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#11a notes	Notes from 1/24/67 - 7:50 p.m. Pueblo 3 meeting with McNamara, Rusk, Rostow, Clifford, Christian, Johnson [Sanitized NLJ 83-13] Secret 5 pp. - <i>open NLJ 92-742 10-5-99</i>	1/24/67	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 2

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P U E B L O 3

January 24, 1968
7:50 p.m.

McNamara, Rusk, Rostow,
Clifford, Christian, Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 24, 1968

~~TOP SECRET~~

TOP SECRET

FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting on January 24, 1968
in the Cabinet Room.

Those attending the meeting were:

Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
Clark Clifford
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

The meeting started at 7:50 pm The meeting ended at 8:25 p. m.

DETERMINED TO BE
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING

BY DLH ON 10-25-82

SERVICE SET

Meeting began: 7:50 p. m.
Meeting ended: 8:25 p. m.

~~TOP SECRET~~

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH:

Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
Clark Clifford
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

January 24, 1968
Cabinet Room

The President opened the meeting by reading a memorandum from Bob Fleming on the network press coverage at 6:30 p. m. (Attachment A).

Secretary Rusk: We met early tonight. We have received a message from Ambassador Porter in Korea. He thinks the Pueblo incident and the Blue House plot are connected with North Korean support for North Vietnam.

We propose the following diplomatic action:

1. We should take this matter to the Security Council. In the United Nations there is a long and strong background for our position in Korea. This would gain time for us. It also would give the Secretary General reason to proceed with private discussions. I think we should take it there, although it is likely that no resolution will pass.
2. Send a telegram tonight to the Republic of Korea to get their agreement on what should be put to the United Nations.
3. Go to the 16 countries who as part of the UN forces had troops in Korea. We should inform them of the situation and get them nervous about it. We should alert them to the possibility of a renewed crisis in which they are involved.
4. We should go to Prime Minister Sato of Japan. He has substantial trade with North Korea. He may be able to bring some

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 92-142

By cb, NARA Date 9-10-99

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leverage to bear with North Korea.

5. We should go back to the Soviets and tell them that their first response was not enough.

The President: I think we should get Ambassador Goldberg down here tomorrow morning for an 8:30 breakfast. Can all of you make it?

Secretary Rusk: Secretary Fowler and I are having breakfast tomorrow to go over our positions prior to meeting with Wilbur Mills.

The President: Why don't the two of you come to the breakfast and then talk afterwards about your problem.

Dean, ask Goldberg to jot down his notes and recommendations. Tell him I do not have confidence in the UN but I do have faith in him (Ambassador Goldberg). I want him to know that we are not going to make decisions about things to put to the UN without him here.

Secretary McNamara: We do want moves which will buy us time. I propose the following steps:

1. Proceed to move armed forces from the U.S. and other places in the area to South Korea and South Korean waters. I propose moving about 250 aircraft in addition to those that are aboard the Enterprise.

The President: Why don't we move the Enterprise back to Vietnam. We do not want them thinking we are diverting from our responsibilities there, do we?

Secretary McNamara: The Enterprise can remain off Korea without any effect whatever on our actions in Vietnam. It was going to the Gulf of Tonkin to supplant and not supplement any operations. We can keep the carrier it was to replace on station off Vietnam.

The President: Are you sure that we have enough air power and support to take care of the situation at Khesanh?

Secretary McNamara: We do have a problem, but I am reasonably confident that what General Wheeler and General Westmoreland have reported is satisfactory.

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The President: What's the strength of the North Korean air force?

Secretary McNamara: They have approximately 400 jets compared to 200 jets in South Korea.

The President: How does the aircraft we are sending compare with the North Koreans'?

Secretary McNamara: Our aircraft would be superior to the bulk of their air force. We propose to send, roughly 63 Air Force F-4's; 33 Marine F-4's; 50 F-100's; 50 A-4's; 30 F-8's; 22 F-105's; and possibly some other aircraft. The F-4's and most of the other planes do have bombing capacity.

My second recommendation is that the President has authority to call up units of the reserves. I recommend that we activate selected Air Force and Marine units. There will be approximately 200 to 300 Air Force units involved. All of these units are in a high state of readiness. This would be calling up to active duty approximately 250 aircraft. These would become part of the strategic reserve taking the place of the 400 regular jets which we will have the capability of sending to South Korea.

The President authorized the Secretary to begin making initial plans and draw up the necessary papers for the dispatch of the aircraft to South Korea and the activation of the units suggested. The President stressed that he would authorize more than what has been suggested if it is considered necessary. He said he would prefer to have more than enough to take care of whatever job might be required.

Secretary McNamara: I propose, although there is some difference of opinion on this, that we move the USS Banner in to replace the Pueblo off North Korea. We are planning to send it into the area to join the Enterprise. so that if we decide to move, it will be in position.

