idea.

Kissinger: Well, he can pay it a NATO visit.

Nixon: A NATO visit. Right. And then tell him in confidence that I want him to discuss this matter of assets with him. You know, Goodpastor will love having something to do. How's that sound to you?

Kissinger: I think that—well, I—

Nixon: Yeah, and then, and then send the defense man too.

Kissinger: We'll send the defense man so that's the—that's the overt—

Nixon: What man do you have in mind?

Kissinger: Well, somebody out of Nutter's [unclear]. I thought we, we would pick a low-key guy. Just to get the facts. Right now we don't even have the facts—

Nixon: Could we get—how about somebody—well, why don't we—better still, why don't we just have somebody from your office go over who knows these people.

Kissinger: Well, I'm—

Nixon: You're afraid that we'll—that I'll get in it then, huh?

Kissinger: No, I'm afraid in—with the campaign going on—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: I think the major thing now is to get information, but Goodpastor's an excellent idea.

Nixon: No reason why he can't, can—is there?

Kissinger: No. That's an excellent thought.

Nixon: You see, the problem is that if we, that—I agree, that if we get in it they'll say we're trying to get it. But, on the other hand, we have got to, we've got to be prepared to help the British. We can't have a British slaughter down there. The British have got enough problems.

Kissinger: Absolutely, and it's a—it would be a disgrace anyway.

Nixon: Have they asked [unclear]?

Kissinger: Well, they sent a personal message to you at midnight last night because they—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger:—were stonewalled by the State Department all week—

Nixon: Yeah. Yeah.

Kissinger:—asking whether we could start some secret technical talks in London.

Nixon: Good.

Kissinger: And that's what I think we should respond to. I like this Goodpastor idea.

Nixon: Yeah, why don't you, why don't you on our private channel get a hold of them and say that Goodpastor will be paying a NATO visit, but that he has private instructions from me to discuss on a secret basis what the hell we can do. How's that sound to you?

Kissinger: That sounds excellent.

Nixon: And, and then you call Andy and you say, "Now Andy, you've got to deny this. This conversation never took place. But by god, we—we're not going to let these people be destroyed by these people." Let's do that. That'll reassure the British. They just want to know privately what we're—

Kissinger: Actually, I could meet Andy in Paris and give it to him orally. That would—

Nixon: Very good. Very good. But you could let—you should let the British know that we've talked about it, and that Goodpastor thing. And then you—if you want to send the defense guy, you can. Only thing is—

Kissinger: I think you should send somebody overt.

Nixon: Yeah. All right.

Kissinger: Because then we—that's the—

Nixon: Overt we'll say for the purpose of evacuating Americans and British.

Kissinger: Exactly.

Nixon: Isn't it awful though what these—that this Goddamn guy at the head of Uganda, Henry, is an ape.

Kissinger: He's an ape without education.

Nixon: That's probably no disadvantage. I mean that—

Kissinger: [laughter]

Nixon: I mean, you figure that that asshole that was the head of Ghana had a brilliant education in the United States.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: I mean, so, let's face it—no, no, what I mean is he's, he's—he really is. He's a, he's a prehistoric monster.

Kissinger: Yeah.

Nixon: But, but the same with Burundi. But can—I really, really got to shake up the Africa—while all the departments—but the Africa department at State, Henry, is a disgrace.

Kissinger: Oh, the whole—

Nixon: When I receive those—you know, I receive ambassadors. All I receive is Africa—three out of four every time are African ambassadors. They're nice little guys, and so forth and so on, but they don't add anything.

Kissinger: Yeah.

Nixon: I mean, it—and, and State just treats them—I mean, what, what do you think they're up to? What is our African policy? Will you tell me?

Kissinger: Our African policy—I just took a paragraph out of a speech—Rogers was happy to accept this, no disrespect to Rogers. But this guy Patterson had two paragraphs in the—in Roger's U.N. speech—

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger:—which was an all-out attack on South Africa—

Nixon: No sir.

Kissinger:—on Mozambique—

Nixon: Never. Never.

Kissinger:—and they are anti-white in Africa. They are, they are obsessively liberal. But you don't hear them say a peep—you, you know, when one of these governments is, is not fully democratic that they don't like, they scream. But when they murder people in Burundi, when there's—get a fellow in, in Uganda has a reign of terror, you don't ever get a protest.

Nixon: Yeah. Now, on, on Burundi, State underestimated, and I know that your people were using it. Do you use the figure 100,000? I understand it's 200,000. Now I want the Belgian ambassador—do you know him? Here in Washington.

Kissinger: I, I've met him, I don't know—

Nixon: He's a decent fellow?

Kissinger: He's a decent guy. Yeah.

Nixon: All right. I want you or—you're the one to do it. You call him in, and—it'd be a very nice touch anyway—and just say, “on a private basis, we'd like to note your estimate of what the hell's

happened in Burundi.” I really want to know. I don’t mean there’s anything we’re going to do about it. Nothing is going to come out of it.

Kissinger: But we ought to know it.

Nixon: But, but you know, let’s get it from the Belgians. Don’t you agree?

Kissinger: I agree completely.

Nixon: I mean, the—on this one, though—now that you mention Patterson, he’s one that’s going to go the day after the election. That son-of-a-bitch has done things in—I mean he’s—

Kissinger: It’s an intolerable situation. Every time we want to do something we have to worry how we can finagle it—

Nixon: Right.

Kissinger:—so that it doesn’t leak. Now we’ve got another month where we’ve got to put up with it.

Nixon: That’s all. Well you’ll do this then—

Kissinger: Immediately.

Nixon: And don’t you think that—who, who will you call? You’ll call Burke Trend or?

Kissinger: I’ll first call Cromer.

Nixon: Cromer. Oh yeah. Okay. Well he’s—he’ll keep it.

Kissinger: He’ll keep it. Absolutely.

Nixon: Good.

Kissinger: Because he delivered the message.

Nixon: Call Cromer. That’s the better way to do it anyway. Tell him to pass it to the—that I’m outraged by the whole damn thing. That naturally we’ve got to handle it in a very discreet way. And that we’re going to do it two ways. We’re going to send Andy over on a, on a official visit, and that the British should—for discussion of NATO problems. And that we’re going to send a defense guy over overtly. Right?

Kissinger: Right.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Africa]

Nixon: But anyway, this is good. I’m glad—I think it’s good to let the British know we’re going to help. Then, you might give the Belgian ambassador a call and say, “Don’t, don’t report this but that the president wants to know what the hell went on and for him—set it up for when, for Wednesday or Thursday of next week. Would you do it?”

Kissinger: I shall certainly do it.

Nixon: I want to know what happened in Burundi. And I want the real cold-cock on that. Just, just you know, for future reference.

Kissinger: Absolutely.

Nixon: Because in these African governments and the rest, the idea that we're going to stand still on the ground that any African government that was—overthrew a colonial power thereby becomes lily white by our, by our standards and thereby beyond criticism is ridiculous. This damn double standard is just unbelievable.

Kissinger: Out of the question.

1. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Tapes, Camp David Secretary's Table, Conversation No. 154–7. This transcript was prepared in the Office of the Historian specifically for this volume. No classification marking. [↵](#)
2. In their lengthy conversation on Uganda and Burundi, Nixon and Kissinger discussed possible actions to evacuate American and British citizens from Uganda. [↵](#)