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48a notes	NSC Meeting — Top Secret — 6 p. [sanitized - placed in open file on 4-25-86] open 8/7/14 per NLJ/RAC 99-243	2/7/68	A
49d memo	Rostow to the President Conf. — 2 p. open 10-21-94 NL 393-460	2/6/68	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 2

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

NA FORM 1429 (6-85)

FEBRUARY 7, 1968 - 12:29 p.m.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Vice President
Sec. McNamara
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Fowler
Under Sec. Katzenbach
Leonard Marks
William Gaud
Paul Nitze
Price Daniel

General Wheeler
Richard Helms
Bromley Smith
Clark Clifford
Walt Rostow
Tom Johnson

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 7, 1968

6:45 p.m. 16. 17202

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ^{Tom} Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of the President's meeting with the National Security Council in the Cabinet Room, February 7, 1968.

Attending the meeting:

The President
The Vice President
Secretary McNamara
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Fowler
Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach
Leonard Marks
William Gaud
Paul Nitze
Price Daniel
General Wheeler
Richard Helms
Bromley Smith
Clark Clifford
Walt Rostow
Tom Johnson

The meeting began at 12:29 p.m. The meeting ended at 1:55 p.m.

Attachment

BY DCit ON 10-27-82

~~TOP SECRET~~

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Meeting Began: 12:29 p.m.
Meeting Ended: 1:55 p.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

February 7, 1968
Cabinet Room

General Wheeler: There is continued fighting in the Cholon section of Saigon. We have intelligence indicating there are two enemy divisions in the Saigon area. At Hue and Danang the situation is most serious. The enemy remains in Hue and the strength of the ARVN battalions is down. Early reports say the ARVN battalions are "running out of gas."

Bad weather on the coast has affected air activities, including some resupply. A new attack on Danang is expected.

General Westmoreland said he plans to reopen Highway One so he can take supplies in by road rather than by air.

In the Khesanh vicinity there was a heavy attack on a special forces camp 4 miles from Khesanh. For the first time, the attack was supported by 9 Soviet-supplied tanks. Some of the tanks were damaged or destroyed. The camp held out until daylight, but we have just learned that it was necessary to evacuate Lang Vie.

Khesanh was shelled again last night and there was a probing attack against Hill 861.

U.S. casualties so far are: 670 U.S. dead; 3,565 wounded. There have been 1,294 South Vietnamese KIA and 4,448 South Vietnamese wounded. Enemy dead now stands at 24,199 with 5,007 detainees. We have captured 6,216 enemy weapons.

General Westmoreland has established a field headquarters in Danang. It will be entitled "MACV Forward." General Abrams will command it for the moment. General Westmoreland and the Senior South Vietnamese Chief of Staff may move to this headquarters to coordinate the heavy activity in the neutral sections of I Corps.

There are some conclusions:

-- The attacks have caused fear and confusion in South Vietnam.

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E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.5

NLI/81C 99-243

By ch NARA, Date 6-23-14

- 2 -

-- The attacks have aroused anger among the South Vietnamese people. The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong had no regard for life and property in these raids. They also violated the TET holiday.

-- There is some loss of confidence, because of these attacks, in the government of South Vietnam and in the U. S.

General Loan said that his headquarters was getting many phone calls from private individuals in Saigon giving away locations of the Viet Cong. This is encouraging.

We are concerned about stepped up MIG activity. They have been conducting bombing practices. MIGs may be used for the first time in support of ground action or in an effort to shoot down our B-52's. They may also attempt to attack an air base, like the one at Danang. I sent a message to all field commanders alerting them to these possibilities.

Secretary Rusk: What about the possibility of the MIG's attacking a carrier?

General Wheeler: No, I do not think this likely. The carriers do have air caps and are distant from the MIG bases.

The President: Go in and get those MIGs at Phuc Yen.

General Wheeler: We will as soon as the weather permits.

Secretary McNamara: The MIG's would have negligible military effects but they would have spectacular psychological impact.

We do get the feeling that something big is ahead. We do not exactly know what it is, but our commanders are on alert.

The President: I want all of you to make whatever preparations are necessary. Let's know where we can get more people if we need to move additional ones in.

General Wheeler: I have a preliminary list on my desk. I am not satisfied with it.

Secretary McNamara: This would include Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine units.

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The President: What about the allies?

General Wheeler: The Australians are incapable of providing more troops. The problems in Korea are such that it will be hard to get the South Koreans to even send the light division they had promised. The Thai troops are in training and to move them in now would be more detrimental than helpful.

The President: So it would be only Americans? Well, I want you to know exactly where you could get them, where they are located now and what we need to do. Get whatever emergency actions ready that will be necessary.

Secretary McNamara: All we would recommend at this time are the three items we had discussed earlier.

There may be some increase in draft calls but this would have no immediate effect.

The President: Do we have adequate hospitals and medical personnel?

General Wheeler: We have ample space, ample supplies, and enough doctors for the present.

Secretary McNamara: There are 6,400 military beds. Of that, 2900 are occupied by U.S. troops and 1100 by Vietnamese civilians. So we have an additional capacity of about 2400.