If we decide to replace the Pueblo with the Banner, we should be prepared to cover it with air and other support units.

The President: First, Bob, I want you to be prepared to move and be ready to make these decisions effective after the breakfast tomorrow morning.

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2. Take the tentative steps which are required to get ready for this action.

3. I would send 300 planes. Get more than you think you really need.

"Be ready to go when you come out of this meeting."

Secretary McNamara: We also would like to send Oxcart flight over North Korea tomorrow. The President approved this action.

Secretary Rusk: Also under consideration is sending a drone over Wonsan. However this has not been recommended to the President.

If we put the Banner back on station, we must have adequate cover for it. A second incident in which we come out second best would be disastrous.

The President: What about the B-52's? Should we send some in?

Secretary McNamara: They can operate easily from Okinawa. Flying time is only about 2 1/2 hours.

Walt Rostow: At what level do we propose to reapproach the Soviets on this subject? Do we reapproach them at the Thompson-Gromyko level?

The President: I see no difference in this situation than in the one in which Kosygin messaged me raising hell over Israel. The President then sent Tom Johnson into the Oval Office to get the hot line messages which had been exchanged during the Middle East crisis.

The President read portions of Chairman Kosygin's initial message to President Johnson on the situation in the Middle East.

Secretary Rusk: I think a message to Kosygin from the President would be appropriate at this time.

The President: Go ahead and draft a message tonight for dispatch tomorrow. Make it strong.

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Walt Rostow suggested that the message be sent through the hot line.

The President: I will not use the hot line on this. We will send it as quickly as possible by cable.

The President asked Clark Clifford if he expected any problems during the testimony on Thursday before the Congress.

Clark Clifford: I expect no real problems, although Senator Tower made a comment today that he was disappointed at the appointment. The Senator said he thought the President would now also be running the Defense Department as he is now running the White House and State Department.

The President asked Secretary McNamara if he had appointed a board to thoroughly investigate the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

Secretary McNamara: Yes, a special representative was sent to review the matter. In addition the Navy appointed a special panel to investigate it.

We will have good men to testify if called upon.

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January 24, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

FROM: Bob Fleming

George suggested a prompt report on the TV network news shows:

NBC opened with an excerpt of Secretary Rusk on the Hill today. He was asked if he agreed that North Korea had committed an act of war. He said it had committed a very harsh act, and he would not object to putting it in the category of "an act of war."

They then used an excerpt from McCloskey's State Department briefing. Brinkley said that contrary to some expectations, even hawkish members of Congress were slow to advocate strong counter-actions. He said many questions remained unanswered, as John Chancellor had learned today.

Chancellor reported that one question heard frequently was why American planes had not come out from nearby bases to knock off the Korean ships attacking the Pueblo. Part of the answer, Chancellor said, appeared to be that Cdr. Bucher did not feel his ship was in danger when the harassment began, since he'd probably faced such actions previously. To the first challenge, he gave the usual answer: "I am in international waters." An hour later, when more Korean ships appeared, he probably asked for instructions from his superiors. That, said Chancellor, was about 11 p. m. Washington time.

The question was serious enough to involve generals and admirals, rather than being handled by light colonels on duty at the Pentagon. It was 11:45pm Washington time when the Pueblo was boarded, only 45 minutes after Bucher had asked instructions. Secretary Rusk was told at 12, the President not until 2 a. m., Chancellor said, suggesting a moral that the United States can deal with problems of nuclear missiles quite promptly, but the problems of small ships in distant waters take longer.

ABC used Frank Reynolds, stressing that the President was insisting on careful study of the motives of North Korea as well as its actions. While there was no attempt to downgrade the seriousness of the incident, Reynolds said, the President not only had to be concerned about losing face in Korea, but even more in avoiding a new war in Asia.

More

ABC also used an excerpt of Secretary Rusk on the Hill that was a bit longer than NBC's. The secretary was asked if we were determined to get the Pueblo back. He said "Yes, indeed." He was asked if he was now ruling out military action. He said he was not now discussing future matters that might arise. Then followed the statement that he would consider the Pueblo actibn in the category of an act of war.

CBS used Dan Rather, who described the mood at the White House as "grim." He said there has been a furious 24-hour period of activity in behind-the-scenes diplomacy, but results have been negative. He reported White House comment that the North Korean attitude was "cynical" and the Defense denial of the reported confession by Cdr. Bucher. Rather said the diplomatic efforts continue with no military retaliation expected now.

In reaction from Senators, Tower said it was up to those engaged in diplomatic action to get the Pueblo released in a reasonable time, which he said he'd describe as hours rather than days. Senator Fulbright said he didn't think there should be military action until we've learned what happened, and determine whether the Pueblo was in international waters.

