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#43 notes	<p>Notes from 5/28/68 - 8:30 a.m. meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors at breakfast [Sanitized NLJ-CBS 39] Top Secret 8 pp.</p> <p><i>Tom Johnson</i></p>	5/28/68	A

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 3

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MAY 28, 1968 - 8:30 a.m.

BREAKFAST WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

The President
Secretary Clifford
General Taylor
Cyrus Vance
General Wheeler
CIA Director Helms

Leonard Marks
George Christian
Walt Rostow
Robert McNamara
Justice Abe Fortas
Undersecretary
Katzendbach
Tom Johnson

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

May 28, 1968
At breakfast
8:30 am

Attending the meeting:

The President	George Christian
Secretary Clifford	Walt Rostow
General Taylor	Robert McNamara
Cyrus Vance	Justice Abe Fortas
General Wheeler	Undersecretary Katzenbach
CIA Director Helms	Tom Johnson
Leonard Marks	

Prime Minister of Australia Gorton joined the meeting.

Cyrus Vance: We believe the North Vietnamese are hurting, but they continue indefinitely. Here are our conclusions:

1. There should be no bombing north of the 20th parallel. Hanoi would break off talks.
2. We should consider bombing selectively north of the 19th parallel.
3. Ambassador Thompson should see Gromyko to back up Harriman's meeting with Zorian to tell the Soviets that unilateral restraint can go on only so long; that private talks are necessary.
4. We should keep all options open, specifically the option to go to the San Antonio formula.

More specifically:

5. They almost admitted the presence of troops in The South yesterday. We should continue to push them to admit this.
6. We should push hard on the North Vietnamese presence in Laos.
7. We should stay away from talks about Cambodia.
8. We must push them to admit the facts about civilian losses in Hue.
9. It is essential to probe for private conversations.

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The President: Will they do anything until the convention?

Mr. Vance: That is most unlikely.

The President: Are they polite?

Mr. Vance: Polite, proper, but their words are very strong.

The President: Why do you think that we are getting the best of them in propaganda?

Mr. Vance: Based on the press, my talks, and reports.

Mr. Katzenbach: There may be a small degree of movement before the conventions that won't mean anything.

General Wheeler: We have identified 107,000 in infiltration groups - half of which are in location. Tonnages in May (1st 21st days): 4800 short tons, 8000 tons in April. The infiltration continues at an accelerating rate.

Mr. Katzenbach: Aren't most of these replacements?

Wheeler: Yes.

The President: They started 107,000 down. Westy estimates 106,000 killed.

General Taylor: These figures are well beyond replacement needs.

The President: 7,900 U. S.
400 Allies
106,000 enemy

Secretary Clifford: I doubt if the North Vietnam attach as much significance to our convention as we are. It is possible they will change position before three months. That's my guess.

We have a five-stage bombing campaign between the 19th and 20th.. It is gradual. I have not favored going north of the 19th.

General Wheeler: Only stage 5 involves specific targets. We spotted 938 vehicles - almost a record high. Also, almost a record high waterborne craft.

The President: Why do JCS think we should be back between 19th and 20th?

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General Wheeler: There are five points:

1. Organization of North Vietnamese supply network. From north to south, there are
 general depots
 forward depots
 distribution points
There are a number of supply areas between the 19th and 20th parallels.
2. People have to go through this area. Headquarters of rear services is in Than Hoa.
3. They have moved to the south a number of patrol boats. These could pose a threat to Naval forces.
4. Airfield north and west of Than Hoa. It was used the other day. It gives range well south of DaNang. Threatens B52 missions.

General Taylor: I agree with Bus. From a political and psychological standpoint, these men won't be moved by eloquence and language.

The President: Do we gain a military advantage by going between the 19th and 20th?

General Taylor: Somewhat.

The President: What about the great propaganda advantage they will win -- or breaking off negotiations?

General Taylor: We'll have to show what they are doing, too. They won't break off talks, as long as they want talks.

The President: I am not quite as optimistic as Clark and Cy about our position in the world opinion. We have such a good case. Look at what Ho is doing. Hitler in his prime day didn't do this.

Justice Fortas: The people in the U. S. infatuated with what is going on in Paris. They aren't reading what is going on in Saigon except casualty lists. We have two platforms:

1. Usual one
2. Paris platform.

The Paris platform is the best one. It is covered, here and abroad. We must show what North Vietnam is doing. For example, what we found at Hue. Give them a detailed statement of what they have done in recent

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weeks. That type of groundwork is necessary.

Mr. McNamara: I am skeptical about North Vietnam planning their strategy around our conventions. They want to weaken us domestically. They want to weaken us militarily. We have never shown the world what they are doing. Let's push them on the ropes - use our intelligence data and release the data. Push the DMZ theme.

I have a different view of the military advantage to going back between the 19th and 20th. If we do it, tie it to psychological and political reasons. If it can help you at the conference table, do it.

Mr. Rostow: There is a limited military advantage to going back. We get more trucks. We tear up roads.

