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MAY 21, 1968 - 1:15 p.m.

TUESDAY LUNCHEON WITH FOREIGN POLICY  
ADVISERS

Secretary Rusk  
Secretary Clifford  
General Wheeler  
Director Helms

Walt Rostow  
George Christian  
Rom Johnson

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NOTES OF THE TUESDAY LUNCH MEETING  
WITH

FOREIGN POLICY ADVISORS

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May 21, 1968  
Family Dining Room  
1:15 p.m.

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Authority NLS-CBS 39

By us, NARS, Date 10-9-84

Attending the meeting:

Secretary Rusk  
Secretary Clifford  
General Wheeler  
Director Helms

Walt Rostow  
George Christian  
Tom Johnson

Mr. Rostow: We have an urgent matter to decide with reference to tomorrow's instructions to our representatives in Paris. The point is on total cessation vs. partial cessation.

Secretary Rusk: The word "cessation" means total. Harriman told Zorian in meetings and word may get around to NVA. I would not put it to the NVA in general meeting tomorrow and let it get around to NVA indirectly.

Secretary Clifford: I had not seen the cables before. This is a bad time to come out with a threat. I would do it privately first in any case.

Director Helms: Communists believe things said privately. They do not believe things said publicly.

General Wheeler: It could be taken as an ultimatum.

The President: It's o.k. to say it privately. That's o.k. with me if you want to. Where are we in Paris and Moscow?

Secretary Rusk: The NVA has three illusions they follow:

- (1) No NVA troops in South - fraudulent
- (2) Crest of NVA military success in South - misinformed

The President: Could it be true?

Secretary Rusk: They believe they are in strong position. They may be misinformed.

- (3) Third point is that world opinion will force us to accept major change in policy.

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(4) We do not have governmental pressure on us.

(5) World opinion won't make us change our course.

I do not think we should change our course. NVA has already discredited itself in Paris with contention they have no troops in the South.

We should see what they are willing to do if we will stop the bombing.

We may get something out of talks in Moscow, but we doubt it. Stewart goes there tomorrow night.

Bombing between 19th and 20th parallels - should we move in? Let's hear the CIA paper on the situation between the 19th and 20th.

Director Helms:

- (1) Continued flow of supplies
- (2) Increase in flow of ammunition
- (3) No flights since 11 May of MIGS at airfield
- (4) AA situation is same
- (5) Infiltration continues as before

General Wheeler: All of North Vietnam show 97,000 North Vietnam on move into Laos or South Vietnam. Peak seems somewhere in July. High level of reconstruction -- lines of communication and supply plants. South of the 20th parallel, 5 or 6 battalions of SAMs and light anti-aircraft extended.

Evidence bears out conclusion they are stepping up their capabilities, both in the South and defending itself in the North. Therefore, we should resume between 19th and 20th parallels. There are political considerations you must take into account.

Secretary Clifford: I feel same as last week. We have had a good week. We had to go through this week. We are in a better posture in standpoint of world and domestic opinion. The opponents have been inflexible. Have not sought to seek means of agreement. We have given image of nation seeking peace. They have given impression of nation seeking only propaganda.

Second, they weakened themselves with ridiculous statement about not having troops in the South. We will continue to improve our position. I would not want to jeopardize our position just now by bombing between the 19th and 20th parallels.

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San Antonio formula has been overtaken by events. We are in a sound position now. We must ask them to do something to match our restraint. If we were to extend bombing we might have problem of them insisting that we stop all our bombing. Negotiations have gone on for only 10 days. They may do something serious. They may find out their strategy is not working well. We must watch to make sure we do not change our position. We got North Vietnam to the bargaining table by the President's offer of moderate restraint.

There is no particular pressure on us at the present time. I know of no pressure to extend bombing by Congress, by public, by press.

Life Editors think the President is on the right track.

The next general approach - the targets are not worth it. They have not been using the airfield. It does not constitute clear and present danger to us now.

South of the 19th parallel, there are 50 new trans-shipment points. Benefit of bombing is only temporary.

South of the 19th parallel our methods are effective. We had 3,000 sorties in February, 5,000 in March, 7,000 in April and 9,000 in May.