Marvin Kalb said that no one was ruling out military action, but the emphasis now is on diplomatic efforts. Carl Rowan at the Pentagon said questions remained: why the "ponderously slow" reaction, why the captain did not report activity sooner, and why no supporting help arrived quickly.

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A-18 ★★

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 1968

The Pueblo Incident

As might be expected, the seizure by the North Koreans of the Navy eavesdropping ship, the Pueblo, has touched off a mighty roll of rhetorical thunder in Congress. Many of those who have no direct responsibility for the application of this country's terrible military power demanded immediate military action or, at the least, the proclamation of an ultimatum.

The ultimatum and the application of military power are—quite literally—the last actions the United States should take.

The capture of the Pueblo and the casualties inflicted upon its crew are, without any question, highly provocative acts. It is, as the White House has said, a very serious incident. It is the first such seizure ever by a foreign power with which the United States was not at war, and the first capture of a U.S. Navy ship since February 4, 1862, when a Union cutter was seized in Galveston harbor.

In earlier days, when the power of the United States was limited to the weapons of conventional warfare and when the adversaries were more evenly matched, such insults to the flag and to the national dignity were considered acts of war. But today, the instinctive reaction of outrage must be tempered by a realization of the awesome power that this nation possesses and of the consequences of a major war to all mankind. Military force should be applied only as a last resort.

The reaction by the President and his advisers has been to seek the offices of the Soviet Union—which is fully

aware of the somber consequences of a full-scale war—to talk sense to the North Koreans. This diplomatic thrust was coupled with a flexing of military muscle. The nuclear carrier Enterprise led a task force north from Japan for Korean waters. And that, for openers, was what was required.

The Pueblo affair is no isolated incident. Guerrilla raids into the South and other provocations have been increasing steadily in number and seriousness in recent months. During 1966, 50 such incidents were reported. In 1967, there were 543. And in this week have come the most serious provocations since the 1953 armistice, the infiltration of the assassination and sabotage team into Seoul and the boarding and capture of the Pueblo.

Some observers fear that this stepped-up activity could be the prelude to an outbreak of open warfare. But it seems highly unlikely that the North Koreans, if they were in fact preparing to resume major hostilities, would be accommodating enough to signal their intentions beforehand. In all probability, the purpose of the incidents has been to bolster morale on the home front, to keep a part of the United States military strength in the area pinned down, and to prevent the deployment of more ROK troops to South Vietnam.

So North Korea continues to tweak Uncle Sam's beard. And, in recognition of the size and strength of the diminutive aggressor, we have—so far—managed quite properly to hold our temper in check.

DAVID LAWRENCE

Pueblo Seizure Threatens Crisis

Seizure by North Korea of the USS Pueblo, a small lightly armed vessel carrying oceanographic equipment as well as electronic and communications gear, has opened up the whole subject of sea coast surveillance. This is being carried on regularly by Russian fishing vessels, for example, in waters off the ports of Charleston, S.C., and Boston, Mass.

These ships may, under international law, station themselves outside of coastal waters. The Russians claim a 12-mile line off their shores, while the United States recognizes a three-mile limit.

All over the world, Russian trawlers are engaged in watching American submarines and also monitoring the flight of airplanes. The United States is doing the same in waters close to countries and islands in the Pacific Ocean where the vessels engaged in gathering intelligence are stationed. It will be recalled that during the Middle East war last June, the USS Liberty was believed to be an Egyptian ship and was attacked in the Mediterranean by Israeli planes and torpedo boats.

But there possibly is an even more pointed significance in the seizure of the USS Pueblo. It may mark the beginning of what Chairman Richard Russell of the Senate Armed Services Committee says could prove to be "a diversionary action" by the

Communists. Certainly, if America's armed services were required to move in force into the Korean area again, it would diminish their strength in Southeast Asia. Such a contingency, however, is much more likely to have been plotted by the Red China regime than the Russians, for the latter have much to lose if the United States finds that international waters are being violated and that the Soviet Union has had a part in it.

As for the Red Chinese, there has always been a fear that they would start trouble again in Korea as a means of weakening the American position in Vietnam. But this could lead to serious consequences for Red China, as the Nationalist Chinese would probably wish to take advantage of the turbulent conditions and try to land troops on the mainland. It is not likely that Peking will do anything to encourage an invasion by Nationalist Chinese from Formosa. The Soviet Union, at the same time, is not too anxious to see Red China make any critical moves in Korea that might have broader and broader consequences.

Certainly the seizure of the United States ship by the North Koreans is, as Senator Russell said, "a serious breach of international law amounting to an act of war." The Department of State views the matter as one of "the utmost gravity," and is

busy through diplomatic channels trying to get the North Korean representatives on the Military Armistice Commission to order the ship released.

North Korea contends that its own naval vessels were merely engaged in patrol duty and that the USS Pueblo had intruded into its territorial waters "carrying out hostile activities." This is the kind of propaganda that would naturally be expected from Communist sources.