The President: Look at this situation carefully. If we have another week like this one, you may need more.

Secretary Rusk: How do you interpret their use of tanks?

General Wheeler: They had to bring them all the way from Hanoi. This shows that this plan has been in staging since September. It represents a real logistic feat. They want to create maximum disruption.

Director Marks: Could they do anything at Cam Ranh Bay?

General Wheeler: They could. On this last attack, we caught frogmen in there. They could put rockets in the hills and fire on to the base.

The President: How many of the 25,000 killed were North Vietnamese Regulars?

General Wheeler: Approximately 18,000 were of a mixed variety of South Vietnamese enemy. Approximately 6,000 to 7,000 were North Vietnamese.

The President: How do things look at Khesanh? Would you expect to have to move out of Lang Vie?

General Wheeler: It was not planned that we would hold some of these outposts. We may have to move back that company on Hill 861.

The President: Bob, are you worried?

Secretary McNamara: I am not worried about a true military defeat.

General Wheeler: Mr. President, this is not a situation to take lightly. This is of great military concern to us. I do think that Khesanh is an important position which can and should be defended. It is important to us tactically and it is very important to us psychologically. But the fighting will be very heavy, and the losses may be high.

General Westmoreland will set up the forward field headquarters as quickly as possible. He told me this morning that he has his cables and his communications gear in. He is sending a list of his needs, including light aircraft. We are responding to this request.

The President: Let's get everybody involved on this as quickly as possible. Everything he wants, let's get it to him.

Secretary Rusk: We had the fourth private meeting on the Pueblo at Panmunjom. All four meetings have been very short. They did turn over to us the names of one dead soldier and the three injured.

Secretary McNamara: It does appear that all were wounded by our own self-destruct devices.

Secretary Rusk: From radio intelligence, it now appears that the Pueblo attempted to evade boarding for 45 minutes. There were 4 pieces of highly classified equipment aboard.

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Paul Nitze: We believe they destroyed all of the input cards. They damaged the four pieces of classified equipment, but many of the manuals and publications giving codes and radar classification instructions were lost.

The President: There are many charges coming across the tickers. You should set up a team of people to keep watch on these charges by people like Nixon and Romney and answer them quickly before they become fact in the public mind.

Mr. Rostow: The New York Times said today that enemy KIAs were more like the number of weapons captured than like the figures which we are reporting.

General Wheeler: That is not true. We have captured many crew-served weapons. In fact we have captured 900 crew-served weapons on which 4 to 5 men operated. Many of these suicide crews have used only grenades and satchel charges. They have been so heavily loaded that they do not carry hand weapons. Experience has shown that the ratios of weapons to men runs 3 to 4 to 1. This ratio confirms our battle figure counts of enemy KIAs.

Secretary Rusk: The North Koreans said at the next meeting they expect to talk business. There is nothing new about what has happened so far.

I met with the members of Congress today. I pointed out that there had been 11 aircraft incidents under President Truman; 33 under President Eisenhower; 7 under President Kennedy; and 11 under President Johnson.

I told them not to get panicky about the Pueblo situation. I discussed why intelligence of this type is so important to us and why we do not escort these vessels.

I also told them we are not preparing a way toward apologizing for the incident. The Meet the Press discussion was misinterpreted by many people.

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SERVICE SET

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- 6 -

Then I went through the whole summary on Vietnam, similar to what General Wheeler gave here today. Most of them are concerned about the political significance of the offensive.

I pointed out that the Government of South Vietnam had not waived or collapsed. There had been no reports of South Vietnamese defections. There have been no reports of a popular uprising. Not a single one of the provinces or district capitals is held by the Viet Cong.

I told them General Westmoreland made it clear that we can expect further attacks.

(There then was a discussion on military aid.)

The President: We may ask the Vice President to go to Latin America to talk with some of the countries there as he did in Africa. Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee told me that 3 or 4 Ambassadors he visited were excellent. There was no Ambassador in the 4th country.

He said our programs are moving well.

We also may get Under Secretary Katzenbach to go to 3 or 4 countries and Ambassador Covey Oliver to go to 3 or 4,

Under Secretary Katzenbach: We have the F-5 problem with Brazil. There are lesser problems with Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Congo. Of course the Middle East is a problem. I have never been to the Congress when logical arguments have produced less response from rational people.

Mr. Rostow: The Vice President suggested we should get some outside pressures on these people to see the problems we face unless we do provide military assistance to these countries.

The President: Get me a list of who might be helpful to us. I will ask them to come down and talk with me on this matter if it is necessary.

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SERVICE SET

Mr. President:

February 7, 1968

Appointment: 12:00

REGULAR NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING.

Location:

Cabinet Room ✓

Fish Room _____

Lobby _____

Rose Garden _____

Other _____

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

(30)

February 7, 1968

6:45 p.m. led 7:20p

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ^{Tom} Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of the President's meeting with the National Security Council in the Cabinet Room, February 7, 1968.

Attending the meeting:

The President
The Vice President
Secretary McNamara
Secretary Rusk
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Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach
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The meeting began at 12:29 p.m. The meeting ended at 1:55 p.m.

