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**Processing Note**

Transcript only of this conversation; there is no recording.

The time of this conversation is not indicated on the transcript; the time is 6:28 p.m.

DATE: 10/31/68

TIME: 6:28 PM

CALLER: Mike Mansfield, Everett Dirksen, John McCormack, Hale Boggs, Thomas Kuchel, Leslie Arends

Pages of Transcript: 2 pages

Barbara Cline  
Archivist

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S NOTES ON CONVERSATION WITH  
SENATOR MANSFIELD, SENATOR DIRKSEN, SPEAKER  
McCORMACK, CONGRESSMAN BOGGS, SENATOR KUCHEL,  
AND CONGRESSMAN ARENDS

OCTOBER 31, 1968

136196

President Johnson said:

"I have just met with Secretaries Rusk and Clifford and Mr. Helms and Mr. Rostow and General Wheeler. The early part of October we got an indication from Paris that if we would stop the bombing they might agree to allow the Government of Viet Nam -- which we had demanded -- to come and stay in the meeting. We told them....we could not have a productive meeting ....if the cities were shelled or if the DMZ was abused. Sunday night they gave us some indication they would sign off...I am going to have a National Security Council meeting a little later tonight. I will probably have some statement after eight o'clock. That statement will very probably say that we are stopping the bombing in order to have prompt and productive discussions ...

"General Abrams recommended to me that we take this step; all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended it for two reasons. One, if we can avoid the abuse of the DMZ and the shelling of the cities, that's a great advantage. If not, we can go back to bombing the next day...Second, our bombing ~~now~~ in the North is not very profitable now because of the heavy rains--the monsoons--and we can use that same power better in South Viet Nam and other parts of that general area. So we will say tonight--and I have told the candidates and they all say that they will back us--that we will stop the bombing and expect prompt and productive discussions with the Government--the elected Government of South Viet Nam -- present and those discussions will continue and be productive as far as we are concerned unless or until they shell the cities or abuse the DMZ, in which event we will resume the bombing.

"...I wanted all of you to know that every military and civilian adviser, Secretary Rusk and Katzenbach, Secretary Clifford and Nitze, General Wheeler and each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Abrams....and General Goodpaster, his deputy." President Johnson said that each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed to the suspension.

President Johnson then asked that all of them say nothing, answer no telephone calls and do no leaking.

President Johnson then said:

"We do not know whether Thieu will issue a joint announcement or not. A few days ago he was aboard but we got a political campaign and some of our fellows have been running around with the China lobby and talking to embassies and telling them that if they would wait until after the election they could do better.... That is very confusing to a foreign government that doesn't realize that our Administration goes on until January 20 and even after that we have the Congressional leaders, we have the same Joint Chiefs of Staff for a while and things of that kind. So our policy is really not going to change from what I am announcing tonight. But that has held us up for two days. A good many boys have died as a result of it. But we are going to announce this tonight. We will stop bombing some time tomorrow.... We will try to have productive discussions and really test their faith.... I hope each of you will support me in this move so that we will have just one voice in foreign affairs at this very critical time."

There answers were:

Mansfield: "...I am with you a hundred per cent.

McCormack: "I think it is a calculated risk that we are justified in taking. I am for it."

Kuchel: "So do I, Mr. President. All the way."

Boggs: "I'm for you one million per cent."

Dirksen: "Well, you know how I feel."

The President asked them not to say anything until after he had gone on TV and then say anything that they thought would help us abroad.