

FEBRUARY 6, 1968 - 1:14 p.m.

TUESDAY LUNCHEON MEETING 45

Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
Clark Clifford
General Wheeler

Director Helms
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 6, 1968
9:00 p.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tom
FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are notes of the President's meeting with the Tuesday Luncheon. The meeting began at 1:14 p.m. and ended at 1:30 p.m.

Those attending were:

Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
Clark Clifford
General Wheeler
CIA Director Helms
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

The meetings was held in the Mansion.

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S TUESDAY
LUNCHEON MEETING

FEBRUARY 6, 1968

THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

Secretary Rusk
Secretary McNamara
Clark Clifford
General Wheeler
CIA Director Helms
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

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The President: I met this morning with Senator Gore of Tennessee. He gave me a good report on Latin America. Do we have everybody working on this matter on what happened when the Pueblo was on radio silence?

Secretary McNamara: Yes sir, we have our best people on it.

Secretary Rusk: We have checked every log and every intercept available. What is important is that there was no unusual North Korean activity during the ten day period to indicate that at any time the ship strayed into territorial waters. I do not believe that it did.

The President: Ambassador Goldberg said he had a position report two days before which showed it outside territorial waters.

Secretary Rusk: Yes sir, there was a position report two days before showing it in international waters.

(The President then left the room to talk to Senator Byrd who had called the President. The President returned to say that the Senator had called to apologize for his criticism at the morning leadership meeting.)

Secretary McNamara: The Joint Chiefs of Staff want to remove the restrictions around Hanoi and Haiphong, reducing the circles to three miles around Hanoi and one and one-half miles around Haiphong.

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NSC letter 8/10/80	
By <u>2H</u>	NARS, Date <u>10-27-82</u>

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The President: What is the reason for this?

General Wheeler: Currently there is a five mile absolute limit around both cities. We would like to reduce this to three and one and a-half with Washington approval required inside of those circles.

Secretary McNamara: This was upon land, water and power facilities to route reconnaissance.

Secretary Rusk: This action also opens up the possibility of large civilian casualties and leads to extensive devastation of the area. From what we have seen in other areas this leads to almost total devastation. What to hit is up to the pilot.

General Wheeler: We do not advocate attacking the population centers. We never have before, and we don't ask for that now. I admit there will be more civilian destruction, but we will be going after trucks and water craft. They are secure now, but represent very genuine military targets.

Secretary McNamara: Any attack of this type is very expensive both in the number of U. S. aircraft lost and in civilian destruction. I do not recommend this. The military effect is small and our night time attack capability is small. Civilian casualties will be high. In my judgment, the price is high and the gain is low. The military commanders will dispute all the points I have made except air craft loss.

General Wheeler: I do not think the effects on the civilian population will be that high. As you know, they have an excellent warning system and most of them go to shelters and tunnels. From that standpoint, civilian loss could be lower than it is in other areas. We have had nothing like this civilian destruction that took place in World War II and Korea. But the targets which are there are military targets of military value. Frankly, this (civilian casualties which might result) does not bother me when I compare it with the organized death and butchery by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong during the last two weeks in South Vietnam. All of this relates to the matter of pressure.

The President: How are our aircraft losses running?

General Wheeler: We are losing more aircraft because the enemy is extending its air defense southward.

Secretary McNamara: We are losing about 40 fixed wing aircraft every month. Our helicopter losses are going up. We had 27 helicopters destroyed and 137 damaged during the past two weeks. During the war we have lost 1700 aircraft. There have been 2025 put in. That is a net gain of 375 wings.

Clark Clifford: The situation is so fluid in Vietnam and Korea now I don't feel it advisable for the President to have any public comment. Any statement now will just augment public concern.

The President: I believe somebody in government should say something. I do not share the view that many people have that we took a great defeat. Our version is not being put to the American people properly.

Secretary Rusk: As you know, we do have some more talks planned at Panmunjom.

The President: Ambassador Goldberg wants to go out there.

Secretary Rusk: I know that.

The President: What do we do on the Jordanian Arms package? Before you ask for my decision on it I think you should consult the Congress and come back with their reaction.

What are we going to do now on these bombing targets?

Clark Clifford: I am inclined to move in the direction that their action over the past two weeks show a dramatic answer to the San Antonio Formula and to the request for talks. I am inclined to resume the bombing in North Vietnam and go ahead with the suggested three mile and one and a-half mile limits.

As long as the enemy has demonstrated that they are not going to respond positively we should go ahead with this.

The President: Bob McNamara says the loss is not worth the gain.

Secretary Rusk: I would recommend hitting the 14 targets designated inside the restricted areas without authorizing total route reconnaissance.

Secretary McNamara: There are 14 authorized and unstruck targets inside of that area.

General Wheeler: We can go first for the authorized targets although the Joint Chiefs does recommend the removal of the limitation.

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Secretary Rusk: Major destruction is involved.

The pilots select the targets. I do not know how much intensive bombing we want to permit in this area.

General Wheeler: I am fed up to the teeth with the activities of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. We apply rigid restrictions to ourselves and try to operate in a humanitarian manner with concern for civilians at all times. They apply a double standard. Look at what they did in South Vietnam last week. In addition, they place their munitions inside of populated areas because they think they are safe there. In fact they place their Sam's in civilian buildings to fire at our aircraft.

We showed during the good weather period that our campaign of bombing cut off Hanoi and Haiphong from each other and from the rest of the country. Photo reconnaissance showed that their air supplies were stacked all over and their turn around time for ships was very lengthy. That turn around time has now been reduced and the ships are able to unload much more quickly.

(The President approved the removal of the five-mile limit, agreed to strike the fourteen authorized targets. After these targets are hit the question of granting permission of armed reconnaissance will be raised again.)

Mendel Rivers is worried about nuclear frigates.

Secretary McNamara: He wants nuclear powered escorts for the nuclear carriers. I think the navy favors our current program. What he wants is for Congress to dictate the procurement. I do not think we should yield on this matter.

The President: All of you should do everything you can to expedite whatever is necessary to Korea. After that, give me a list of what else is needed.