

MARCH 19, 1968 - 1:01 p.m.

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TUESDAY LUNCH WITH FOREIGN ADVISERS

The President	Walt Rostow
Secretary Rusk	The Vice President
Secretary Clifford	Harry McPherson
Justice Fortas	George Christian
General Wheeler	Tom Johnson
Director Helms	

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 19, 1968

8 p.m.

FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your Tuesday luncheon meeting with Foreign Policy Advisers held in the Mansion on March 19, 1968.

Those attending were:

The President	Walt Rostow
Secretary Rusk	The Vice President
Secretary Clifford	Harry McPherson
Justice Fortas	George Christian
General Wheeler	Tom Johnson
Director Helms	

The meeting began at 1:01 p.m. The meeting ended at 2:55 p.m.

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Meeting began: 1:01 p.m.  
Meeting ended: 2:55 p.m.

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH HIS FOREIGN ADVISERS  
AT THE  
TUESDAY LUNCHEON

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March 19, 1968  
In the Mansion

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The President: Dean, have you read the Reischauer letter?

Secretary Rusk: Yes, but it has been over taken by recent events.

The President: I think they should be called in.

Secretary Rusk: Habib is seeing them.

The President: I think you and Clark should see them. I wouldn't object to seeing them myself.

Secretary Rusk: We need some good news from Vietnam, Buzz.

General Wheeler: News is basically good. They are clearing out the enemy around Saigon.

There have been successful offensive operations in IV Corps. Nothing is happening in II Corps. News is good in I Corps.

We will see an effort to grab Hue. It could be a sizeable operation.

Mr. Rostow: The Vietnamese seem more willing to contemplate offensive actions of their own. The enemy hasn't.

Secretary Clifford: The enemy may feel he is doing so well politically that he need not do anything militarily. They see:

- Debate in the Senate
- The New Hampshire primary
- Quarrels over the war in Congress

The President: Can we talk on the Goldberg-Bowles proposal?

Secretary Rusk: I met with Ambassador Goldberg, Ambassador Harriman and Under Secretary Katzenbach. Goldberg says to go ahead with the San Antonio formula even though there is no response from the other side. He thinks it would unify the country. I don't think it will affect the doves.

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I would be more inclined to have de facto bombing in the north halted and see if we get de facto response from Hanoi. I think we should go over it with Ambassador Goldberg.

Secretary Clifford: I am not impressed by the merits of the Goldberg proposition. I think it would be fruitless.

You have your committee of senior advisers. They met prior to the Tet offensive. They were briefed -- you met with them. You had unanimous expression for carrying on as you were in Vietnam.

A lot has taken place. I wonder if it would be of value, if in the last three to four months -- if you were to find that the same men either affirmed their attitude or reached a change of attitude. It would be of considerable help to you.

The group of Dillon, Dean and the Republicans was a very good group. Bob Murphy and Cabot Lodge were also included in it. We should get the benefit of their substantive opinion. Then we could say you were meeting again with the same group.

Drew Pearson wrote around that time about the group.

The President then asked Tom Johnson to get these quotes.

The President: I would add General Ridgway. He was not a critic. The net of what he said was that he was concerned -- that we have these alliances and responsibilities in Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Mideast. He thinks we do not have enough strength to meet a new crisis. He thought we should have stronger strategic reserves.

He was not critical of any person. He had no magic formula.

They think a lot of Ridgway, as they do of Reischauer. It might be good to have them in.

The President read notes from the Dean Acheson meeting he had last week. He said nothing much comes out of these big meetings.

It would be a mistake to get a new super-Presidential board.

Mr. Rostow: November 2 was the date of that meeting.

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The President read the notes of the November 2 meeting which had been written by McGeorge Bundy.

