

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date of transcription 8/12/98

Albert Arnold Gore, Jr., Vice President of the United States, Date of Birth March 31, 1948, Social Security Account Number [REDACTED] was interviewed at his residence, U.S. Naval Observatory, Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. James Neel, Vice President Gore's legal counsel, was also present during the interview. After being advised of the official identities of the interviewing agents and that of Department of Justice Attorney Peter Ainsworth, Gore provided the following information:

Vice President Gore was provided with a copy of a memorandum, dated 12/18/95, from Harold Ickes to the President, et al., along with five documents referenced in the memorandum. The Vice President's attention was drawn to a 11/21/95 meeting in the Map Room at the White House, which was the subject of the 12/18/95 memorandum. The Vice President was also provided with a copy of his schedule for 11/21/95. He recognized that this meeting on 11/21/95, was discussed during his earlier interview by the FBI on 11/11/97, because of Ickes being the contact person and the location of the meeting in the Map Room. Vice President Gore has no independent recollection of whether or not his schedule for that day was kept. Often times his schedules were not kept.

The 11/21/95 meeting was one of several meetings that took place from time to time, to prepare the groundwork for the confrontation between the ideas of the President and the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and those of the Republican majority in Congress. The President and Vice President were in the beginning stages of a re-election campaign, so these meetings also served to update them as to where they and the DNC were and to define their goals. Although Vice President Gore could not specifically recall what was said or discussed at this meeting, he did recall that the DNC budget was discussed, along with activities relating to commercials and the direct mail campaign. The discussion at this type of meeting typically evolved around how can we meet the needs of the DNC to carry on their activities to help candidates get elected. They would discuss the overall status of the DNC budget, as well as sources of income such as the direct mail campaign, and expenses such as the media campaign. The point would be made that the DNC had expenses,

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by SA Martin F. Harris

by SA Kevin J. Comiskey

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such as staff, payroll and travel, and if they were going to also be expected to pay for television commercials, they needed help. Vice President Gore believed that discussion of the above points would accurately represent the nature of the 11/21/95 meeting.

The Vice President reiterated that he did not read memorandums from Ickes, such as the 12/18/95 memorandum, but felt it was fair to say that the 12/18/95 memorandum was about the 11/21/95 meeting. He recalled that in addition to the President and himself, other attendees were Leon Panetta, George Stephanopoulos, Don Fowler, Marvin Rosen, Scott Pastrick, David Strauss and Ron Klain. Brian Bailey and Bobby Watson, two others reflected on the memorandum as being at the meeting, are less well known to Vice President Gore, and he has no recollection of them being at the meeting. He also does not recall anyone else being at the meeting.

Vice President Gore advised that he and the President were at this meeting to participate in the discussions and to give guidance. The President is the titular head of the Democratic Party, and it is normal for him to be active in the Party. This was a period when the DNC was running commercials promoting Democratic ideas and their agenda, and the President was actively involved. Decisions ultimately had to be made, and the President would make these decisions, with guidance from the Vice President. Klain and Strauss were at the meeting as part of Vice President Gore's staff. They would normally not speak at a meeting like this, but instead were there as part of his team. They also had relationships with the DNC, and Vice President Gore presumed they would have had some type of follow up concerning the meeting, on behalf of the Vice President. The DNC people were at the meeting because it obviously concerned the operations at the DNC. Panetta, Stephanopoulos and Ickes were there as the President's staff. Stephanopoulos probably did not serve any specific role, but at such meetings sometimes simply offered general type advice.

Vice President Gore observed that there were not many meetings like this one in the Map Room, especially ones with the President and Vice President in attendance. This was by no means a regularly scheduled meeting. The big decisions were typically made at smaller, more frequent Oval Office meetings, that were attended by both the President and Vice President. There were

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also larger meetings, known as the "Wednesday" meetings. These meetings were also in the White House and were used for things like reviewing proposed television commercials.

Vice President Gore does not recall who called the 11/21/95 meeting, but presumes it was Ickes. He also does not specifically remember receiving papers at this meeting, but usually at this type of meeting, papers were handed out. Typically something was given out to everyone as a sort of "road map" for the meeting. Based on the 12/18/95 memorandum, he presumes the documents listed on the memorandum were provided to everyone, including him, who attended the 11/21/95 meeting. He did observe that some of those documents, specifically the 11/19/95 memorandum and the DNC responses to that memorandum, were not the type of thing typically handed out at a meeting like this one. The type of documents typically handed out were those referring to the agenda, summaries and categories of DNC expenses, and documents relating to matters up for discussion.

The Vice President was provided with a six page document (Bates stamp numbers EOP 070968 thru 070973), containing handwritten notes on papers from the 11/21/95 meeting. He advised he was familiar with the document and had been provided with a copy of it, to prepare for this interview. He had no knowledge of its' existence, prior to its' recent discovery. He reiterated that he does not have a specific recollection of anything talked about at that meeting. He does recall, in general terms, that the DNC budget was discussed, as well as their activities relating to commercials and the direct mail campaign. He did not typically take notes at this type of meeting, nor did he rely on anyone else to take notes for him. He was completely unaware that Strauss took notes during the meeting, and was unaware if anyone else did as well. He had never before seen these notes, prior to reviewing them for this interview.

Vice President Gore does not know if he left this meeting, while it was going on, for any reason. It was not uncommon for him, and for that matter the President, to excuse themselves from meetings to use the restroom. There also were times when he might walk in on a meeting that was already underway. Normally at this type of meeting he sat next to the President, and it was not unusual that his attention would be

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diverted by private conferences with the President. He could not recall any of the above described scenarios, that could have diverted his attention, occurring during this meeting. He also could not recall any one else leaving the meeting or having their attention diverted for any reason.

