

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION  
BIPARTISAN LEADERS BREAKFAST  
MAY 26, 1960 - Page 6

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The President responded that when our friends were on the spot he had no alternative but to cancel out the flights. But he added that it was quite clear that with the advance of techniques these flights are not going to be as useful as they were in the past.

Senator Johnson then asked why they weren't stopped before the Summit Meeting.

The President said again that this was a decision that had to be made. The previous flights had been successful. The ill-fated flight had to take advantage of the weather to get the needed information that would not be available later on, and the decision was to go ahead. It was just bad luck that the flight had failed.

Speaker Rayburn interjected that as far as he was concerned, he had kept quiet about the whole thing.

The President responded that the people closely associated with the flight were sure that their cover story would hold and that that was the only reason he told them to put it out. He said that on reflection it would have been a good idea to count to ten, but that that was crying over spilt milk and that nothing could be done about it. It was then that the President said that he would study any recommendations that Senator Fulbright's Committee might make.

Secretary Herter said that the whole matter was a question of alternatives -- that the flights in the past had been successful, that the information they had collected was remarkable but that when the flight failed it was decided to make a frank and full story of the incident.

The President jocularly said that as far as punishment was concerned, the only way he could be punished would be by impeachment. Speaker Rayburn also replied jocularly that "you haven't got long enough to go for that." But then on a serious vein the Speaker told the President that whether mistakes had been made or not, "we are all in this together."