Secretary Clifford: The names of the group who have met with the President before are:

Dean Acheson  
George Ball  
McGeorge Bundy  
Douglas Dillon  
Arthur Dean  
Abe Fortas  
General Taylor  
Omar Bradley

William B. Murphy  
Henry Cabot Lodge  
Nicholas Katzenbach  
Secretary Rusk  
Secretary McNamara  
Clark Clifford  
Director Helms  
George Christian

Of these, eleven were outside government:

Dean Acheson - hawk  
George Ball - dove  
McGeorge Bundy - for de-escalation  
Douglas Dillon - dovish  
Arthur Dean - hawkish  
Abe Fortas  
General Taylor  
Omar Bradley  
*Robert* ~~William~~ Murphy - hawkish  
Henry Cabot Lodge - hawkish  
Clark Clifford

Secretary Rusk: Lodge thinks we should do less search and destroy and buildup the South Vietnam forces.

The President: There are two or three dangers in this:

- (1) We comply with the Senator Kennedy demand.
- (2) We create doubt about the fact we are doubtful.
- (3) We were charged with handpicking.
- (4) It might harden public position against us.

Cyrus Vance should be in that group.

We will not change any dove any time with anything.

Abe Fortas: There are three problems:

- (1) The general public attitude
- (2) The merits of the situation
- (3) What we can do to get people behind your program.

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Abe Fortas: Are we doing this as a defensive mechanism? If so, it is good. I think the committee would be a defensive public relations move. As that, I would wait a little while. It is a negative defensive thing to blunt the other side.

In summary, it is a good thing to do. We need to keep it from being excessively hawkish. I support a firm policy. We should get to work to mount public support for what we are doing.

The President: What is the Douglas committee doing?

Walt Rostow: It's still here.

Abe Fortas: It should (1) Blunt the attack of the doves.  
It should have a new job. (2) Mobilize the people behind us.  
(3) Maybe there are some fresh ideas it could give.

Secretary Rusk: There is safety in reconvening this group since you met before. It would be an advantage of getting their views.

The President: What about Reischauer and Ridgway?

Secretary Clifford: We could get the same group to look at developments since they last met. It would be valuable to get the judgment of the same group in light of the last four months.

Announcing it publicly would have two defects:

- (1) Senator Kennedy would say he persuaded you to set it up
- (2) The group is very hawkish.

I would use the group as a confidential advisory group.

If you did it from a public relations standpoint, I would start from scratch.

Walt Rostow: The timing should be related to

- (1) Whether or not South Vietnam goes ahead with 125,000 new troops
- (2) How Westy's April offensive looks
- (3) Logistical base for operations against Khesanh is reduced.  
The timing may matter.

General Wheeler: I would have the same group. I would get the views of the same men. A reappraisal might be important indicators of public opinion. To establish a new and larger group will be counter-productive.

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You will get no benefit out of it. The first group would benefit you. The second (new) group is a trap.

The President: Let's set it for this weekend. Let's try it Wednesday.

What about Ambassador Bowles?

Secretary Rusk: I will take care of him.

The President: What about the Jarring mission?

Secretary Rusk: The UAR pulled back from it. Jarring is back out there now. We need to keep Israel within the ballgame.

We have a troublesome problem coming up on Rhodesia because of executions of the black nationals.

The President: What about Panama?

Secretary Rusk: We are trying to be kept from being caught in the middle. Robles' trial is coming up. We are trying to work out a standstill.

The President: I guess they will give us trouble.

Secretary Rusk: It will be internal to Panama.

The President: Did we send troops in last time?

General Wheeler: We have troops there.

The President: What is the situation on troop deployments, Clark?

Secretary Clifford: Senator Russell will go along with a plan for 50,000 reserves - 43,000 to Vietnam.

30,000 for Westmoreland

13,000 for support

43,000 deployed

Russell would also go along with calling up 48,000 more reserves to fill the places open in the strategic reserves of this country. He is grateful of the build-up in strategic reserves.

This would build up to 7 deployable division versus 1 1/2 now.

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I also met with Senator Stennis. He is for the call-up but not unless we broaden the scope of the war. He would like a plan to expand the war.

We told him General Westmoreland wanted 43,000 troops to protect over what we already have. Senator Stennis said O.K.

Senator Smith is strong for a call-up. She wants to call the U.S. people to arms to rally the people here.

Senator Scoop Jackson would go along with the plan.

