

**General John D. Lavelle, USAF
1916 – 1979**

**Transcript of audio-taped conversation of
May 19, 1972 of
President Richard M. Nixon,
Vice President Spiro T. Agnew,
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, &
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer**

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19 May 1972

President Richard M. Nixon
Vice President Spiro T. Agnew
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Adm. Thomas Moorer

HK: Let's get Moorer in here, he's in my office.

RN: Where is Moorer?

HK: I think he's in my office waiting for me.

RN: Well the operator can't find him and they're usually quite competent.

HK: He's in my office I think. I'm certain he's in my office.

SA: [indecipherable: Kissinger and Agnew]

RN: Is he in his office? Ask him where he is.

RN: I never . . . I given them the latitude and the Air Force's dropped the ball in a miserable way. They aren't worth a goddamn. They aren't worth a goddamn. I want the head of that son of a bitch of the Air Force—Ryan—today. He's out. Out. Out. Out.

HK: Basically he's bitching around town. . .

RN: Right.

HK: . . . And I've been—I've not been telling it to the President because

RN: No, for God's sake, they'd never (indecipherable) they've done. Total (indecipherable) bombing (indecipherable) and they know it. And they're doing the accusing. They're the ones that have (indecipherable) they're scared. They're scared to go in under the ceiling. Five thousand goddamn Israelis who would fly at a thousand feet.

[Admiral Thomas Moorer enters the room.]

TM: Good morning.

RN: Hi, how are ya?

[indecipherable]

RN: A the Vice President has given us his report to the effect that a talking to your colleagues in the military in a Vietnam, and a he remarked that they are complaining a that we a have put such limited restrictions on them in terms of what they can bomb that they are unable to do a very good job.

Now, I want tell you something. And a I, I, I've said this before and I'll say it again. Ryan has got to get off his goddamn ass or he's out. I'm tired of him anyway, he's a soft man. And of course he should be, he had his son killed and all that.

But let me say. You know and I know I have ordered that goddamn Air Force time and time again to do anything, and they can't bomb because they say it takes four, a four thousand foot ceiling.

You know and I know that they do not have restrictions. The only restriction they've got is the one of ten miles to Hanoi at the present time which they didn't have before. And the Air Force didn't do a goddamn thing for the last three days you know. Not one goddamn thing in North Vietnam. Because the little bastards were afraid that they might not- they might lose a plane because they couldn't see.

Now I am tired of this bullshit. It's been in every paper in this town. They're talking about the President this, and they're flying around. Now never do they have the backing that they've got today.

And I own the military issue. Or there is going to be a new chief of staff all up and down the line including here. Right now, is that clear?

TM: Yes, sir.

RN: Now get off your ass. Now I want you to get that son of a bitch Ryan on the phone, I want you to get McCain on the phone. Are you restricted?

TM: No, sir. Except for this a

RN: Are you bitching about it?

TM: No sir.

RN: What the hell is the matter with these people? Why aren't they fighting? Because they are afraid to go in and do the job they went over there to do? What in the hell is the matter with them now?

SA: I must say that, for example, a spot where they have taken out some very important rail. And they had been able to go back and taken it, and really taken it out but they were told they couldn't go back to it.

RN: Now that is absolutely false. That's absolutely false. Not only are they able, but I've watched every day and the goddamn Air Force doesn't go back. Because they're afraid. The weather isn't good enough. They gotta have to have five thousand foot ceilings. The goddamn Israelis fly thousand foot ceilings. Now tell them to get off their goddamn ass and do the job.

And, and, and I, like for example. I want some 52s to hit (indecipherable) in the South. Alright fine, we'll keep them in the south. But for Christ's sakes why does the Air Force constantly undercut us and bitch when they've never been backed as they're backed today.

Tell them to do the job. Now look, I agree. Ryan is going to have a resignation on this desk. I'll fire his ass out of here unless he gets some discipline in that outfit. Is that clear?