

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 25, 1967
1:15 p.m.

~~TOP SECRET ATTACHMENT~~

FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ^{Tom} Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting with the Democratic Leadership on October 23, 1967 in the Cabinet Room.

Those attending were:

The President	Congressman Carl Albert
The Vice President	Congressman John Moss
Senator Mansfield	Postmaster General O'Brien
Speaker McCormack	Barefoot Sanders
Senator Byrd of West Virginia	Joe Califano
Senator Long	Mike Manatos.

Those joining the meeting were:

Secretary McNamara	Senator Dirksen
Secretary Rusk	Congressman Bill Bates
CIA Director Helms	Senator Hickenlooper
	Congressman Mahon
	Senator Margaret Chase Smith
	Senator Sparkman
	Senator Hayden.

The meeting began at 5:36 p.m. The meeting ended at 7:04 p.m.

Attachment.

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Author: NLS 22-60

By: 8-13 84

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OCTOBER 23, 1967 - 5:36 p.m.

DEMOCRATIC CONG. LEADERSHIP

VP	Cong. Carl Albert
Senator Mansfield	Cong. John Moss
Speaker McCormack	Postmaster O'Brien
Senator Byrd (WV)	Barefoot Sanders
Senator Long	Joe Califano
	Mike Manatos

JOINING

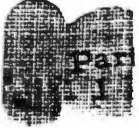
Secretary McNamara
Secretary Rusk
CIA Director Helms
Senator Dirksen
Congressman Bill Bates
Senator Hickenlooper
Congressman Mahon
Senator Margaret Chase Smith
Senator Sparkman
Senator Hayden

MEETING NOTES
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Meeting began: 5:36 p. m.
Meeting ended: 7:04 p. m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP
October 23, 1967
Cabinet Room

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ATTENDING WERE:

THE PRESIDENT
THE VICE PRESIDENT
SENATOR MANSFIELD
SPEAKER McCORMACK
SENATOR BYRD of WEST VIRGINIA
SENATOR LONG
CONGRESSMAN CARL ALBERT
CONGRESSMAN JOHN MOSS
POSTMASTER GENERAL O'BRIEN
BAREFOOT SANDERS
JOE CALIFANO
MIKE MANATOS

The following items were discussed:

(1) LABOR-HEW

Barefoot Sanders said the problem is one of getting the committee together. He said he talked with Congressman Flood on it today.

The President said the leadership should try to get the committee together to go to conference this week.

(2) DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Senator Byrd said that the committee would meet Wednesday. He said that the Senate will not get over \$70,000,000 which was the House version of the bill.

(3) FOREIGN AID

Congressman Albert said that Senator Fulbright will not be back until November 2. There will be a meeting on this tomorrow.

(4) EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

The President: Can we get Patman to get it out this week?

Congressman Albert: Yes, I think we will get it reported.

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(5) SOCIAL SECURITY BILL

Senator Long said that a bill would be reported toward the end of the week.

(6) CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Senator Mansfield said that the Senate would act on this tomorrow seeking an extension until November 15. He said that Senator Mundt is offering an amendment which may cause difficulties.

Senator Byrd said that we could probably carry this if the President really wants to make a fight for it. Senator Byrd said there were 26 or 30 Senators he polled today who would vote with the administration. He said some southerners and some liberals like Proxmire will vote with the Republicans.

Senator Mansfield said that the leadership would do the best it could.

The President: We need to get a clear indication of what the leadership on both sides will support on any spending reductions.

Senator Byrd: It is my feeling that we ought to wait until the appropriations bills are passed. We don't want for the House to be the only one which is on record for economy. We in the Senate also want a record for economy measures.

The President: We should let Congress take out what it wants to take out.

(7) CAMPAIGN FINANCING

Senator Long said he did not want to call it up this session. He said if necessary, the votes could be found to pass the Presidential aspect of it.

