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| #119a notes | Notes from 10/23/67 - 1:05 p.m. meeting with Rusk, McNamara, Helms, Rostow, Christian, Wheeler [Sanitized NLJ 82-60] Top Secret 9 pp. Sanitized 9-26-86 NLJ 93-885 more info released Sanitized 2/28/02 NLJ/RAC 99-104 (more info) OPEN; SANI. parts in FRUS, Vol 19, item 483 | 10/23/67 | A |

FILE LOCATION Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 1

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OCTOBER 23, 1967 - 1:05 p.m.

Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
CIA Director Helms
Walt Rostow
George Christian
General Wheeler

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 25, 1967
1:20 p.m.

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EYES ONLY

FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tom
FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting on October 23, 1967 with Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, CIA Director Helms, Walt Rostow, George Christian, and General Wheeler.

The meeting began at 1:05 p.m. The meeting ended at 3:40 p.m.

Attachment.

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DETERMINED TO BE AN
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING.

BY DCH ON 12-11-81

Meeting began: 1:05 p.m.
Meeting ended: 3:40 p.m.

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
SECRETARY RUSK
SECRETARY McNAMARA
WALT ROSTOW
GEORGE CHRISTIAN
GENERAL WHEELER

In the Mansion
October 23, 1967

THE PRESIDENT: Discussed the arrest of two UPI reporters mistaken for demonstrators.

Secretary McNamara said his information was that they had hid their credentials and went along to the detention camp for the story.

SECRETARY RUSK: I am going tomorrow to Los Angeles to make a speech at the same hotel where the President spoke in July. I expect a demonstration and it will be necessary that I be choppered to the location.

THE PRESIDENT: As long as I am President we are going to make sure that justice is given to all but that the laws are enforced and applied. I think we handled the Pentagon problem very well.

I am proud of the way our men in Vietnam handled themselves in commenting on the demonstrations here last weekend. I am concerned as to how we handle the draft card burners who are handing in their draft cards at various federal centers.

SECRETARY RUSK: I would enforce the law.

GENERAL WHEELER: Not to enforce the law is going to create unrest among Americans who do support the law.

The Israeli response to the sinking of a ship was discussed.

SECRETARY RUSK: The Israelis have not consulted us. I think if they want our support they ought to consult us. I do not know what they have in mind. They are waiting awfully late for a response.

MR. ROSTOW: I would not ask Eban. Our intelligence shows that the ship

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was 10 miles off shore. CIA feels they will retaliate against the Egyptians' fleet. CIA says Egypt wanted to show its power.

MR. HELMS: This ship was doing the same thing the Liberty was. It is strange that the Israelis didn't do anything about the attacks. There were no planes or ships. We will try to find out where they intend to retaliate.

SECRETARY RUSK: They will equate this with the Gulf of Tonkin. But our vessels were 50 miles from shore and there was no cease fire in the Gulf of Tonkin. I think we should leave this matter to the U.N. and recommend prudence and hope for a long-term settlement.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you have a final draft of the letter to Kosygin?

SECRETARY RUSK: This is a message dated Friday. Dobrynin received it Saturday.

MR. ROSTOW: We knew about the ship before we knew about this letter.

The President read and suggested changes in the proposed Kosygin letter.

The text of that letter follows:

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I fully share the concern expressed in your letter of October 20 about the continued tense atmosphere in the Near East and the lack of progress toward a political settlement in that area. I cannot, however, subscribe to your assessment of the causes or to your inaccurate description of United States policy.

The explosive nature of the situation was dramatically underscored by the news, which reached me on the heels of your letter, of the sinking of an Israeli destroyer in the eastern Mediterranean by an Egyptian patrol boat equipped with surface-to-surface missiles. This act of war was the most serious of a series of threats and counter-threats, acts of terrorism and hostile deployments of armed forces during recent weeks. The situation calls for the best efforts of both of us and of others to secure strict observance of the existing cease-fire and to exercise restraint in the provision of arms to the countries in the Near Eastern area.

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Unlike the Soviet Union, the United States has for many years followed a policy of restraint in the arms field, a policy which has been even more restrained since the hostilities of last June. However, the continued flow of massive quantities of Soviet arms to certain States in the area has created a situation very difficult for others to ignore. While we have sought and will continue to seek to limit the arms race, the continued flow of Soviet arms will necessarily bring about some response by various countries in and out of the region. We may well have to resume shipments of arms ourselves to some of the Arab countries as well as to Israel. In these circumstances I would again propose that the Soviet Government agree with us that arms supplies to the Near Eastern countries should be registered with the United Nations. I would be glad if we could go on from there toward an agreement on an effective arms limitation program which would diminish the dangers and permit the countries of the Near Eastern area to use their limited resources for their much needed economic development. I assure you again that we are prepared to undertake immediately serious discussions towards this end.

