

WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#37 notes	Notes from 5/15/68 - 5:53 p.m. meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors in the Cabinet Room [Sanitized NLJ-CBS 39] Top Secret 4 pp.	5/15/68	A
#38 notes	Handwritten notes from 5/15/68 meeting Top Secret 10 pp. <i>Declassified 9/14 FRUS Vol. VI Doc 233</i>	5/15/68	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 3

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SERVICE SET

NA FORM 1429 (6-85)

MAY 15, 1968 - 5:53

MEETING WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISORS

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

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NOTES ON THE MEETING IN THE CABINET ROOM

MAY 15, 1968
5:53 p.m. to 6:50 p.m.

THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

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

CIA Director Helms: There has been no use of airfield on May 13, 14 and 15 by MIG 21's or forays south of the 20th Parallel. There has been an increase in SAM emplacements. They do try to knock everything out of the air down as far as Danang when they operate out of it, including B 52's if they can.

Secretary Rusk: UPI 88 is most unfortunate. (UPI 88 attached.)

Secretary Clifford: The reasons why I think the President should delay a decision for a week are:

1. In paris we have a posture based on the March 31 speech, and the fact that we have been bombing only up to the 19th. I do not think we should be the first to change our position.
 2. Our hope is that we can persuade them to de-escalate, such as demilitarization of the DMZ. We are in a weak position if we take an escalatory step.
- If you do the job on the airfield you hit it hard and pound it later.
3. They are negotiating while we bomb up to the 19th. They may have to ask for total cessation or no more conversations. There is a question of face involved.
 4. Curious oriental approach -- this action could give them reason to break off negotiations. It is small chance, but I do not like to gamble on it.

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E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.4 *FR45 Vol VI*
By *IGN* NARA, Date *Dec 23 9-27-14*

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5. The target is not important enough to warrant this. It will not affect the future of the war. The CIA says "it would hinder but not seriously impede flow into the South.

The President's annual science advisory report says this type of bombing doesn't seriously affect their movement. We might cut the flow down 25%, but it will not cut down much.

Therefore, it is not worth the risk. The talks are going well. They have not laid down any ultimatums. The polemics were expected.

They might take some action. If they did, I would not object to hitting the airfield. If they do not move within a week, you may want to reconsider this action.

Secretary Rusk: We have three proposals:

1. Challenge and pursuit between 19th and 20th by our aircraft.
2. Strike the airfield.
3. Targets.

I do not think the "escalation" argument holds. They have taken advantage of our restraint. They have moved planes south of the 20th. They are negotiating expecting us to operate up to the 20th.

I worry about UPI 88 very much. It confirms to Hanoi there is a 19th parallel confinement. We should not let MIG's operate between 19th and 20th.

I would authorize air to engage MIG's and use Talos missiles.

I suggest the JCS send a message on the gravity of this leak. It looks like an effort to put pressure on Washington.

I would put off until next week hitting the airfield.

Secretary Clifford: I would hope we wouldn't do it. This is an overt act on our part. They will pick it up immediately. We do not want to give them that type of argument. Planes could get north of the 20th.

General Wheeler: The JCS suggests only VFR conditions on attack on the base. (Visual flight rules). Control system would be for electronic planes warning them of the 20th penetration. There is a possibility of

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penetration.

From the military point of view, these are worthwhile targets. MIG's can operate off sod field. It is a staging field. They can refuel, go down to the south and sooner or later try to knock off a B52. It also gives them a chance to hit at our planes in Laos.

They have stacked up supplies. They are moving three times as much supply into the south, including PT boats. They pose a threat to naval forces. They have 76,000 men on the road south. They may move the 330th division and the 350th division. On the 19th of May -- Ho has a birthday. We may have some surprises.

Military targets are worthwhile.

Secretary Rusk: We did not promise not to put U. S. aircraft north of the 20th. We promised not to bomb. If a plane veers over 20th in a turn, I have no problems.

We do not want steady erosion of our strength due to Joe Clark, U Thant, Trudeau of Canada, and others.

From a political point of view, we must let them know our position of March 31 cannot be steadily eroded by world opinion.

I would take it in stages. First, engage them in air.

Walt Rostow: World opinion we must consider, but we must remember they have shown an act of goodwill only by coming to the conference table and demanding a complete halt to bombing without any response by them.

The President: Jordan² is doing an unusually good job in Paris. But all of us here should talk to opinion molders.

I consider UPI 88 rank in subordination. I am concerned.

I did not like the story on the draft being the lowest in some time. This looks like a blueprint of deterioration.

You do not get any gains at a peace table by weakness.

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Walt Rostow: We must show them they can't push us back by this kind of pressure. They are taking our temperature. We are getting nowhere now with formal fencing.

I think we should bring aircraft in, both in the air and with route reconnaissance. up to Route 7. We should move back in quietly.

Would they break up the negotiations? Nobody knows. The intensity of their movements give us a case that they aren't interested in serious talks. They have not done much at all in Hanoi except conventional propaganda.

The President: We can't win war or peace based on public opinion. We should show whatever strength we can. I do not think this will affect the negotiations. We should not go above the 20th parallel. All of Clark's arguments will apply in a week. We will wait until next Tuesday, as Clark suggests.

We already have made an overly generous concession by taking Hanoi and Haiphong off the list.

After Tuesday, have a few planes up in that area very carefully.

General Wheeler: The recommendations came out of the Embassy.

Walt Rostow: It was signed Bunker.

The President: We have got to do anything we can to nick them.

We ought to support our men or get out. I am not for this gradualism. If it busts up the meeting, they weren't interested in serious talks anyway.

Go out with wire to Harriman.

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May 15, 1968

Meeting with:

Sec Rusk

Sec Clifford

Genl Wheeler

Helms

Rostow

Christian

Johnson

HELMS: NO USE OF AIRFIELD 13-14-15 MAY

BY MIG 21'S OR FORAYS SOUTH OF

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OUT OF IT, INCLUDING BS2'S IF THEY
CAN.Rusk UPI 88 is most unfortunate.
(Insert UPI 88)Clifford. Reasons why I think Pres.
should delay a decision for
a week① In Paris we have a posture
based on March 31 speech
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bombing only up to 19th

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NARA, Date

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I do not think we should be the first to change our position.

- ② Hope is we can persuade them to deescalate, such as demilitarization of DMZ. We are in weak position if we take an escalatory step.

If you do the job on the airfield you hit it hard and pound it later.

- ③ They are negotiating while we bomb up to the 19th. They may have to ask for total cessation or no more conversations. There is a question of face involved.

- ④ Curious oriental approach—this action could give them reason to break off negotiations. It is small chance, but I do not like to gamble on it.

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⑤ Target is not important enough to warrant this. It will not affect future of the war. CIA says "it would hinder but not seriously impede flow into the South."

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① Challenge + pursuit
between 19th + 20th by
our aircraft.

② Strike Air field.

③ Targets.

I do not think the "escalation"
Argument holds. They have
taken advantage of our
restraint. They have
moved planes south of
20th. They are negotiating
expecting us to operate up
to 20th.

I worry about UP 188 very much.
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there is a 19th parallel
confinement.

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We should not let Miqs operate between 19th + 20th.

I would authorize air to engage Miqs and use Talos missiles.

I suggest JCS send message on the gravity of this leak. It looks like effort to put pressure on Washington.

Put off to next week hitting the air field.

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Pres - We have got to do anything we can to nitch them.

We ought to support our men or get out. I am not for this gradualism. If it busts up the meeting, they weren't interested in Serrano's talks anyway.

Go out with wire to Harriman.

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