General Maxwell Taylor's memo says resumption of bombing is available at any time. We should use this only when it would produce maximum effect in Paris.

The last point, as long as matters proceed this way, it is important to help keep talks going from political standpoint.

I urge us to keep talks going

- keep bombing off 19th and 20th parallels
- keep talks going

Secretary Rusk: I hate to freeze<sup>to</sup> the 19th ~~to~~ ourselves. We should not have dramatic attack, but we could engage MIGS. I would recommend route reconnaissance across the 19th parallel.

We should not have rigid limits on the 19th. I would take two steps of route, reconnaissance and engaging MIGS.

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The President: I agree with you, Dean.

Secretary Clifford: We voluntarily limited ourselves to the 19th. We have made progress in Paris. I do not want to shift our positions. I think it is worth postponing for another week.

It doesn't help us to do this. We are waiting for them to de-escalate. The heat is on them. If we go back in, we remove some of this heat.

The President: How long can we go on with 19th without getting trapped into never being able to do anything above the 19th?

I think our force brought them to table, not our eloquence of March 31. All we are doing now is to let them build it back up.

There are advantages to our bombing between the 19th and 20th.

Their terror hasn't blown up the peace conference.

We have a duty to try to stop all we can from coming into the South.

I never thought we would stay out of 19th and 20th. I think we should do it if it's to our military advantage.

I am under the impression military people feel very strongly that we should bomb up to the 20th. Isn't that right?

Wheeler: (Nodded "yes.")

Secretary Clifford: That is right. Military does feel that way. We haven't had any incidents above the 20th which would upset the talks. I do not think it would substantially reduce the flow if we went up to the 20th more than 20% or 25%. We are doing a good job south of the 19th parallel.

The benefit does not warrant the chance or the risk; it will make it more difficult for him to take a step down.

The President: The longer we stay out, doesn't that make it more difficult to go back?

Secretary Clifford: No.

Secretary Rusk: I think it does make it more difficult.

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Secretary Clifford: I happen not to agree with that.

The President: Buzz, what do you think?

General Wheeler: Militarily, it is a hub of communications and trans-shipment points. You have heavy 1-A leading out.

I would dispute fact they could replace Than <sup>Hoa.</sup> ~~Huoi.~~

Between the 17th and 19th parallels, these are smaller trans-shipment points, POL facilities, etc. Rear depots are large (Haiphong and Hanoi.)

Selected items shipped to forward depots. South of that, they have distribution points. There is a big concentration in Hanoi and Haiphong. Next biggest, Theu Huoi and Vien. Then the smallest ones are southward.

;  
Militarily, you should go ahead.

Political factors may outweigh this.

The President: Do we suffer from this restraint?

General Wheeler: To a degree. It's not quantifiable. The enemy gains when you permit him to put supplies close to the lines safely.

The President: How much do we suffer in Hanoi and Haiphong - not striking them?

General Wheeler: Military price is going up. Weather is clearing. From the 1st to the 15th monsoon changes. Good bombing until mid-September. We have had six clear days for bombing in May.

The President: Clark, how long would you wait?

Secretary Clifford: My approach is pragmatic. We made practical decision not to go above 19th to avoid incidents above 20th.

The President: I thought we decided to lay off for awhile until things cooled off. I thought we pulled back to appeal to Fulbright after first thing we did was to bomb right up to the 20th the day after the March 31 statement.

I think every day the clock is ticking.

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Mr. Rostow: Issue in Paris is whether we can be pushed into another unilateral action toward total cessation of bombing.

Second, Harriman told Soviet ambassador we cannot sit indefinitely. It would give us some credibility to move forward a bit.

Secretary Clifford: I think a sufficient answer to them is refusal to stop the bombing -- we don't need to move it forward.

I do not want to take action which will produce minimal results. Perhaps we will take only 1,000 of 4,000 tons out.

The President: I don't want to go on doing this. Everything we do is not total. North Vietnam may misread this as a voluntary act of foolishness.

Secretary Clifford: I feel this deeply. I do not want to appear stubborn.

The President: Shouldn't we stop what we can? What rewards have we gotten from this? Haven't we let more men and ammunition get through because of this?

