

NOVEMBER 15, 1967 - 2:16 p.m.

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Ambassador Bunker
Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
General Wheeler
Director Helms
Walt Rostow
George Christian

MEMORANDUM

10
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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November 16, 1967
6:00 P. M.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tom
FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of President's meeting on
November 15, 1967, with the following:

Ambassador Bunker
Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
General Wheeler
Director Helms
Walt Rostow
George Christian.

The meeting began at 2:16 P. M. The meeting ended
at 3:20 P. M.

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AMBASSADOR BUNKER

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH SECRETARY RUSK, SECRETARY
McNAMARA, GENERAL WHEELER, CIA
DIRECTOR HELMS, WALT ROSTOW, AND
GEORGE CHRISTIAN

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Prior to the President joining the meeting the group discussed the possibility of Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara appearing on the December 19 CBS program for a "year-end wrapup".

Secretary McNamara said he did not like the idea of spending a whole hour on Vietnam alone.

Secretary Rusk said Vietnam was the one area that he is completely clear on. George Christian said he was sure it would cover other areas, including NPT, ABM and relations with other countries.

George Christian said that Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland would appear on Meet the Press Sunday.

Ambassador Bunker reported on his morning meetings with Congressional committees and his appearance before the Overseas Press Club.

The ambassador reported a good turnout and a receptive attitude in the meetings.

The ambassador said he reported "steady progress on the political, military, and economic front in South Vietnam."

Bunker: "I tried to point out that nation-building and rural reconstruction is as important as the military aspects. We are making progress on all fronts.

"The House Foreign Affairs Committee asked if South Vietnam would negotiate with the NLF. I said they were anxious to get into dialogue. I spent two hours with the House Foreign Affairs Committee. There was very little criticism.

"Most of the questions were in the center. I repeated the San Antonio formula. This seemed to calm them down.

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"One congressman had a question about the charge that we never come forth with anything on negotiations which would not make it look like a defeat for Hanoi.

"I said that was correct if defeat meant that they must stop their aggression.

"Young Tunney's son did a lot of talking. My schedule for the remainder of the day is to meet at 4 p.m. with the Vice President and at 5 with the Peace with Freedom Committee."

General Wheeler then reported on the recent series of contacts around Dak To. The first contacts were on November 3. Another heavy engagement was on November 6. Other contacts were on November 8, 10, 11 and 13.

General Wheeler said there have been 102 U.S. KIA vs. 636 enemy KIA. In support of this operation have been 102 B-52 sorties, 81 of which have been in 'close support'. There also have been 1,116 tactical air sorties.

General Wheeler said the VC are attempting to achieve a dramatic victory and/or draw forces away from pacification. Ambassador Bunker agreed with this assessment.

The President asked if the quality of the South Vietnamese army has improved?

Ambassador Bunker said there has been substantial improvement in the South Vietnamese army. "The Vietnamese soldier is very good when he is well led. The press underrates the Vietnamese forces. Out of 40 battles recently, they have had 35 successes. They are fighting in night actions now too.

"The press does not believe our head counts and KIA."

The President asked Director Helms to get what information the U.S. government has on head counts of enemy KIA and determine the accuracy of the head counts -- see where we have made any errors, if indeed we have.

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In addition, show them the enemy documents and correlate them with the body counts to see if there is a relationship. (Rostow said that enemy documents show about the same as the head counts which have been reported.)

The President then asked Ambassador Bunker what more he would do to bring the war to a conclusion if he were President.

Ambassador Bunker said that if you take any time frame -- six months, a year, two years -- and compare it with the present there is evidence of a great deal of progress.

"I would do exactly what we are doing. The ratio of combat troops to support troops has reversed. There are now 39% support troops to 61% combat troops. We are going to get more troops from the Koreans and the Thais."

PRESIDENT: What about pushing up the arrival time of more units?

GENERAL WHEELER: Two major elements already have been moved ahead -- the 101st Airborne and the 11th Infantry. They will be in Vietnam before Christmas.

PRESIDENT: I want you men to do two things. First, get the number of targets down to the absolute minimum. Second, get the troops out there as rapidly as possible. I want to get these two things behind me.

PRESIDENT: While all of you are here this week, I want you to get together with General Westmoreland and think about what more -- if anything -- we should be doing.

AMBASSADOR BUNKER: We are in a position now -- with the ratio change of support to combat troops -- to step it up steadily. We have good logistics now and there has been considerable ARVN improvement.

I believe the new government is committed to their program. We ought not try to shove more at them than they can handle.

We may have too many AID people over there now trying to do too much. There are some priorities for them, including the reorganizing of the army, the refugee problem, and land reform.

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PRESIDENT: Have you seen any substantial changes in the six months you have been over there?

AMBASSADOR BUNKER: Yes, indeed. There is a significant change in the government -- most improved. There has been a change in the political situation for the better. There now are local people getting involved in local government at the village level. We are urging Ky and Thieu to put land control in the hands of the local people.

Secretary Rusk then reported on Ambassador Goldberg's discussions at the U.N. on the Middle East question. The proposed trip to England by the Vice President also was discussed.

The President then said he wanted from Ambassador Bunker, Ambassador Komer, and General Westmoreland "an accurate assessment of things as they stand now".

"I want to see what else we can do. "

"We need to get a better story to the American people. "

The group then discussed the possibility of Jim Hagerty, former Press Secretary to President Eisenhower, going to Vietnam for a short while to replace Barry Zorthian, joint Information Officer.

It was agreed he would be a good man for the job -- but it was unlikely that Hagerty would leave ABC to take the post.

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