General Wheeler: We have better night vision devices. We have better forward air controllers.

Mr. Rostow: The major reason is political. It would show them in Paris we mean business.

General Wheeler: Westy says it would be useful to go back to the 19th and 20th area.

The President: Get up pros and cons of why we should go back.

Mr. Katzenbach: North Vietnam has an objective to destroy South Vietnamese government. Make South Vietnam government nervous.

I feel comfortable about this situation now. You have press on more pro-U.S. attitude. Country is not divided much on this. It is more united today than any time I can remember. I would not want to do anything to upset this situation.

The President: Two thirds of Congressmen will vote for \$4 billion cut. All shudder at the thought of \$6 billion. But it now looks like \$6 is inevitable.

It will take \$2 billion or \$3 billion from DoD - non Vietnam.

At 6 p.m. there will be a Joint Leadership meeting.

(At 9:45 a.m. Clifford and Wheeler departed.)

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Mr. Katzenbach: You will have trouble going above the 19th in view of world opinion. It will be misinterpreted. It may hurt you on tax bill.

The President: We were foolish announcing we had restricted to the 19th. On the tax increase, no Congressman wants to vote for taxes in a political year.

In summary, Cy, you have seen:

- No progress
- No give
- May not do anything before conventions.

Mr. Vance: We will proceed carefully and be patient.

(At 10 a.m. Prime Minister Gorton arrived at the meeting.)

Mr. McNamara: There are three roles Australia can play:

1. Shows our people we are not alone. If U.S. is to play any role, Australia must stand alongside the U.S.
2. Economic role is important. States in area need economic assistance. Provides lever to get Japan to play greater economic role.
3. Military support to Malaysia. U.S. won't get support in Congress for unilateral role in Malaysia.

Mr. Katzenbach: Do people feel comfortable?

Prime Minister Gorton: Australia will stand with the United States in other areas. Australia will stand along in Malaysia and Singapore. We aren't large enough to stand there alone. Our presence would be small. It won't be backed up by England.

We have a couple of brigades. We lose what we've got if we don't get support. From public relations standpoint, it may be useful.

Mr. McNamara: Short of China moving, Australia support is important. U.S. will have mobility to move in.

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General Taylor: Instability in Southeast Asia is great now. It will be greater when British aren't there.

Prime Minister Gorton: We don't know how much importance can be attached to a small force of this type.

The President: Vance says Australians are good allies in Paris. Your people have been first class.

Mr. Vance: The North Vietnamese have insisted there be no private talks.

Summary:

1. No tangible progress.
2. We have better press
3. North Vietnamese credibility has been shaken.
 - They claim no troops in South
 - They claim no troops in Laos
 - They deny they caused casualties in area.

We have made constructive proposals:

- DMZ re-established
- Laos accords
- Eventual withdrawal
- Private discussions

4. No give in North Vietnam position except one.
5. No sign of restraint on ground. Agree we would stop bombing first. Then go on to other matters before actually stopping.
6. The North Vietnamese have ability to continue fighting.
7. We should continue to push on North Vietnamese presence in the South.
8. We must probe for private conversations.

The President: All our people ought to be told what they are doing and what we are doing. We are going to reassess to see what we can do.

Our morale at home is not as good as morale out in the field.

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Prime Minister Gorton: Will proposition be put forward for a cease-fire?

Mr. Vance: We do not believe this will be put forth in near future. We do not anticipate they will put forth this proposition.

Prime Minister Gorton: What does the near future indicate?

Mr. Vance: We do not know.

General Taylor: Cease-fire would take a great deal of negotiation.

Mr. McNamara: Before we can talk about a cease-fire we must get them to admit presence in the South.

Prime Minister Gorton: A cease-fire could be disastrous.

Justice Fortas: North Vietnam now takes the position they are not in South Vietnam at all. If you have a cease-fire, they would pretend only people affected would be Americans and Viet Cong. As long as they do not admit they are in the South, they don't have to move.

Prime Minister Gorton: We must have no partial conquest of South by permitting North Vietnam to stay in the South.

The President: We could find no worse situation than our pulling out with North Vietnamese remaining in the South. If they pull out, we pull out.

Director Marks: On world opinion, newspaper opinion since March 31 shows:

1. President removed self in interest of peace.
2. U. S. restrained
3. U. S. wanted talks
4. Very skilled negotiating team.
5. Reasonable U. S. negotiating terms
6. Hanoi's intransigence.

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The President: Location of North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia:
There was a graphic presentation.

Prime Minister Gorton: I have no suggestions about Paris. I fear a
cease-fire leaving South Vietnam under North Vietnamese control.

Cessation of the bombing bothers me. We must have an understanding
along the lines of the San Antonio formula before it is further sealed down.

The President: What is the sentiment in your country?

Prime Minister Gorton: The morale is first class by men in the front
lines. The support is good.

- The R&R program is excellent.
- We hope U. S. men will return and live in Australia.
- Families have taken R&R boys in. Kids will stay in
homes rather than hotels.

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