But the United States is not likely to let the matter rest there. The Defense Department has declared that the Pueblo was seized 25 miles from the mainland of Korea and that the ship did not fire any of its weapons. There is every indication that the American government, by its protests not only to Moscow but to the Military Armistice Commission, will demand that the vessel be permitted to leave the North Korean port. The State Department insists that the USS Pueblo was not engaged in any hostile action whatsoever and had a right to be on the high seas off North Korea.

The whole incident illustrates how readily small conflicts can be generated that could lead to international complications. The attitude of the Soviet government will be a key to whether the incident will diminish in importance or become an excuse for starting new crises in the Far East.

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Presidential Style of Little Moment

The President, it is said, hand-wrote the version of the State of the Union address we all heard, and the credibility gap notwithstanding, it is altogether plausible that it is so. It was a pretty awful speech, awful in every sense. In concept, it was utterly unimaginative. In style, totally, relentlessly lacking in distinction.

Johnson's delivery—surely?—is the worst in history! My own memory goes back only as far as FDR, who was supreme, and they say that President Buchanan was pretty bad, but sight unseen, I'd listen to James Buchanan read through the entire encyclopaedia, rather than the incumbent recite one poem by Edgar Guest.

The principal deficiencies of the speech have been fully remarked—the failure to integrate the Vietnam war to our foreign policy; the failure to explore the root causes of the restlessness to which he fleetingly alluded; the encyclopaedic enumeration of all the blessings he has conferred upon us (the President even found time to mention his program for the redwood trees in California, at which point Arthur Schlesinger leaned over to me and whispered "better redwoods than deadwoods," whereupon I granted him a plenary indulgence for all his past sins); etc., etc., etc. But besides all that, the speech was peppered with irritating phrases of little moment except insofar as they suggest the profile of the President's thought.



What are we to make, for instance, of the sentence: "Tonight our nation is accomplishing more for its people than has ever been accomplished before"? A moment's concentration on that sentence leads one to the brink of total dismay. Consider, to begin with, the syntax. What does he mean, "tonight"? Apparently, a synonym—more technically, a synecdoche—for "At this point."

But the clumsiness is dis-

tracting. And then again, on the point of syntax, if one learns English good like a President should, you don't change from the active voice ("our nation is accomplishing") to the passive voice ("... than has ever been accomplished") unless required to by a great national depression, or a world war. And finally, what is this about "the nation" accomplishing something for its "people"? The nation is its people.

If he meant to say that the people of America are accomplishing a great deal for the people of America, then that's okay, only hardly worth saying because it is tautological. One cannot refrain from suspecting that what the President had in mind was "the government"—that he meant to say that "the government" is accomplishing more for the people. Whereupon one objects: but the government isn't the nation. And don't forget that, buddy. And tempted moreover to insist: the people don't belong to the government, so that Johnson should not have referred to the nation's accomplishing more for "its" people.



Let those who will say that this is nitpicking. I write for those who care to ponder the President's thought habits, which, ideally, should be all of the nation's people.

Or consider this: "Surely a nation that can go to the moon can place a decent home within the reach of its families." Once again, a statement which, read fast, or heard fast, tends to cross the stage quickly, and disappear into the wings of platitude. But it is a very foolish thought. In the first place, it is a government that decides whether to go to the moon. And the way the government gets to the moon is by taking money from the people which might otherwise have been spent in building more houses.

Since the government's decisions are backed by the power of the police, what the government desires, the government

gets. In a totalitarian state like Russia's, the government can decide to go to the moon even if it means that in its capital city families have to live two to a room, separated by a curtain. It is relentlessly clear that the government of Russia couldn't possibly go to the moon if it permitted the people the freedom to spend their money as they saw fit. And it is relentlessly clear that the United States will have fewer houses on account of our decision to go to the moon.



And again, what is this business about a nation's "placing" a decent home within the reach of "its" (there we go again) families? The government has practically nothing to do with houses, if you consider government-built or subsidized houses as a percentage of the whole. (Between 1950 and 1960, free enterprise built 18,000,000 housing units, while the government, net, destroyed 100,000.) The people of America come within reach of houses as a result of their own exertions, and as a result of the disposition of other people to save.

What makes it difficult for people to build their houses is: a) taxes (taken by the government); b) inflation (caused by the government); and c) restrictive labor union policies (protected by the government). The most useful thing the government could do to place decent homes within the reach of its people, is go away.

And so on. Fortunately, the state of the union is better than the state of its President's mind.

NOTES

Ronald Reagan usually played the hero's best friend, which may be the reason he impresses so many people as a natural-born vice president.

Perhaps the situation has never been so grave before. Even poverty is running out of money.

—BILL VAUGHAN.

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