As for political settlement, my Government has been doing its part for peace in every forum, at every level and at every hour, both before and since the outbreak of hostilities. We have consistently upheld the principles which I stated publicly and repeated to you at Glassboro:

First, the recognized right of national life;

Second, justice for the refugees;

Third, innocent maritime passage;

Fourth, limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; and

Fifth, political independence and territorial integrity for all.

We were guided by these principles when our representatives in New York worked out jointly with your representatives, toward the close of the Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly, alternative drafts of a resolution which would bring about force withdrawals, an end to the state of belligerency between Israel and its Arab neighbors and establishment of a stable basis for peace in the

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Near East. We were prepared to have either of those drafts presented to and adopted by the Emergency General Assembly when, because of objections from certain Arab countries the Soviet side withdrew ~~its~~ support. We would still be prepared to go ahead with those drafts which we considered joint ones and not, as you state in your letter, the United States "own proposals". We have attached no new conditions or new interpretations, nor have we weakened our adherence to any understandings with your government or other governments. On the other hand, we have been circulating to delegations at the current General Assembly drafts, the texts of which do not conform to those agreed in the Emergency Session. I believe it is essential that our representatives in New York continue their consultations to try to clear up any misunderstandings. We should ascertain whether we do not in fact agree on underlying policies and determine whether we can achieve agreement promptly on a Security Council resolution which would help move the parties toward peace.

I believe that the opportunity is before us to move forward. Recently, representatives of some of the Arab States have stated to our representatives that an acceptable resolution of the Security Council can be formulated on the basis of the five principles of peace set forth in my statement on June 19. This could be implemented by a special United Nations representative working with the parties on the basis of such a framework. My representatives in turn have made it clear that this would be an acceptable way to make progress toward peace in the area.

The same Arab representatives have said that the best way to achieve the objective of securing an acceptable Security Council resolution would be for the non-permanent members of the Council to proceed promptly to draft a resolution along these lines. My representatives assured the Arab states concerned that while we continue to adhere to our understanding of the provisional agreement we reached with your government in July, we should of course also cooperate wholeheartedly in their effort. We have confirmed that position both to the President of the Security Council and to Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov in New York.

Mr. Chairman, I stated to you at Glassboro that the first and greatest principle of peace is that every nation in the area has the fundamental right to live free from claims and acts of war and belligerency and to have this right respected by its

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neighbors. I welcome your statement of belief in this principle. Equally, there need be no doubt of the United States position that troops must be withdrawn. But there must also be, as I made clear in my statement of June 19 and again directly to you at Glassboro, recognized rights of national life, guarantees of the freedom of innocent maritime passage in international waterways, limitation of the arms race, a solution to the refugee problem and respect for the political independence and territorial integrity of all states in the area.

Mr. Chairman, in a context of peace, no state is justified in either refusing to withdraw its forces from the territory of another state or claiming the right to assert or pursue a state of belligerence against another state.

On this common basis, which we believe is acceptable to the great majority of the world community at the United Nations, there should be no difficulty in fashioning a resolution which will promote negotiations through the good offices of the United Nations in order to bring about a just and durable peace in which every state in the area can be assured security.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyndon B. Johnson

THE PRESIDENT: I want Goldberg to make sure that we have documented evidence of all of the statements made in this message.

DIRECTOR HELMS: Discussed the text of CIA's analysis of Pennsylvania. In brief, it showed no new movement on the part of the Hanoi government toward peace negotiations.

MR. ROSTOW: Should the President see Abba Eban?

THE PRESIDENT: I wish all of you would try to keep so many of these visiting dignitaries off me.

SECRETARY RUSK: Abba Eban's own position is one of moderation. I am inclined to tell him that the last time you were over here we advised

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you not to get into a fight. Now you're in a fight. We're not anxious to come over there and fight the Soviets for you.

DIRECTOR HELMS: Read CIA analysis. He said there is a strange consistency in messages. "In short, Mr. President, you ended up where you began."

THE PRESIDENT: Isn't there a lot we would gain by exposing this channel? You can summarize the results of the channel without identifying the people involved.

