

WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#80 notes	Notes from 3/5/68 - 1:14 p.m. Tuesday luncheon meeting with Rusk, Clifford, Wheeler, Helms, Taylor, Rostow [Sanitized NLJ 83-24] Secret 9 pp. <i>Open NLJ 92-142 10-5-99</i>	3/5/68	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 2

RESTRICTION CODES

- A) Closed by Executive Order 12356 governing access to national security information.
- B) Closed by statute or by the agency which originated the document.
- C) Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in the donor's deed of gift.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

NA FORM 1429 (6-86)

MARCH 5, 1968 - 1:14 p.m.

79

TUESDAY LUNCHEON MEETING WITH
FOREIGN ADVISORS

Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
General Wheeler
CIA Director Helms

General Taylor
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

RECEIVED

XERO

~~TOP SECRET~~

80

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 6, 1968

7:30 p.m.

mid 8:30 p

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: **Tom**
Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of the President's meeting on Tuesday, March 5, with senior foreign policy advisers.

Those attending include:

The President
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
General Wheeler
CIA Director Helms
General Taylor
Walt Rostow
George Christian
Tom Johnson

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLJ 92-142

By cb, NARA Date 9-16-99

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
—Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

~~TOP SECRET~~

-1-

THE PRESIDENT: I will be meeting with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee tomorrow evening. Senator Fulbright, Sparkman, Aiken, and Hickenlooper.

SECRETARY RUSK: You should remind them that we were not bombing Hanoi and Haiphong about six months of last year. He (Senator Fulbright) doesn't seem to give us credit for that.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Nixon has taken note of it. He has accused us of gradualism and stated that we would have ended the war sooner had it not been for this policy of gradualism.

SECRETARY RUSK: There may be a point to that. If back under President Kennedy we had recommended and approved putting in 100,000 men it might have saved things. ✓

THE PRESIDENT: What is the situation on the Pueblo?

SECRETARY RUSK: The issue now is: do we apologize? Even if we did, we have no assurance that the NKs would return the ship. My department recommends that we ask NK if they would release the crew if we apologize?

There is a very bad precedent. In 1964, one of our generals did apologize for the chopper incident. Of course, that was a clear violation and we do not think this one is. Then we were guilty. Now we do not think we are.

THE PRESIDENT: How about the letter from the Pueblo crew?

SECRETARY RUSK: This letter looks a little more legitimate.

THE PRESIDENT: How about getting some more information on this. What about their various statements about the miles and points where they intruded?

SECRETARY RUSK: We don't know. We are working on a formula now. It may be that we apologize by having our man at Panmunjon say "we adopt the statement of the crew as our own. Now release the crew." When they are released we will get the actual facts.

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

-2 -

DIRECTOR HELMS: How about getting the Swiss to see if the crew actually wrote the letter?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes, we can do that.

GENERAL TAYLOR: We cannot let this thing terminate so our enemies will be encouraged to take hostages and get massive propaganda value out of it.

CLARK CLIFFORD: We are almost certain we did not violate territorial waters.

SECRETARY RUSK: We need to take more time on this.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Would the fear of military reprisal make the North Koreans hold the men longer?

SECRETARY RUSK: They know enough to assume we do not want to step up the military side of this.

CLARK CLIFFORD: How about the impartial tribunal?

SECRETARY RUSK: They were outraged by the idea. The Pueblo problem seems to have dropped out of the press. I would not hurry this.

THE PRESIDENT: O.K. on that. What about the suggestions of last night?

SECRETARY RUSK: There is one idea which would throw additional responsibility on Hanoi. (Secretary Rusk read a statement about cessation of bombing).

My guess is that it would last about three days. It would not hold up if they attacked Khesanh or the cities. By the time the bad weather had ended, if there is no response by Hanoi, we could resume it.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

~~TOP SECRET~~

-3-

General Wheeler has some targets with him today. They consider the possibility of bombing inside Haiphong itself. This is not a recommendation yet. We will see what develops.