Secretary Clifford: It is entirely possible.

The President: When was the last strike on Hanoi?

General Wheeler: The last strike was on April 1.

Secretary Rusk: I would be against dramatic strike. I would be for planes doing something -- route reconnaissance or air to air or hit coastal shipping.

Secretary Clifford: You can go up to the 20th when conditions warrant.

The tone of last week has been general support for your policy. Something will come out of Paris conference. I hope so.

With limitations placed on the military, we have no real plans to win the war. If you limit -

- no invasion into the north
- no mining of harbors
- no invasion of sanctuaries.

Then I do not believe you can win militarily.

Our hopes must go with Paris.

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Enemy controls the situation in the South.

- they can hit and run
- they can attack cities
- they can control casualties

We can hope only for success in Paris. We are in a war we can't win.

In the fall of 1967, the North Vietnamese decided earlier plans were no good. They put their stack in. That was Tet. They didn't win. Now, they may have concluded it is a good time to have a political settlement.

They can't win war militarily. We can't win the war militarily.

The President: I disagree.

General Wheeler: I disagree to some extent.

Secretary Rusk: We have sought to keep North Vietnam from overtaking South Vietnam by force. We have succeeded in that.

Secretary Clifford: Hanoi cannot win the war militarily. They know that. That doesn't mean we have won it.

I do not believe they are going to give up that effort unless we reach some agreement in Paris. If Paris does not come off, we will be back where we were before. They are not running out of manpower. They can continue at rate indefinitely.

The Soviets and Chinese will continue to help them. We must settle at Paris. Otherwise, I do not see a conclusion ahead. I see it dragging on indefinitely.

We lost so many men. They don't seem to be bothered by their loss of men. We had a rapid erosion in support. March 31 changed all that.

We will start another period of erosion. I want to bring about a good result in Paris. We should not do anything in Vietnam.

Secretary Rusk: We will not get a solution in Paris until we prove they can't win in the South.

Secretary Clifford: They have already seen they can't win in the South. They have turned to Paris hoping for a political deal.

Secretary Rusk: It is worth their sending men to Paris in return for no bombing of the North. That is a real bonus.

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The President: I will put it off again against my judgment. Let's wait until Wednesday. I think we should hit everything below the 20th parallel. Let's wait until Wednesday.

I like Dean's suggestion of planes out hitting certain targets.

Concerning the Pueblo:

Mr. Rostow: On the proposal, they come in with their version of the U.S. apology and our men. They could claim we signed the apology. We could claim we did not.

Secretary Rusk: Porter thinks it is worth trying.

Director Helms: I do not like this. It is skull-digging. It cannot stand up in front of a Congressional investigation.

Secretary Clifford: It is worth a try. It gets the men back. It gives us freer action with the men out.

The President: Let's wait until the next meeting.

On the Filipino engineering unit:

General Wheeler: They can't support it until June.

Secretary Clifford: They want to go down from 1,800 to 1,400.

General Wheeler: 70 per week isn't getting much attention.

The President: What is the progress with the Korean troops?

General Wheeler: South Korean Minister of Defense will be here next week.

Secretary Rusk: The Soviets want to sign NPT in Geneva.

The briefing of Presidential candidates was discussed.

On the state of the Strategic Reserves:

Secretary Clifford: We'll come back to you on that one.

The President: How are the expenditures running in the Department of Defense?

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Secretary Clifford: About as expected.

Secretary Rusk: Are you saving any money by not bombing North Vietnam?

Secretary Clifford: Now, now - you can't put it on a cost basis. The B-52s really do cost.

The President: What do you think of our military situation in Vietnam, Buzz?

General Wheeler: We are in a good position.

The President: Are we stronger or weaker?

General Wheeler: Stronger.

The President: Any problems with changes in South Vietnam government.

Secretary Rusk: I don't think so. It will represent 60% of the votes.

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400- *Suspense*  
5/20 1/30  
not done  
cable RAB  
*to follow*

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Lunch with the President  
Tuesday, May 21, 1968, 1:00 p. m.