Attachment

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING

BY Dut ON 10-27-82

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 6, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Suggested Order of Business for ~~NSC Meeting~~
(Wednesday Noon, February 7, 1968)

1. ~~Vietnam Briefing~~ (about 5 minutes)

General Wheeler is prepared to summarize the current military situation.

2. ~~Military Aid and the Conte/Long and Symington Amendments~~

- a. ~~Secretary Rusk~~ is prepared to present the issues but he will probably ask Nick Katzenbach to do this.
- b. Discussion of the issues. (Attached is a briefing memo including questions you may wish to ask.)
- c. To conclude the meeting, you may wish to say that you would like to have promptly for consideration an agreed statement of policy to use in briefing Congress on how we are handling the amendments.

For *Brouley Smith*
For W. W. Rostow

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NEJ 93-460

By 112, NARA, Date 10-12-94

Tuesday, February 6, 1968 -- 6:30 PM

DECLASSIFIED

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Suggested Discussion Questions on the Conte Amendment
(for NSC Meeting, Wednesday, February 7, Noon)

Last year's battle over military aid and sales to poor countries produced two amendments. The Symington Amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill directs us to discourage poor countries from unreasonable levels of military spending and ultimately to stop our economic aid if they refuse to comply. The Conte Amendment to the Foreign Aid Appropriations Act directs the President to withhold economic aid in an amount equal to any expenditures by poor countries (except seven, including Israel, named in the law) for "sophisticated weapons". The Symington Amendment is a step forward. The main problems with the Conte Amendment are as follows:

- how to define "sophisticated weapons";
- whether to apply the amendment to old arms contracts (many of which will involve deliveries in future years) or whether to limit it to contracts made after the amendment came into force (Jan. 2, 1968);
- when to make waivers; (This means a Presidential determination that the arms purchase is "vital to the national security of the United States".)
- how to relate the Conte Amendment to the Symington Amendment; (Whether, for example, a decision to withhold aid under the Conte language constitutes evidence that a country is committing an unreasonable amount of its national budget to defense, bringing into play the Symington Amendment.)
- how to handle the F-5 problem in Latin America; (We have an offer outstanding. If it's accepted, it would force us to cut economic aid to the buyers. The present alternative is a Presidential waiver in the teeth of specific legislative history to the effect that a waiver is not justified to permit sales of jets to Latin America.)
- what to do, particularly in India and Pakistan, when the next arms deal is made by either country with the Soviets or the Chinese; (Should we withhold aid, or should the President find that the purchase of Bloc weapons by the South Asians is "vital to the national security of the United States?")
- what to do when countries lie to us or won't give us information.

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SERVICE SET

Answers to some of these questions have been suggested in the inter-agency review of the problem now underway. For example, we might:

- (1) have a separate list of sophisticated weapons for each country, varying with the inventory and military history of each country; (2) apply the Conte Amendment only to new contracts; and (3) try to survive the last half of this fiscal year without any more waivers than are absolutely necessary. But not even these points have been nailed down, and they are only a partial solution to the specific and complex problems we face in Latin America and South Asia.

The details of overall policy are still under discussion. However, this NSC meeting gives you an opportunity to take stock of some of the larger issues and to sound out current thinking.

You may want to ask some of the following questions:

1. When and in what context do we expect the first really difficult decision under the Conte Amendment? (For example, when must we saw off on F-5's in Latin America?)
2. Should we make a major effort this session to get the Conte language repealed or modified? Do we know how it could be modified so that we could live with it? How would we go about making such an effort?
3. Can we avoid the very difficult choice between withholding aid from an important country or waiving on the ground that a specific arms deal is vital to the national security of the United States? In other words, is there a way to relate the Conte Amendment to defense budget levels rather than to specific arms deals so that the President can avoid hitching his waiver to an arms deal which may be very unpopular on the Hill?
4. How are we going about clearing and consulting about our interpretation of this amendment on the Hill?
5. When will we be ready with an overall policy to put before the Congress? (The law requires us to advise the Congress before March 2 on how we plan to carry out the amendment.)

W. Rostow Rostow

LIST OF INVITEES, NSC MEETING

February 7, 1968; Wednesday, 12:00 noon

Vice President Humphrey

Secretary of State Rusk
Under Secretary Katzenbach

Secretary of Defense McNamara

Secretary of Treasury Fowler

CIA Director Helms

JCS Chairman Wheeler

USIA Director Marks

AID Administrator Gaud

OEP Director Daniel

Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson
Bromley Smith

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Wednesday, February 7, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Attendance at the NSC Meeting, Noon

Secretary Fowler will be on the Hill this morning. It is not certain that he will be able to arrive at the NSC Meeting scheduled for noon.

Do you wish us to invite Under Secretary Barr to come to the meeting if Secretary Fowler is not free at noon?

YES

☒

NO

☐

Dick Helms will be testifying before the Mahan Committee this morning. He is coming to the meeting but may be a few minutes late.

Ed Hamilton of my staff is following the subject matter of today's meeting and I would like to have him sit in.

YES

☒

NO

☐

2-7-68
Jaws told B. Smith

W. Rostow

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