GENERAL WHEELER: I sent General Westmoreland the message you asked me to give him last night. I told him of the report of your committee and that we did not have the capability to send more than 22,000 men to him at this time. But I emphasized that no decision has yet been made on this.

The general said he is going to publicize the offensive U.S. troops are about to undertake.

CLARK CLIFFORD: I feel not. If the offensive does not come off as well as planned, we would have an added burden.

SECRETARY RUSK: Let's emphasize what we have done after it is over---not our expectations or what we will do.

THE PRESIDENT: Let's don't get these people to expect more than we can deliver.

RUSK: It's fatal to promise more than we can get. Also, it is wrong to expect more of the ARVN than we can deliver.

THE PRESIDENT: It looks like we should have two or three suppliers of choppers and weapons.

Also, it appears we are about to make a rather basic change in the strategy of this war, if:

- we tell the ARVN to do more fighting.
- we tell them we will give 20,000 men; no more.
- we tell them we will do no more until they do more.
- we tell them we will be prepared to make additional troop contributions but not unless they "get with it."

I frankly doubt you will get much out of them unless they have a good coach, the right plays, and the best equipment.

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

-4-

SECRETARY RUSK: Let's put on a massive helicopter program. We always can use them. There is substantial demand for their use as civilian evacuation. They will be put to good use, no matter what the number.

THE PRESIDENT: Let's get that firm on a 7-day week, three shifts. I see that Paul Nitze was wrong. They are not on it now. The engines are the limiting factor. Let's do something to clear that up. Let's get that M-16 production up too---right away.

RUSK: What about the possibility of getting foreign production of choppers.

GENERAL WHEELER: I think the President is aware of the feeling in the Congress about "buying at home."

CLIFFORD: The chopper firm can go to 3 shifts, six days a week. They need the 7th day for maintenance. It is interesting that the firm is opening a new plant in Charleston, S. C. This will get production up from 200 to 300 / month.

THE PRESIDENT: Do we want to talk over this strategy change with Congress? ✓

CLIFFORD: That depends on the President's attitude toward the recommendations.

THE PRESIDENT: I am ready to sign on except for how we handle the announcement---what we say and the timing of it. ✓

I would be guided by Senator Russell, Mansfield, Rivers and Dirksen on what to say---as well as talks with the other leaders. I think we should announce the reserve callup with a full explanation.

I think we should say at the same time that we may ask for specialists and the extension of tours of duty.

Let's make it clear that we are not going to lengthen the tours in Vietnam. The tour there will still be 12 months. ✓

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

SECRET SET

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 5 -

Buzz, you and Clark go this afternoon and talk with Russell. Tell him you are about to recommend this to the President. See if he can swallow:

- a call-up of reserves
- authority to call specialists
- extension of enlistments

If he can, let's see if he can "march it through" the Senate and the Congress.

CLARK CLIFFORD: The first thing Russell will want to know is what Westmoreland has asked for.

On these figures, I want to know if they should include the 31,000 for Korea and the naval cruisers and destroyers. 511,000 total strength sounds large; 454,000 sounds better.

I think the lower figure (without the 31,000 for Korea and the naval vessels) is easier to sell.

GENERAL WHEELER: I think we should work on three solutions, and the JCS is doing that:

SOLUTION ONE: The full package of 511,000. This includes the troops for South Korea and the naval vessels.

SOLUTION TWO: This includes 8,500 men for Korea for the security of the air bases. It would drop out the two cruisers and the 15 destroyers.

SOLUTION THREE: No cruisers. No destroyers. No troops for South Korea. On this, I suggest we talk in terms of a call-up of 240,000 with an end strength of 450,000.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Have we promised the Koreans anything?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

SECRETARY RUSK: In Korea, they have a population which is entirely with its forces. We do not want a conventional war. And we do not see any evidence of any offensive intervention by North Korea into the South.