The Vice Presidents' attention was drawn to the first page containing handwritten notes (Bates number EOP 070968). He stated that he did not recall anyone saying, or any discussion regarding 65% soft / 35% hard. He also did not recall anything being said about hard/soft relating to the media fund, or about the media fund having a hard component. He offered that he was well aware that the DNC had hard and soft money components, but it was his belief that only soft money was being used for the media commercials. He did not recall the statement, "corporate or anything over 20K from an individual", being made at this meeting, nor any type of discussion concerning the definition of soft money. He does not know who would have said this at the meeting. He also did not recall the handwritten statement at the bottom of the page, "need for 8 million in next 5 weeks to meet fundraising goals, 4 million from direct mail", being made at the meeting. He was not sure who would have made that statement either, but indicated it would be normal for DNC people to say that. They would have been discussing the overall needs of the DNC, and showing that additionally, they had a specific need for money for commercials. These meetings were a way for the DNC to show what expenses they had, in particular to show they needed money for expenses beyond just the television commercials. They would often articulate goals when discussing their needs. Fowler normally was the one who spoke on behalf of the DNC.

The Vice Presidents' attention was then drawn to the second page containing handwritten notes (Bates number EOP 070969). He stated he does not recall the President, or anyone else, making the statement "not an option", or making a decision relating to the possibility of the DNC borrowing money. He speculated that possibly the President was saying it was not an option to end the year in debt. There were reporting requirements that had to be satisfied at the end of every year and these reports were available to the public. A negative balance, or large debt, would have possibly been dangerous politically. People might have interpreted this to mean the DNC and the campaign were in trouble. Vice President Gore remembered

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a discussion of the need to raise more money if the DNC was going to finance television commercials, and meet other expenses, without going deeply in debt. Vice President Gore believed he and the President left that meeting with the intention to raise more money for the DNC. He and the President would carve out more time for raising money. This was typical of the conclusion reached at most of these types of meetings, raise more money. Ickes, as the White House point of contact with the DNC, typically would be the one who made a presentation such as this, and if not him then Fowler. He could not recall a specific discussion concerning how to raise money, but it was typical to hear a list of possible options. Among the options would be, do more events, direct mail, and telephone calls by the President and the Vice President. He had no recollection of the final handwritten note on that page, "hard limit 20K".

Vice President Gore was then directed to the last page containing handwritten notes (Bates number EOP 070973). He did not specifically recall the quote, seemingly attributed to him, "is it possible to do a reallocation for me to take more of the events and the calls?". He offered that although he could not recall this quote at this meeting, it sounds like the kind of thing he would have said, and he probably did say it. He felt it was the role of the Vice President to take the load off the President. He believed it had been determined earlier to do the telephone calls, but he was not sure how they arrived at the number of calls to be made. He could not recall discussing the number of calls to be made at this meeting, only that he was prepared to take on the burden of the responsibility for the calls. He wanted more of the burden for himself, to relieve the burden on the President. He also could not recall another quote on that page, also seemingly attributed to him, "count me in on the calls". This was also in keeping with something he would have said. The final quote on the page, "one or two night time events week of 11 Dec. or week of 18 Dec.", was also unrecalled by the Vice President. He further stated that this did not sound like something he would say. He also did not recall the quote attributed to the President, "making calls on over Thanksgiving".

As of 11/21/95 he was not aware there was a hard money component to the DNC media fund. He certainly knew the DNC required and had, hard and soft money components. He also knew that some expenses were paid with hard money, and some with soft

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money. It was his general impression, at the time of this meeting, that they needed more soft money than hard money. He was told they needed soft money, and they could spend it to buy commercials. The principle advantage of the generic commercials they were running was that they could use the soft money. This belief of his that soft money could be raised to pay for the television commercials, originated at the Wednesday night "residence" meetings. He recalled being told this at the meetings, possibly by Dick Morris. Morris was the advocate of the media campaign, and may have been saying that as part of pushing the initiative. Morris would prepare samples of the commercials for them to view, and would provide them with feedback from people who saw the commercials. He argued the need for money to continue the media campaign.

Vice President Gore stated he was unaware of the way the DNC allocated hard and soft money. He could also not recall that topic being discussed at the 11/21/95 meeting. He was not well versed on the DNC accounting methods and procedures. His attitude was that it was fine for them to handle the nuances of their accounting procedures. He pointed out that he had been a candidate for 16 years, and thought he had a good understanding of hard and soft money.

Vice President Gore had no knowledge concerning the recent discovery of the document with the handwritten notes, or why it had not been discovered earlier. The first time he saw it was when he was recently provided with a copy of it to prepare for this interview.

The Vice President concluded by saying that Strauss is a truthful and diligent person. If he took those notes at the 11/21/95 meeting, the Vice President would not dispute that what is reflected in the notes was said at that meeting. Vice President Gore simply did not hear those things said. Vice President Gore advised that normally at these meetings he sat next to the President, and it was not uncommon for them to consult while a meeting was going on. It was also not unusual for the Vice President to be pulled outside during a meeting by one of his staff members, and that he might even leave the meeting. The Vice President also observed that he drank a lot of iced tea during meetings, which could have necessitated a restroom break. He additionally pointed out that much of the

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subject matter discussed at this meeting was of no interest to him, which could explain why Strauss heard it and he did not. In any case, he recalled that there were almost always interruptions at this type of meeting. After again reviewing his schedule for the day, he noted there was an hour long foreign policy meeting on 11/21/95. He remarked this was not normal and surmised it meant something important was happening in the foreign policy arena. This increased the possibility of an interruption at the DNC meeting. He also indicated that the time allotted for the DNC meeting on his schedule seemed short. Most of those type meetings were longer.