

Phone Conversation March 14, 1957 at  
11:50 a.m.  
Robert K. Bell - General Shinkle

B (To Operator) 2400, please.

Sec. General Shinkle's office.

B This is Robert Bell. I wonder if I might speak to the General.

Sec. All right, just a moment, sir.

S This is General Shinkle.

B Good morning, sir. This is Robert Bell.

S Yes, Mr. Bell.

B We have run into a situation this morning that is tending to handicap us considerably in talking to some of the witnesses in behalf of Colonel Nickerson's defense.

S Yes.

B Colonel Bengston and Captain Ledford have called and said they would be glad to come in and let us have a conference with them, but they insist on military counsel being present when they came.

S Yes.

B We would like to see those two gentlemen this morning and would like to see them with just the Colonel and me talking to them.

S Now, isn't that their election?

B Not necessarily, because Nickerson is not required to have military counsel at all. They can have counsel of their own.

S That's what I understood they wanted from you.  
It was my understanding of what you told me--you said both Colonel Bengston and Captain Ledford?

B Yes.

S They said they would like to have their own counsel there?

B I didn't understand it that way. They told me they didn't want to talk without military counsel being present. I didn't know whether they had reference to appointed defense counsel or whom.

S I don't know, either. This is pretty much a matter of their own affair, whether to talk or not to talk and when. It is not something I can give them an order to do, one way or another. What do you propose that I do?

B I wanted to know if they were under suggestion from higher authority to proceed in this fashion.

S I have given them no instructions whatsoever.

B You don't know whether General Medaris' office has or not?

S That I do not know.

B Thank you, General. Enjoyed talking with you.

S Mr. Bell, I have given them no instruction whatsoever. They have an interest in this. Whether they require legal counsel or not I don't know. That is their own election; whether they got instructions from General Medaris or not I don't know. I have not given them any.

B Thank you. We will get back in touch with them.

S All right.