

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 2, 1967

2:50 P.M.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ^{Tom} Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting with Colonel Robin Olds today in the Oval Office.

Attending the meeting were:

Colonel Robin Olds
Colonel James U. Cross
Mr. Tom Johnson

The meeting began at 11:50 a.m. It ended at 12:25 a.m.

SERVICE SET

102

OCTOBER 2, 1967 - 11:50 a.m.

Meeting with Colonel Robin Olds and
Colonel Cross

SERVICE SET

XEROX

Meeting Began: 11:50 a. m.
Meeting Ended: 12:25 p. m.

NOTES OF PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH COLONEL ROBIN OLDS.

Colonel Olds saluted the President as he was introduced to the Commander in Chief by Colonel James U. Cross, Military Aide to the President.

The President asked if Colonel Olds was ready for his new assignment as Tactical Commander of Cadets at the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs.

Colonel Olds said he was honored by the assignment although he regretted leaving Vietnam where he thought his services were needed most at this time.

"I am not exactly completely happy to come home. There is a lot left to be done (in Vietnam)."

The President remarked jokingly that he would send Colonel Cross over there to replace Colonel Olds. "If Colonel Cross can fly those B-52's as well as he flies my aircraft, he will be an excellent replacement." Colonel Cross said he would be very happy to go.

Colonel Olds: "Mr. President, as a man who has spent a lot of time in Vietnam with the men on my wing I want you to know that we understand your problems and are all for you. I really mean that."

The President: "Colonel, I appreciate that. I hope the men are with us. The hippies and the draft card burners certainly aren't.

"But I believe the basic soundness of America is still there. There are a lot of people who are saying that we should stop the bombing, 'negotiate now,' and pull out. When they say stop the bombing, they really are saying for us to stop protecting American boys.

"When we take out a mortar, we stop the killing of American marines in the DMZ area. When we destroy supply trucks and supply trails, we prevent ammunition from reaching the enemy so he cannot kill American boys. So when they keep saying 'stop the bombing,' they really are saying stop protecting your own men."

As late as my speech last Friday night (in San Antonio, Texas), we have demonstrated that we are willing to stop the bombing if the halt would lead to prompt and productive discussions.

"If we had stopped the bombing along the DMZ, those guns would not be silent this morning.

"This is a psychological and political war as well as a military war. It looks like our boys who are returning home would be speaking out. We need to hear from the loyal elements. General Walt made a good appearance this morning on NBC. He said something other than blaming our allies. The Vietnamese leadership is improving."

Colonel Olds: Mr. President, there is one thing that does have an effect on the morale of the troops out there. It's to read the news reports of men like David Schoenbrum and Baldwin of the New York Times.

But we believe the best way to counter their stories is to win the war for you. We believe we will do it.

The President: We have authorized all but 19 out of 479 targets. Those 17 include the port of Haiphong, and targets in and around the center of Hanoi. They would cost us too much in world opinion. If we have wholesale destruction of civilian lives, we will lose the support of many, many people. There are about one-third of our people who are against the bombing as I am doing it now.

The President and Colonel Olds then discussed the fact that our constitutional system set up a procedure whereby the judgments of the JCS are considered along with the advice of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense but that final authority is placed

with the civilians. Colonel Olds said as far as the men are concerned they are assigned targets and will attack those targets with precision and accuracy.

The President said we have the men and equipment to do the job. The morale is good and we are doing the job. I am not worried about the military war. But I am worried about the psychological war in this country. I think Americans ought to stop, look, and listen because our men are out there to protect our lives. In other words, you might say that we'll take care of the military war out there if you will take care of the home front.

This is not only a military struggle but a psychological struggle.

We may make mistakes, but this is the best trained, best equipped defense team we've ever seen.

The President said there is less jealousy and better cooperation than any other team he had ever known. There is less division in this war than in any war.

We have gone through division in all the wars.

If they can do it as well on the home front as we do on the war front, we'll see it through.

It would be useful to reiterate, if you believe it as I do, that there is no military stalemate.

You should speak from the field standpoint saying this team is the

best trained,
best equipped,
best fed,
best clothed group you have ever known.

It certainly has the best morale.

Colonel Olds said he certainly agreed with all that. "These are the finest soldiers that America has produced. I believe the military is in good condition. In my new job, I will try to send them the very best men I can."

Colonel Olds: "The MIGs will get more of our planes because they have changed their tactics. They are a constant menace, but it's a combination of things that bothers the pilots: flak, ground fire, SAMs and the MIGs.

The President said he has been considering a decision on whether or not to hit Phuc Yen air field. He pointed out that there are 200 Russian technicians on the base who would be killed if the base were to be attacked. Also there is a chance that more planes would be lost in the attack than would be eliminated.

Colonel Olds said there are two sides to the coin. As long as we do not bomb Phuc Yen, they keep pouring money and men into the base. The threat of bombing may be more confining to them than actually bombing it.

Hitting Phuc Yen will not affect the outcome of the war.

I'd rather knock them out of the skies.

In my own opinion, I would rather have them coming from Phuc Yen because I know where they are.

We have better tactics and better planes than they do. Our boys are 100 percent better than they were during World War II.