

TELECON  
Secretary Laird  
4/9/71 10:57 a.m.

L: Several things I thought that we ought to . . . Do you have a couple of minutes?

K: Sure.

L: One of the problems that is developing around here in the past six to seven months is that there's been a lot of real in-fighting on this question of the law of the sea.

K: Yes.

L: You've got these private interests and fishing interests and others doing a hell of a job on this. But I'm afraid national security interests are not being adequately thought of the protected. Bill is going to this meeting on Tuesday of next week and he plans to talk informally with Brazil and some others about the question of the two hundred mile limitation. But once you bring that up without our policy resolved it causes difficulties. We can make some changes in our position, but we have to be careful because this idea that Brazil is going to start taking our boats -- we've got to hard-line it before we resolve these issues. The right of transit through straights (?) is important, not only to us but to the Soviet Union too, and before informal discussions with anyone get started we have got to have a national policy. I think this is important. I think it is more important than SALT. I know that for everyong SALT takes the front burner, but our ocean policy from a long-term point of view is very important. If we don't have the capability to operate we might as well not have an Air Force or a Navy.

K: I agree.

L: There was a NSSM sent out . . .

K: And then there was some misunderstanding and I held it until we could talk again.

L: That had to do with the point that's coming up on Tuesday. But I've been pressing for a year on this. I think it's important.

K: I will do something about it. I think the problem that arose was that I didn't sufficiently distinguish between the 200 mile policy and the law of the sea problem. I will do that and get it out today, if you'll back me up on it.

L: I will back you on it but let me see how you write it.

K: I will. I will get Kennedy to check with General Pursley.