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

SECRET

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 6 -

THE PRESIDENT: Let's get Colt working around the clock on those M-16s. Also let's consider opening two additional sources of supply. Waive that contract with Colt, if necessary before June. Let's get on with this. Don't wait until June either.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Is that the fully modified version of the M-16?

GENERAL WHEELER: Yes.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Is the powder any problem?

THE PRESIDENT: Is that the ammo?

GENERAL WHEELER: There is no problem on that. They have worked this out.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with General Johnson on this proposal to hurry-up the dispatch to Vietnam of 3 maneuver battalions. Their current ETA is March 28, April 6, and April 15.

What about the 2,250 B-52 capability?

GENERAL WHEELER: We can give him surge capability, but not a sustained level.

CLARK CLIFFORD: Are you (The President) authorizing me to take whatever steps that are necessary to increase chopper and M-16 production? ✓

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Let's also give the South Vietnamese the best equipment we can. ✓

Get the engine company high behind. Let's see if somebody else can't make that engine.

SECRETARY RUSK: I think we should investigate the possibility of foreign production.

THE PRESIDENT: Let's also look at the fixed wing plane proposal. That proposal will run \$2.29 billion.

What is the Berlin situation?

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 7 -

SECRETARY RUSK: There may be some harassment in the air and along the highways. I think we should let the West Germans, the British and the French look at this. Let's not get involved in any challenge.

HELMS: I agree. The Soviets are just reminding us that they are still there.

THE PRESIDENT: Are our people prepared?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes.

On NPT, we are still working on a common statement with the Soviets.

THE PRESIDENT: I will talk with Russell about the Gulf of Tonkin. He may have put Hollins up to proposing that the resolution be withdrawn, and then vote against his own motion to get people to take sides.

The hawks want the others to put up or shut up.

What about UNDERDOG.

SECRETARY RUSK: I do not think we should go ahead with this in light of all our other problems in the world.

This is an action comparable to the U2. It clearly invades Soviet territorial waters. Were we to get caught, it would be tough in the light of world opinion. This mission is to photograph the nose cones of missiles.

CLARK CLIFFORD: The Navy believes this is the best time to do this. There is no shipping in the area. They know exactly where the missiles fell. They know right where to go. The Navy thinks the chance of apprehension is one in five to ten thousand. We need to learn more about their missile.

This is one which goes up to a high altitude, then levels out. There is no way to stop it that we know of.

I wonder if there ever will be a better time to do it. We do not have an ability to defend ourselves against it. I would be inclined to take the risk.

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 8 -

RUSK: If I measure the value of this information to us versus the risk involved, I would come out no.

THE PRESIDENT: You and Dean talk about this and come back to me on it.

#

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED
Publication Requires
Permission of Copyright
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

~~SECRET~~

Lunch Meeting With the President
Tuesday, March 5, 1968, 1:00 pm

AGENDA

1. Pueblo: Next Moves. (Sec. Rusk)
2. Vietnam. (Sec. Rusk; Sec. Clifford and Gen. Wheeler)
 Any follow-on from this afternoon's discussion of Westmoreland's request.
3. Berlin. (Sec. Rusk)
 Situation report.
4. NPT. (Sec. Rusk)
 Situation report and question of security assurances.
5. Senator Hollings' suggestion on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. (Sec. Rusk and Sec. Clifford)
 The two Secretaries will be prepared with a recommendation.
6. Sec. Rusk's March 11 appearance before the Congress on Foreign Aid.
 The President may wish to give guidance on how to handle this particular appearance.
7. Personnel. (Sec. Rusk)
 Sec. Rusk will wish to talk with you privately about certain personnel problems.
8. Other.

VICE SET

DECLASSIFIED	
File 3-13-79; NSC 3-27-80	
By DCH	NARS, Date 11-9-82

~~SECRET~~

W. Rostow