Agenda

1. Paris Talks (Sect. Rusk)

Sitrep; plans for Wednesday meeting; prospects for days ahead. ✓

2. Bombing Between 19th and 20th Parallels (Sects. Rusk and Clifford; Gen. Wheeler)

-- The Military Situation and Enemy Intentions (Gen. Wheeler)

-- Sect. Clifford's View and Recommendation

-- Sect. Rusk's Views and Recommendation

3. Proposed New PUEBLO Formula (Sects. Rusk and Clifford)

See Tab A.

4. Draft Cable to Manila on PHILCAG (Filipino engineering unit in Vietnam).  
(Sects. Rusk and Clifford)

See Tab B.

5. Other.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)  
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983  
By Oct, NARA, Date 3-6-91

W. W. Rostow

(*Takes in to P file*)

May 21

Meeting Began: 1:15

Meeting Ended:

Location: Family Dining Room

Attending:

Sec Rusk

Clifford

Gen'l Wheeler

Helms

Rostow

Christian

Johnson



Rostow: We have an urgent matter to decide with reference to tomorrow's instructions to our representatives in Paris.

Point is on total cessation vs. partial cessation

Rusk: Word "cessation" means total. Harriman told Zorion in meetings and word may get around to NVA. I would not put it to NVA in gen'l meeting tomorrow and let it get around to NVA indirectly

Clifford: I had not seen cables before. This is a bad time to come out with a threat. I would do it privately first in any case

Helms: Communists believe things said privately. Do not believe things said publicly

Wheeler: It could be taken as an ultimatum

Pies: It's ok to say it privately.  
That's ok with me if you  
want to

WHERE we are in PAvis + MOSCOw

Rusk: NVA has 3 illusions they follow:

- ① no NVA troops in South  
- fraudulent
- ② Crest of NVA military Success in  
South  
- misinformed

Pies: Could it be true?

Rusk: They believe they are in  
strong position. They may  
be misinformed

- ③ Third point is that world  
opinion will force us to accept  
major change in policy

A) We do not have governmental  
pressure on us

B) World opinion won't make us  
change our course

I do not think we should change our course. NVA has already discredited itself in Paris with contention they have no troops in South.

We should see what they are willing to do if we will stop the bombing.

We may get something out of talks in Moscow, but we doubt it. Stewart goes there tomorrow night.

## Bombing Between 19th + 20th

### Should we move in?

CIA paper on the situation between the 19th + 20th.

### Helms:

- ① Continued flow of supplies
- ② Increase in flow of ammo
- ③ No fights since 11 May of MiGs at airfield
- ④ AA situation is same
- ⑤ Infiltration continues as before

Wheeler:

All of NVNem show

97,000 NVN on move into Laos or SVN

Peak seems somewhere in July

High level of reconstruction

KOC

Supply Plants

South of 20th

5-6 bins of SAMs

light AA <sup>anti-aircraft</sup> extended.

Evidence bears out conclusion

they are stepping

up their capabilities,

both in the South and

defending itself in the North

Therefore, we should resume  
between 19th + 20th. There are  
political considerations you must  
take into account.

Clifford: I feel some as last  
week. We have had a good  
week. We had to go through  
this week. We are in better  
posture in standpoint of  
world + domestic opinion  
opponents have been inflexible

and intransigent. Have not sought to seek means of agreement. We have given image of nation seeking peace. They have given impression of nation seeking only propaganda.

Second, they weakened selves with ridiculous statement about not having troops in the South. We will continue to improve our position. I would not want to jeopardizing our position just now by bombing between 19th + 20th!

San Antonio formula has been overtaken by events. We are in sound position now. We must ask them to do something to match our restraint. If we were to extend bombing we might have problems of them insisting that we stop all our bombing. Negotiations have gone on for only 10 days. They may do something serious. They may find out their strategy is not working. We must watch.

make sure we do not change our position we got NVN to bargaining table by Pres.' offer of moderate restraint.

No particular pressure on us at present time. I know of no pressure to extend bombing by Congress, by public, by press.

Life editors think Pres. is on right track.

Next general approach, Targets not worth it. They have not been using the airfield. It does not constitute direct & present danger to us now.

South of 19th, there are 50 real transshipment points. Benefit of bombing is only temporary.

