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MAY 8, 1968 - 6 p.m.

PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH THE PARIS PEACE
NEGOTIATING TEAM

The President	Cyrus Vance
Secretary Rusk	Ambassador Harriman
Secretary Clifford	General Goodpaster
William Bundy	Bill Jordan
General Johnson	General Taylor
Walt Rostow	George Christian
Under Secretary Katzenbach	Phil Habib
	Tom Johnson

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NOTES ON THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
NEGOTIATING TEAM

MAY 8, 1968, CABINET ROOM

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THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

The President
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
William Bundy
General Johnson
Walt Rostow
Under Secretary Katzenbach
Cyrus Vance
Ambassador Harriman
General Goodpaster
Bill Jordan
General Taylor
George Christian
Phil Habib
Tom Johnson

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By ics, NARS, Date 10-9-84

The President: I will read the opening statement tonight.

Secretary Rusk: The delegation leaves tomorrow morning. Habib will talk to North Vietnam tomorrow about exact meeting time. We expect the North Vietnamese to have very strong statement. We will stick to the March 31 speech. in key points. Ambassador Harriman may have to answer some of their statements on the spot.

The issues are:

1. The "no advantage" clause of the San Antonio formula.
2. Cessation of bombing. That is the heart of the matter
3. The matter of reconnaissance. We must have this. They are in the South and have their intelligence.
4. Important political issues. Go ahead and get their views on more formal talks and views on terms for settlement. Thieu and Ky suggested "our side, your side" theory of the United States with South Vietnam, and Hanoi with their allies.

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5. I hope we can avoid argument about an agenda. If there is no agreed agenda we should be able to add or subtract from it when we need it.

The President: Should you propose the Manila formula to start with, to set the record straight on what we are for?

Ambassador Harriman: We have proposed the following:

1. Re-establish the DMZ.
2. Leave South Vietnam to themselves.
3. Economic Cooperation.
4. End aggression in the South.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: I agree with the opening statement, but I think we should "feel them out."

The President: We should talk about the new Marshall Plan for that area. The statement doesn't give "effective pitch". We need something a truck driver can understand.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: We will work on it further.

Ambassador Harriman: I am glad to have that advice.

Secretary Rusk: Our allies agree on this language. The South Vietnamese are very concerned about the idea of supervised elections.

Walt Rostow: Maybe there should be a seven-point plan.

Secretary Clifford: I like the statement. Some parts can be explained further.

General Johnson: I see nothing objectionable from the Joint Chiefs of Staff point of view.

Walt Rostow: On Page 5 there is a new note I would add (handed notes to Cy Vance).

The President: What did we do at Manila.

Bill Bundy: The principle of self-determination was set forth quite clearly.

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The President: Put in language which is in accord with Manila.

I am concerned about MIG engagement in Panhandle. One of our F-4's was shot down.

General Johnson: We do not know if MIG's staged from base 6 miles south of the 20th parallel. We cannot prove they are on that airfield.

The President: Let's check to see if they staged there or not.

Walt Rostow: DIA thinks they did fly from there.

Secretary Rusk: There could be operations between 19th and 20th Parallel.

The President: We have tried to play it cool to get this thing going. I am getting to be nervous about the infiltration and this MIG activity. General Chapman told me the North Vietnameses - Viet Cong were not standing and fighting.

(Senator Mansfield and Senator Dirksen entered)

Secretary Rusk: A major step forward was "our side, their side" formula given us by the South Vietnamese. We need to see what they are willing to do if we stop the bombing. Since the first of the year they have been increasing their infiltration about 80,000 to 100,000.

The President: The month of May may be the worst month with highest infiltration.

Secretary Rusk: We want to talk to Mansfield and Dirksen when issues come to a head. We have had nothing to indicate Hanoi is moving toward basis of settlement. Even if we stop bombing, we must have minimum reconnaissance to know what is going on.

The President: Since March 31 we have imposed unusual restraints on ourselves including many acceptances of sites agreeable to us but not agreeable to them.

We stopped bombing above the 19th Parallel. We will coordinate all our activities carefully between Washington, Paris and Saigon. There is no hurry here. We must feel our way -- every step of the way. We need to be able to take care of ourselves. We want to start with a maximum position. Always it is easier to retreat than move forward. We want them to negotiate with one point in mind "What is in our national interest --

~~TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY~~

now and in the future.

There are no Democrats or Republicans on this panel. This is strictly an American team.

I will discuss everything with Senator Mansfield and Senator Dirksen first. Secretary Clifford is going over tomorrow. I may ask you to fly over at some point.

I only want one spokesman during this session. We must have a common line.

Secretary Clifford: Only one guarantee -- the discussions will be lengthy and difficult. It took a month to get a site. It will take a long time. ^{present} There is a certain euphoria. I do not know why Hanoi has chosen to negotiate. It is possible they want us to relax our military posture. Hanoi will try to divide the United States during this time. They will attempt to divide the American people. We all want war to stop -- but on a decent and honorable basis. We need to present an appearance of unity during these talks.

Ambassador Harriman: Cambodia and Warsaw would have been an insult to Saigon.

Secretary Rusk: They have been willing to begin talks even though we have not completely stopped the bombing.

Senator Mansfield: I can't find fault with anything said here tonight.

Senator Dirksen: I haven't let you down yet.

~~TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY~~