The President: It is going to cost a lot more in inflation than in taxes unless something is done. I do not believe Congress will want to cut much out of the budget. In my judgment, Foreign Aid and poverty will take the big cuts.

(The President then asked all the members of the staff except Tom Johnson to leave the room.)

The President then said that he was going to ask some of the other members of Congress to join in a very confidential discussion on Vietnam.

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By ics NARS, Date 8-23-84

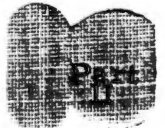
JOINING THE MEETING WERE:

SECRETARY McNAMARA
SECRETARY RUSK
CIA DIRECTOR HELMS

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AND THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS:

SENATOR DIRKSEN
CONGRESSMAN BILL BATES
SENATOR HICKENLOOPER
CONGRESSMAN MAHON
SENATOR MARGARET CHASE SMITH
SENATOR SPARKMAN
SENATOR HAYDEN



The President: We were having our regular leadership meeting on various programs this afternoon. I wanted to review with you on a very confidential basis some of our difficulties in Vietnam.

As of tonight Hanoi's position is just as rigid as it has been. We have had as many plans as we have Senators.

But I want you to be completely informed on our most recent exchange with Hanoi through intermediaries.

I have asked the Leadership to meet with me today in order to discuss with you our search for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam, and particularly the question of whether or not a cessation of bombing would lead to negotiations.

As you know, for the past several months, and particularly in the past month or two, there has been increasing sentiment here and abroad urging the United States to stop bombing in the hope or expectation that this unilateral act would bring us to the peace table. While undoubtedly some of this sentiment has been instigated by those who are sympathetic to Hanoi's position -- or unsympathetic to the position of the United States -- there are nevertheless a substantial number of responsible people who have taken this view.

I have felt that this proposal should be taken seriously not only because it is held by a substantial number of people and governments, but also because it has been and will continue to be my policy to take whatever steps would lead to a peaceful resolution of Vietnam.

Unfortunately, it is my conclusion, and that of all of my principal advisers, that a total cessation of bombing at this time would not in fact lead to

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productive negotiations. I want review with you the reasons why we have come to that conclusion.

First of all, it should be clear that the United States has long been willing to enter into talks without any conditions at all -- in any forum or through any channel -- public or private, formal or informal, open or secret. At one time last November, there was some indication from a third country that Hanoi might be willing to enter into such secret discussions. While we had some doubts about the reliability of this information, we nonetheless pursued it and indicated our readiness to meet with Hanoi in accordance with proposals which we had previously suggested to third parties and which, we were told, they had tentatively accepted. Hanoi failed to show up for these discussions. We were told that the reason for this was bombing in the area of Hanoi. To meet this obstacle, I then ordered a cessation of bombing in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi and maintained this restriction for some four months. Hanoi continued, however, to refuse to meet with us at that time.

Following that November incident, we made efforts to pursue negotiations in Moscow, where we made a number of suggestions to the North Vietnamese and sought their views. They did not respond to our suggestions and the exchange culminated in my February letter to Ho-Chi-Minh and his flatly negative response, which Hanoi chose to publish.

Since that time, despite additional efforts by the United States, the North Vietnamese have been unwilling to engage in any contact - privately or publicly - with Government officials. And they have repeatedly stated publicly that there could be no "talks" until such time as the United States ceased bombing North Vietnam. Generally, their condition has been stated as a "permanent and unconditional" cessation of bombing and other acts of war, although sometimes the word "permanently" has been omitted.

It is not my purpose here to review in detail the various efforts which we and others have made but to discuss this condition which Hanoi has imposed as a prerequisite for negotiations.

I am quite willing to order a cessation of bombing and to meet any condition imposed by Hanoi if this will in fact lead promptly to productive discussions. But I simply cannot take this action if the only result would be that North Vietnam would take advantage of the cessation to reinforce and resupply its troops in a major way.