South of 19th our methods are effective. We had 3,000 <sup>1st Feb</sup> bombs  
5,000 March  
7,000 April  
9,000 May



Max Taylor memo says  
resumption of bombing  
is available at any time.  
We should use this only  
when it would produce  
maximum effect in Paris.

Last point, as long as matter  
proceeds this way. It is  
important to keep talks  
going from political  
standpoint.

I urge keep talks going.

- > keep bombing off 19th + 20th
- > keep talks going

Rusk: I hate to freeze 19th  
to ourselves.

We should not have dramatic  
attack, but we could engage  
migs.

I would rec. route reconnaissance  
across 19th =

We should not have rigid limits on 19th. I would take two steps of route reconnaissance & engaging M1cp.

Pres - I agree with you, Wlan.

Clifford: We voluntarily limited ourselves to 19th.  
We have made progress in Paris.  
I do not want to shift our positions  
I think it is worth postponing it for another week.

It doesn't help us to do this  
We are waiting for them to  
deescalate. The heat is  
on them. If we go back in, we remove some of this heat.

Pres: How long can we go on with 19th without getting trapped into never being able to do anything above 19th.



Pres | I think our force brought them  
to table; next our eloquence  
of March 31.

| All we are doing now is to let  
them build it back up.

| There are advantages to our  
bombing between 19<sup>th</sup> + 20<sup>th</sup>.

| Their terror hasn't blown up  
the peace conference.

| We have a duty to try to  
stop all war from  
coming into South.

I never thought we would  
stay out of 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>. I  
think we should do it if  
it's to our military advantage.

I am under impression military  
people feel very strongly  
that we should bomb  
up to 20<sup>th</sup>. Isn't that right?

Wheeler: (Nodded yes!)

Clifford: That is right. Military  
does feel that way.

We haven't had any medals  
above 20th which would  
upset the talks.

I do not think I would  
substantially reduce flow  
if we went up to the  
20th more than 20 or 25%

We are doing good job  
south of the 19th  
parallel.

The benefit does not  
warrant the chance  
or the risk it will  
make it more difficult  
for him to take a  
step down

Pres: The longer we stay out,  
doesn't that make it  
more difficult to go back

Clifford: No

Rush: I think it does make it more  
difficult

Clifford: I happen not to agree  
with that

Pres: Buggy, what do you think?

Wheeler: Militarily, it is a hub of  
communications and  
transshipment points.

You hear Huey 1-A leader  
out.

I would dispute fact they  
could replace Than Kwei.

Between 17th + 19th  
parallel, these are  
smaller transshipment  
points, POL facilities,  
etc.

Rear depots are large (Haiphong  
and Hanoi)

Selected items shipped to  
forward depots. South

Big concentrations in Hanoi - Haydon.  
Next biggest, Then Huoi and Vieu.  
Then the smallest ones are southward.

Militarily, you should go ahead.

Political factors may outweigh this

Pres: Do we suffer from this  
restraint?

Wheeler: To a degree. It's not  
quantifiable.

Enemy gains when you  
permit him to put supplies  
close to lines safely.

Pres: How much do we suffer  
in Hanoi & Haydon - not  
striking them?

Wheeler: Military price is  
going up. Weather is  
clearing.

1-15<sup>th</sup> Monsoon changes.  
Good bombing until mid-  
September.

We have had to clear days  
for bombing in May.

Pres - Clark, how long would  
you wait?

Clifford: My approach is  
pragmatic.

We made practical  
decision not to  
go above 19<sup>th</sup> to  
avoid incidents above  
20<sup>th</sup>.

Pres: I thought we decided  
to lay off for a while  
until temp cooled  
off.

I thought we pulled back  
to appeal to Fulbright  
after 1st thing we did  
was to bomb right  
up to 20<sup>th</sup> the day  
after March 31  
statement.



Pres: I think every day the clock is ticking

Rostow: Issue in Paris is whether we can be pushed into another unilateral action toward total cessation of bombing.

Second, Harriman told Soviet ambassador we cannot sit indefinitely. It would give us some credibility to move forward a bit.

CC: I think a sufficient answer to them is refusal to stop the bombing. — we don't need to move it forward.