Senator Milton Young gave general approval.

Senator Symington is opposed to the call-up. He thinks we should get out. He thinks the dollar will depreciate.

Congressmen Mendell Rivers and Bates would go along. Congressman Rivers wants a settlement on the nuclear frigate. Representative Mahon will go along with it. He was shocked about the money it will cost.

The Defense Department will move when the President is ready to move.

We should give consultation and notice to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and also the House Foreign Relations Committee. That should be done the same day the announcement is to be made.

Senator Russell is quite upset about the invasion of the defense field of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

We feel some prior notification should be given to the two Foreign Relations Committees.

Secretary Rusk: We should have an executive committee to notify our allies: Gorton, Thieu, Pak, and the Prime Minister of Thailand.

I still am concerned about the details one puts out publicly. I don't want to give exact figures.

Secretary Clifford: We can separate it some. Out of the first <sup>50,000</sup> ~~80,000~~ some will be deployed to South Vietnam. Out of the second group they will fill our strategic reserves.

Senator Smith expressed hope that there would be a joint session of the Congress. We feel this would be too much since nothing is asked of

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Congress at this time. We are not asking for extension of enlistments or a call-up of selected reservists. We propose a speech to the nation on television by the President.

Secretary Rusk: I agree it should be on television.

Secretary Clifford: We should deal with the military situation, international situation, political situation, the situation with the GVN and ARVN, the 120,000 call-up of 18 and 19 year olds.

It will look better if the GVN calls up 125,000 of their own men. We also would discuss what, if anything, the allies are doing. The ARVN is being raised from 700,000 to 850,000 troops.

We must face up to the international monetary situation. All of that should go together.

General Wheeler: Here is a statement on the deployment. This is being coordinated by General Westmoreland.

Secretary Rusk: Ambassador Bunker is working with Thieu to get him to make a speech by Wednesday.

The Vice President: What about weapons to South Vietnam, particularly the regional forces and popular forces?

General Wheeler: We are doing more. (He then gave a list of equipment the U.S. is providing.)

The President: Are we final on our costing?

Secretary Clifford: We are as close as we can get. I refer to the memo of March 16. We estimate \$10 billion.

The President: Get Bill Jorden, yourself, Harry McPherson, Secretary Rusk, Secretary Clifford, Justice Fortas, along with Budget, Treasury, Council of Economic Advisers to get a first draft of the speech by Thursday. I will be gone Friday and Saturday.

(Harry McPherson entered the meeting at this point.)

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I meet with the leadership at 6 p.m. today.

George Christian: I don't expect you can talk about this with the leadership without it leaking.

The President: If we announce the call-up of 48,000 reserves - most of who go to Vietnam -- I have directed the Secretary of Defense to have his department study the possibility of a call-up for strategic reserves here, to give us seven divisions of the strategic reserves.

We do not have plans for their deployment to Vietnam.

Secretary Clifford: That would meet it very well.

Secretary Rusk: Many would say the seven divisions are about to go to Vietnam. They would say we are going to get our strategic reserves in order.

Abe Fortas: You might talk about the first call-up for Vietnam and make sure our ready reserves are adequately strengthened.

The President: I could say we are calling up 48,000 people, a substantial portion of whom will go to Vietnam, and with our world responsibility I am directing the Department of Defense to look at the call-up for our strategic reserves.

General Wheeler: You could say on the second call-up, it is in order to replenish and build up our strategic reserves. The number will approximate the first call-up.

The President: How do you cost it out?

Secretary Clifford: Let's see what our people feel on that.

The President: Let's check that out with Secretary Fowler.

Walt Rostow: (1) We need information on an increase in forces because of those brought in by North Vietnam from information by the CIA. (2) We need information on the general North Vietnamese situation of the war -- the proportion of the North Vietnamese fighting in South Vietnam today.

Director Helms: I will look at it. It is in the range of 50,000.

General Wheeler: 30- 35 battalions.

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Director Helms: On the Neil Shehan article, all copies were passed out in Clark Clifford's office on March 2. No other copies were ever distributed

The memorandum on Pacification was then passed out.

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