Remember, we are not talking about our conditions for talks -- we will talk tomorrow without any conditions at all. We are talking about a minimum

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response to their condition -- a cessation of the bombing.

At San Antonio, on September 29, I said: "As we have told Hanoi time and time again, the heart of the matter really is this: The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation."

I would like to tell you very privately that this same proposal was made to Hanoi through a private channel a little more than a month before my San Antonio speech. We also offered to give them a specific date on which bombardment would cease and discuss with them privately the place and date where negotiations could begin. We also offered the possibility of preliminary contacts and a lesser reduction in hostilities.

Ten days ago we received an answer from them in which they declined to assure us that talks would promptly take place; refused to meet any American representative to discuss the cessation of the bombing and the time and place of negotiations; and said that there could be no contacts until the bombing ceased -- without affirming that there would be such contacts then. Finally, they categorically refused to discuss the matter further with the foreign intermediaries involved thus closing down the private channel.

This private rebuff must be read in the light of Hanoi's recent public statements. These have all been extremely negative on the subject of peace negotiations. Let me cite a few of the more important ones:

1. On October 19 an editorial in their authoritative Party newspaper said categorically that all American proposals, including my San Antonio proposal, "had been refused."
2. Wilfred Burchett, the Australian Communist correspondent who is often a reliable spokesman for North Vietnam, last Friday published an article from Hanoi which some of you may have seen in the press, in which he reports the views of Premier Pham Van Dong and other high officials. He describes Hanoi as "in no mood for concessions or bargaining" and attributes this position to key North Vietnamese leaders: "There is no possibility of any talks or even contacts between Hanoi and the US Government unless the bombardment and other acts of war against North Vietnam are definitively halted."
3. The Soviets, who we believe may have tried for peace on at least two occasions in the past, are now silent and not offering the slightest encouragement to us or to anyone else. Their conversations confirm our reading that

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Hanoi's only desire is a permanent cessation of the bombing; they have said bluntly in private conversation with reliable third-country diplomats that Hanoi continues to regard any bombing pause as an ultimatum -- which fits with all that Hanoi has been saying for nearly two years.

4. Hanoi has applied serious military pressure south of the DMZ. General Westmoreland's forces beat this back in late September but the threat now seems to be building up again. Several North Vietnamese in private conversations have referred to Hanoi's expectation that it will achieve a significant military victory -- probably meaning in the DMZ area -- in the near future. There has even been talk by North Vietnamese representatives of "another Dien Bien Phu."

Where does this leave us? First, all of us reluctantly conclude that the North Vietnamese are not seriously interested in meaningful peace negotiations at this time. There may be many reasons for this attitude. Clearly, the line from Hanoi is a hard one and this may be because they feel they can get a significant psychological or military victory south of the DMZ at some point. Or they may think that the political structure in the south will come apart under the new Constitution. Or that they can outlast us, as they outlasted the French, in a struggle of will. Or that criticism and division within the United States, and on the part of some of our important Allies in Europe, will deepen and cause us to abandon Southeast Asia.

In addition, we have to realize that serious discussions about peace present political problems for Hanoi at home, with its Communist Chinese ally, and with the NLF which might feel abandoned.

There is some evidence to support all of these views. But, quite honestly, I am unable to find any evidence -- apart from hope or wishful thinking -- which indicates that Hanoi is ready at this time to talk seriously.

I recognize that there will continue to be people who will urge -- despite the evidence -- apart from hope or wishful thinking -- which indicates that Hanoi is ready at this time to talk seriously.

I recognize that there will continue to be people who will urge -- despite the evidence -- that a change in our bombing policy could lead us toward peace. But I am not prepared to act simply on hope. A cessation which did not in fact lead promptly to discussions, or which proved to be only an opportunity for North Vietnam to repair its bridges, its roads and railroads, and built up its stockpiles and supplies for a further attack upon our Marines in I Corps,

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would not be in the interests of peace.