I do not want to take action which will produce minimal results. Perhaps we will take only 1,000 of 4,000 tons out.

Pres: I don't want to go on  
doing this. Everything  
we do is not total.

NVN may misread this as a  
voluntary act of foolishness.

Clifford: I feel this deeply

I do not want to appear  
stubborn.

Pres: Shouldn't we stop what  
we can.

What rewards have we  
gotten from this?

Have n't we let more  
men + ammo get  
through because of this?

CC: It's entirely possible.

Pres when was last strike on Hanoi  
wheels? Last strike on April 1.

Rush: I would be against  
dramatic strike.

I would be for planes  
doing something  
I route reconnaissance

OR

- air to air

OR

- hit coastal shipping

CC: You can go up to 20%  
when conditions  
warrant

Tone of last week  
has been general  
support for your  
policy.

Something will come  
out of Paris  
conference. I hope so.



CC: With limitations placed on  
military, we have no  
real plans to win the  
war

If you limit —  
no invasion into North  
no mining of harbors  
no invasion of sanctuaries  
Then, I do not believe you  
can win militarily

Our hopes must go with  
Paris

Enemy controls the Situation  
in the South:

- they can hit & run
- they can attack cities
- they can control casualties

We can hope only for success in Paris

→ We are in a war we  
can't win

CC: In fall of 67, NUN decided earlier plans were no good. They just threw sticks in. That was Tet. They didn't win. Now, they may have concluded it is a good time to have a political settlement

They can't win war militarily

We can't win war militarily.

Pres: I disagree

Wheeler: I disagree to some extent.

Reich: We have sought to keep NUN from overtaking SVN by force.

We have succeeded in that.

Clifford: Hanoi cannot win war militarily. They know that that doesn't mean we have won it.

I do not believe they are going to give up that effort unless we reach some agreement in Paris.

If Paris does not come off, we will be back where we were before.

They are not running out of manpower. They can continue at rate indefinitely.

Soviets & Chinese will continue to help them. We must settle at Paris. Otherwise, I do not see a conclusion ahead.

I see it dragging on indefinitely.

We lost so many men. They don't seem to be bothered by their loss of men. We had rapid erosion in support. March 31 changed all that.

We will start another period  
of erosion. I want to  
bring about a good  
result in Paris. We  
should not do anything  
in the

Rush: We will not get a  
solution in Paris until  
we prove they can't win in South.

CC: They have already seen they  
can't win in South.  
They have turned to  
Paris hoping for a  
political deal.

Rush: It is worth their  
sending men to Paris  
in return for no  
bombing of north.  
That is a real bonus

Bus - I will put it off  
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judgment. Let's wait  
until Wednesday

I think we should hit  
everything below 20th.

Let's wait until Wednesday

I like Dean's suggestion  
of planes out hitting certain  
targets

Pueblo ←

Postow: Proposal — They  
come in with their version  
of US apology and our  
men. They could claim  
we signed apology. We  
could claim we did not.

(Get text)

Rush: Porter thinks it is worth  
trying

Clifford: It's worth a try

Helm: I do not like this. It is  
shuddering. I cannot stand  
up in front of Congressional  
investigation.

① It gets men back.

② It gives us free action  
with men out.

Pres: Let's wait until next  
meeting.

Item 4 — Filipino engineering  
unit

Wheeler: They can't support it  
until June.

CC: They want to go down  
from 1,800 to 1,400.

Wheeler: 70 / week and getting  
much attention.

Pres: What a progress with  
Korean troops



Wheeler: S. Korean Min. of Defense  
will be here next week.

Purk: Soviets want to sign  
NPT in Geneva.

Briefing of Presidential Candidate

#

State of Strategic Reserve

CC: will come back to  
you on that one.

Pres How are expenditures running  
in DDP

CC: About as expected

Purk: Are you saving any money  
by not bombing WDR

CC: Now, now. You can't  
put it on Post basis  
The B52's really do cost.

Pres: What do you think of our  
military situation in Un. Burg?

Wheeler: In good position

Pres: Are we stronger or weaker?

Wheeler: Stronger.

Pres: Any problems with changes  
in SUN government

Rub: I don't think so.

It will represent 60% of vote.