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OCTOBER 14, 1968 - 7:20 p.m.

FOREIGN POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

The President
Secretary of State Rusk
Secretary of Defense Clifford
General Earle Wheeler
Walt Rostow
Tom Johnson

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT
WITH:

SECRETARY OF STATE RUSK
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CLIFFORD
GENERAL EARLE WHEELER
WALT ROSTOW
TOM JOHNSON

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Cabinet Room
October 14, 1968
7:20 pm

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NJ 87-38

By ing NARA, Date 5-19-89

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Smathers said the word is out that we are making an effort to throw the election to Humphrey. He said Nixon had been told of it. Nixon told Smathers he did not want the President to be pulled into this, that wrong results could flow. Nixon said he is afraid we would be misled.

Senator Smathers said he assured Nixon that the President would move if an opportunity for peace presented itself.

SECRETARY CLIFFORD: I doubt it would have any effect on the campaign.

THE PRESIDENT: Both sides think it would.

SECRETARY RUSK: George Ball is coming down tomorrow. I will give him nothing.

SECRETARY CLIFFORD: The people have made up their minds on the election already.

Mark Twainsaid "when in doubt do right."

THE PRESIDENT: That is right. But let's not be pulled in.

When does Paris want it announced?

SECRETARY RUSK: By midnight tomorrow.

There was a discussion of the draft cable outgoing to ambassadors in troop-contributing countries.

THE PRESIDENT: Do the Joint Chiefs of Staff feel we are on solid ground completely? Do all of you think this is the right course?

GENERAL WHEELER: Yes, sir. We have unanimous agreement. Abrams is strong for it.

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EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

THE PRESIDENT: Do you know this is what we ought to do?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes, sir.

SECRETARY CLIFFORD: I have absolutely no doubt that this is right.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, go ahead and execute (7:39 p.m. EDT)

The decision was made to send out the draft cable - attachment A.

Senator Russell said we need to do this.

In San Antonio, we said
In Detroit, we said
In New Orleans, we said

We are in close touch with our negotiators.
We concluded we should stop bombing to test their faith
Ordering it at a certain time.

Gorton, Holyoake will take it. The Koreans, Thais will give us trouble.

SECRETARY RUSK: Let's amend the GVN so that South Vietnam are at the table the next day.

THE PRESIDENT: Are we all in agreement that we should stop the bombing if the GVN are there?

If the GVN are not there do we resume the bombing?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes, if they don't agree to sit down.

SECRETARY CLIFFORD: I agree.

THE PRESIDENT: Do we resume bombing if they hit cities or attack across DMZ?

SECRETARY RUSK: Yes.

SECRETARY CLIFFORD: Yes.

The question is, should we place any limitation on the bombing?

SECRETARY RUSK: No limitation. It will depend on circumstances and the degree of violation as to what we do.

EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY CLIFFORD: I am aboard.

SECRETARY RUSK: I am aboard.

GENERAL WHEELER: I agree. So do all of the Chiefs.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not want to be the one to have it said about that one man died tomorrow who could have been saved because of this plan.

I do not think it will happen, but there is a chance.

We'll try it. We'll be scared, but let's try it.

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EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT

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7:20 p. m.

CABINET Room

- 1 Rusk
- 2 Clifford
- 3 Wheeler
- 4 Rostow

Pres: Sen. Smathers said word is out that we are making an effort to throw election to Humphrey. SAID Nixon had been told of it. Nixon told Smathers he did not want President to be pulled into this, that wrong results could flow. Nixon said he is afraid we would be misled.

Smathers said he assured Nixon that the President would move if an opportunity for peace presented itself.

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President: Both sides think it would

Rusk: George Ball is coming down tomorrow. I will give him nothing.

CC: People have made up their mindson the elections already.

Mark Twain said "when in doubt do right."

Pres: That is right. But let's not be pulled in.

When does Paris want it Announced?

Rusk: By midnight tomorrow.

Discussed draft cable outgoing to
AMBASSADORS in troop-contributing
countries.

Pres: Do JCS feel we are on solid
ground completely? Do all of you
think this is right course.

Wheeler: Yes, sir.
We have unanimous Agreement
Abrams is strong for it

Pres - Do you know this is what we
ought to do?

Rusk : Yes, sir.

Clifford: I have absolutely no doubt
that this is right

Pres: All right, go ahead and
execute (7:39 p.m. EDT)

(Decision made to send out
draft cable - Attached)

Sen Russell said we need to
do this

In S. A., we said -

In Detroit, we said

In New Orleans, we said

in close touch with negotiators.
concluded we should stop bombing
to test their faith
ordering it at certain time.

Gorton, Holypoke will take it.
Koreans, This will give us trouble.

Rusk: Let's Amend the GUN
so that SUN are at
table next day.

President : Are we All in Agreement
that we should stop the
bombing if GUN are there.

If GUN not there do we
resume bombing?

Rusk: yes, if they don't agree
to sit down.

Clifford: I agree.

Pres:

Do we resume bombing
if they hit cities or
attack across DMZ?

Rusk: Yes

Clifford: Yes.

Question is, should he place
any limitation on bombing?

Rusk: No limitation. It will
depend on circumstances
and degree of violation
as to what we do.

CC: I Am ABOARD

Rusk " " "

Wheeler: I Agree. So do all
of chiefs.

Pres. I do not want to
be the one to have it
said about that one man
died tomorrow who could
have been saved because of
this plan.

I do not think it will
happen, but there is a chance.

We'll try it. We'll be
scarred, but let's try it