But I also want to assure you that we shall keep every possibility for peace in mind, every offer and every door open. What we want -- and what we shall continue to seek in every way possible -- is some indication from their side that they are willing to discuss with us in good faith how to put an end to this war. And proposals they make -- or any comment they make on our proposals -- will have our sincere and considered attention.

In short, we have said that we would stop the bombing promptly if it led to prompt and productive discussions assuming they would not take advantage of it. Within the last few days we have had people who have talked to emissaries who talked to North Vietnam.

The best judgment and advice I have is that the current policies are best to bring us to an honorable peace. That is what I want you to know.

Senator Hickenlooper: If we stop the bombing, we will surrender in effect. I do not know what other objections the President has, but I think perhaps we should do more damage than we are doing. I would support a continuation in the bombing.

Senator Dirksen: I am still in your corner. Do not lose this leverage of bombing. Remember how many casualties resulted from the talks during the Korean war.

Congressman Bates: Senator Dirksen expressed my view. I would like to ask Secretary McNamara what is the effect of the bombing? There has been great misunderstanding about what the Secretary has said on this matter.

Secretary McNamara: We cannot win the war with bombing in the north. We need action in South Vietnam supplemented by bombing in the north with limited objectives. Bombing is a supplement to not a substitute.

The great danger is to lead our people to think we can win the war overnight with bombing. We cannot.

The President: We do have differences of opinion. And there has never been a time when we had fewer disagreements with our Joint Chiefs of Staff than we have now.

There are less than two dozen targets we disagree on. These are in the port of Haiphong and in Hanoi.

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Congressman Mahon: You should keep the pressure on. Continue the bombing.

Senator Long: Don't stop the bombing. If anything, step it up. Anytime you want to lose a war you can. If we lose Vietnam we lose influence in this entire area of the world. We must make a stand here.

Senator Smith: I don't see any good coming out of our other pauses. Stand firm is my position. I don't know the President's alternatives but I don't think you should stop the bombing. I have a great admiration for the firm stand you have taken.

Senator Byrd: You can't do more than you've done. If anything, you have been overly eager. I am not surprised these people feel the way they do.

These people have every reason to believe they should hold out until the next election. I hope you continue to be firm. I hope you try to work through the U. N. If you feel what you are doing is right I hope you continue to do it. You may lose next year's election because of it, but I believe that history will vindicate you.

Senator Sparkman: You have done all you could. I think you should stand firm.

Senator Mansfield: I am not in accord on the matter of the effectiveness of the bombing. We could bomb North Vietnam into the stone age if we wanted to. I do not believe we have reached the objective which was stopping the flow of men and material into the South. We have lost many planes and we are flying within 24 seconds of China. I think there is much to what Senator Cooper said. We should think of contact between the NLF and Saigon to try to cut them out from North Vietnam.

Do not be fooled by the internal disturbances in China either.

The President: There were three objectives for the bombings:

- (1) To raise the morale of the South Vietnamese. We have done that.
- (2) To cause North Vietnam to pay a price at home for its aggression. We have done that.
- (3) To make more costly the flow of men and material into the South. The bombing has made it much more costly.

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Senator Byrd: Are the Viet Cong running short of ammunition?

Secretary McNamara: No.

Secretary Rusk: Last year we listed 28 public proposals to the Hanoi government. We gave an affirmative response to all of these. Hanoi said no to each of them. Interspersed with these 28 proposals were a number of private contacts.

This most recent contact began in mid-August. In the past there have always been some discussions about counter proposals.

Now Hanoi has said that there is nothing new to say. There is no reason to talk again.

The President: This was a man who sat across this very table last week. He went and talked with intermediaries who are in contact with the North Vietnamese.

Secretary Rusk: Their response was simple: "The situation is worsening. There is no reason to try again."

The President: We pursued this channel religiously. We are trying all we can. We will try again.

Congressman Albert: I would tell them to jump in the lake. We must continue to do what we have to do.

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