MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Richard Helms, Ambassador to Iran, former CIA Director
John O. Marsh, Counsellor to the President
Philip W. Buchen, Counsel to the President
Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Saturday - January 4, 1975
12:37 - 1:00 p.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office
The White House

SUBJECT: Allegations of CIA Domestic Activities

President: Dick, you and I have known each other a long time. I have only the most admiration for you and for your work. Frankly, we are in a mess. I want you to tell me whatever you want. I believe the CIA is essential to the country. It has to exist and perform its functions. We will have a Blue Ribbon Panel look into these charges. It will investigate the domestic activities of the CIA.

Helms: Why not add the FBI? They overlap, and you may as well get to the bottom of it.

President: I will consider it. Secondly, though, the commission will look at the Colby report and, thirdly, make recommendations to me. It is a good commission. I hope they will stay within their charter, but in this climate, we can't guarantee it. It would be tragic if it went beyond it, because the CIA needs to remain a strong and viable agency. It would be a shame if the public uproar forced us to go beyond and to damage the integrity of the CIA.

I automatically assume what you did was right, unless it's proved otherwise.
Helms: I have been in the service 32 years. At the end all one has is a small pension and a reputation -- if any. I testified in Watergate; I didn't dump on President Nixon and I stuck to the truth. I intend to fight this matter. I welcome a Blue Ribbon Panel.

At the base is Congressional oversight. No Congress wants to join hands with the Bay of Pigs, etcetera; it's bad politics. The CIA is the President's creature.

If allegations have been made to Justice, a lot of dead cats will come out. I intend to defend myself. I don't know everything which went on in the Agency; maybe no one really does. But I know enough to say that if the dead cats come out, I will participate. I think the mood of the country is ghastly. I feel deeply for you, Mr. President. I am a member of your team and I don't intend to foul the nest if I can avoid it.

The basic allegation -- that we spied on dissidents -- stemmed from the charge to me to discover if there was any foreign connection to the dissidents. I never permitted any spying on any Congressmen. The business of the files is ridiculous; if you get a name, of course you make a record and open a file in case it is relevant thereafter.

President: I have no doubt about your total integrity, and, in fact you did a good job running the Agency. What we are trying to do is look into the charges and protect the functions of the Agency with a Blue Ribbon group which will operate responsibly. I hope you understand my position. You have my pledge that everything I do will be straightforward. I plan no witch hunt, but in this environment I don't know if I can control it.

Helms: I will help you, Mr. President. I believe in the Agency and its mission.
I haven't seen you in a long time. I have only a short extension for your own work. 

Finally, we can now go back to where we left off. I'm not sure what you want, but it seems like a 

comparison to the work you did before. We will have to work on that, but it will 

probably be done by the end of the year.

If you need red tape, they usually come in 

cells to be touched up.

Please construct #2 in a manner that will allow 
at least eight more plans to be 

it a good lesson. I hope they will stay 

at least thirty days in the closet and 

prevent. We would begin if it went beyond 

the need of C.A. trends to remain a story 

with a feeling, and instead of justice 

fulfilling to go beyond & to damage integrity

I intentionally assume what you do and won't 

If I have in mind 72 yes, at 818 am 

there is some serious to out of any. 

I can't find it. Wellington. I didn't bring an 

 Visitors to attend to this matter. I welcome 

a blue shirt hand.

At least if I can oversleep, I can wonder to 

join hands very slow fly 1st and put it, 

the C.A. is - well that's the all right. By all right 

these must be justified, a lot of other 

can court request. I wanted to reflect on 

3 don't know anything which service went on.
I am a lawyer. Maybe we can do this thing that I have
in my job to try that if we don't come out, that
I will participate. I think the mood of a country
is critical. I feel deeply for you. And I don't
see a market upon it or a market instead
of just a market. I have a point.

The basically, you can distribute this
pamphlet from church to church. Any
foreign nation that is absent.

I have permitted as a person. As a person,
the business of a file or a file, if you get
a name of a person or a maker record, open
file in case it is relevant later.

I have no doubt about you! The subject is
just you did good job. I'm doing
what I'm trying to do is to work on changes.
I try to again of a file of an
which will operate separately.

I hope you understand my point. You
have any pledge things. This will be
transferred. I plan to work with but
in this circumstance I don't know if
I can control it.

It would help your Lordship in a matter
of its mission.