SECRETARY RUSK: The doves will make trouble if we publicize the message. In addition we may want to talk some serious business through this channel at a later time. M and A and Kissinger will not talk if we do not identify the channel. Kissinger is sending down a summary of the entire business. I would not identify the channel.

DIRECTOR HELMS: We have no indication that China is about to do anything in terms of getting into the Vietnam war.

SECRETARY RUSK: I have seen no change in the Chinese situation in over a year.

THE PRESIDENT: Are we now ready to take the wraps off the bombing?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: It depends on what you want to do for the rest of the year. If you open up the ten mile circle the JCS have recommended the power plant and the two bridges.

GENERAL WHEELER: I would strongly urge the President not to have a pause. I urge you to open up the ten mile circle and also hit the Phuc Yen airfield.

SECRETARY RUSK: One serious disadvantage is that every time a new target is added it becomes an act of escalation. I would not rush in with a whole new series of targets.

I have no strong feelings about Phuc Yen but it will have to be hit over and over. It may cost more planes than it will destroy. I do not object to the re-entry into the ten mile circle. But I do believe we should spread these targets out.

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SECRETARY McNAMARA: There has not been a bunch of these targets.

The President reminded those present that the air field had been authorized previously subject only to winding up the Kissinger talks. Now we have gotten rid of all the excuses. Let's go with it.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: If we are going to strike we should hit the two bridges and the power plant. They will be announced as a restrike.

GENERAL WHEELER: There is a list of thirteen targets. Some of these are restrikes.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Then we are agreed that Phuc Yen is authorized; the two bridges are authorized, and the power plant is authorized. No more than one of these is to be hit in a single day.

THE PRESIDENT: Are you pretty well up on schedule?

GENERAL WHEELER: Only three of the authorized targets haven't been hit.

SECRETARY RUSK: The attack on Phuc Yen will require two or three hundred aircraft, won't it?

GENERAL WHEELER: All totaled, it will require a couple of hundred. There will be four different waves of attack aircraft.

SECRETARY RUSK: What is the rationale for this when there are only twelve aircraft on the field?

GENERAL WHEELER: To destroy the support facilities as well as the aircraft.

SECRETARY RUSK: Phuc Yen will not give us a major international political problem unless there are a couple of hundred Soviets there. I wonder if the target is really there.

GENERAL WHEELER: Their air effectiveness will be further reduced by hitting Phuc Yen.

At Bac Mai, there is ground control intercept capabilities. There is also a filter center and over-all control. We have been paying a price for this facility. But we do not want to hold anything back. There is, we know, one prisoner of war facility at that location.

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THE PRESIDENT: Dean, are you ready to go on Phuc Yen?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes, if you can spread out the number of strikes.

THE PRESIDENT: Bob, are you ready to go on Phuc Yen?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I want Bob and Buz (General Wheeler) to talk to the JCS. Unless they have a target on their list which they are willing to put their reputation behind, don't recommend it. And let's not wash any more dirty linen in public.

My political instinct is to make public this exchange in Paris but say we are unable to make a proposal which we can stand on publicly. It doesn't seem we can win the war militarily. I asked the JCS suggestions on how to shorten the war but all of their proposals related to suggestions outside South Vietnam.

We can't win diplomatically either. We ought to make the proposals so clear and get such clear answers back that we can tell a farmer what has taken place and be able to have him understand it.

Now we are back to where we started.

We've tried all your suggestions. We've almost lost the war in the last two months in the court of public opinion. These demonstrators and others are trying to show that we need somebody else to take over this country.

People who want us to stop the bombing should know all we have gone through in this exchange. There are men at this table who do not know what all has taken place. We have not seen one change in their position. They are feeding the air waves with this propoganda. Your two departments must provide answers to these charges. Senator Russell won't even talk about it. The hawks are throwing in the towel. Everybody is hitting you. San Antonio did not get through. I cannot mount a better explanation.

If we cannot get negotiations, why don't we hit all the military targets short of provoking Russia and China. It astounds me that our boys in Vietnam have such good morale with all of this going on.

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We've got to do something about public opinion.

I want to make sure that Kissinger is on board. We ought to have a sentence every farmer can understand and the enemy say no to it.

We must show the American people we have tried and failed after going the very last mile.

What about the reserves?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: We do not need them in Vietnam now.

GENERAL WHEELER: We certainly do not need them at the current level of operations.

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