

Official White House Transcript

of

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S PRESS AND RADIO CONFERENCE #185

(Filmed, Taped, and Shorthand Reported)

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Held in Room 474, Executive Office Building
Wednesday, May 11, 1960
At 10:27 o'clock a.m. EDST



This Copy For:-

The President

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Now I wonder how many of you people have read the full text of the Able trial, the record of the trial of Mr. Able. Well, I think he was sentenced to thirty years. Now, this business of saying that you're doing things that are provocative, why, they had better look at their own record. And I'll tell you this: The United States and none of its allies that I know of has engaged in nothing that would be considered honestly as provocative. We are looking to our own security and our defense and we have no idea of promoting any kind of conflict or war. This is just, it's absolutely ridiculous and they know it is.

Q Taylor, Scripps-Howard. Mr. President, sir, would it be trespassing on your request about the U-2 to ask if you could tell us something about any possible Soviet reconnaissance flights over the western part of the world, and our response to them, if any?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I could just say this: As far as I know, there has never been any over the United States.

Q Holmes Alexander, McNaught Syndicate. Sir, this is a question about Quemoy and Matsu, and two of the Democratic candidates have said that if elected they would try to get rid of that responsibility. I know you don't deal in personalities, but I wonder if you could tell us, as a military man, to what extent these islands help us control the air and sea over the Formosa Strait?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I am not talking personalities because I don't know who said this, but I will say this: If you go back to the Formosa Doctrine, you will find that the responsibility is placed upon the President to determine whether, in the event of any attack upon Quemoy and Matsu, whether this is in fact a preliminary to or part of an attack against the Pescadores and Taiwan. If that is true, then he must participate because then it will be the defense of Formosa, one of our allies.

Now, as to the actual value of Matsu and Quemoy, of course we must remember how much this seems to mean to the morale of all the Chinese forces on Formosa. From their viewpoint, any desertion of those islands means a complete surrender, abject surrender. So it is a factor that anyone who is going to have to make possible decisions in the future has to take into consideration when he talks about the abandonment of these sets of islands. And frankly, no President of the United States can do it by himself.

Now he can withhold support to Taiwan, but are you going to destroy Taiwan? So none of these problems is ever a simple, black and white thing. You have a very great number of conflicting considerations and they take study and heart searching, and you hope and pray that you are right most of the time.

Q Roberts, Washington Post. Last week, sir, you announced that the U. S. would resume underground nuclear testing for purposes of protecting the detection and control system. There seems, however, to be some dispute as



to whether this would be joint or coordinated, that is, this testing in conjunction with the Soviet Union. Could you tell us what the argument there is, and what your own view is?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Roberts, having heard of this, somewhat of this misunderstanding, I had a discussion with Mr. Kistiakowsky only this morning. These things are not nuclear weapons testing, they are, for one simple and as a matter of fact in many cases I don't think we are involved in any nuclear explosions except under the coordinated directions of a body made up of the U. K., USSR, and ourselves. That's the way I understood the agreement, and I believe that you will find that they are not expected to have anything to do either with weapons development or the Plowshare Project, anything else except just the finding out how good this testing of the weapons below 4.75 are.

Q (Roberts) Well, sir, is it your understanding that we would show everything involved, mechanism and so on, to the Soviets under this program?

THE PRESIDENT: Well now, Mr. Roberts, there are some details I just can't get down to. You know that. But I would suspect or I would think that everything that they found it necessary to see in order to determine whether this thing is effective, they would see and should see.

Now I think that to get a little further on the thing, you might go and get that statement of Dr. Kistiakowsky's and show it to him --- (Conferring with Mr. Hagerty.) Well, Mr. Hagerty just reminds me of what Dr. Kistiakowsky told me, another point. Our people are leaving tomorrow, they will meet together with the USSR and the U. K. and the U. S. in determining exactly how we will do this.

Q Charles Roberts, Newsweek. Sir, in connection with the Able trial which you mentioned ---

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q (Roberts) --- the Soviet government in that case made no effort to defend Colonel Able. I wonder if an American citizen were arrested by a foreign government and brought to trial as a spy, what the policy of this government would be so far as his defense was concerned?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we would certainly offer the good offices of our Embassy, and see whether there was anything we could do. Of course, we would have to do it, it would be an internal matter there and we would have to do it with the permission of the other country. So far as I think that if there is anything wrong diplomatically with my answer, you had better ask the State Department, but I think that would be the result.



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