

FOREIGN POLICY GROUP
MEETING

48

OCTOBER 25, 1968, Friday

THOSE ATTENDING:

The President
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
General Wheeler
General Taylor
Walt Rostow
Tom Johnson

Meeting began: 12:38 p.m.

Meeting ended: 1:20 p.m.

CONFIDENTIAL

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NOTES ON MEETING WITH FOREIGN POLICY GROUP
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1968

THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

The President
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
General Wheeler
General Taylor
Walt Rostow
Tom Johnson

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NLJ 87-38
By isp NARA, Date 5-19-89

General Taylor: This looks like a phony to me.

The President: You fool the world with this. You do it with no conditions attached whatsoever. That old dog won't hunt.

Secretary Rusk: Hanoi would surface this secret message on "without conditions" if we had to resume bombing.

General Taylor: It's tricky.

Secretary Clifford: Is it a condition?

The President: Credibility would be a word of yesteryear if this happened.

Secretary Clifford: We could say we can't go on with talks if they attacked cities or moved across the DMZ.

If they are peaceful, we'll be peaceful. If they aren't we won't be either.

Walt Rostow: Backgrounding would say they held their concept on "unconditional" we held our language in terms of facts of life. Plus we could say we gave Abrams standing orders.

Secretary Clifford: What did the President get for halting the bombing?
The Presence of the GVN at the negotiation table.

Secretary Rusk: We could say you will have to wait a few days to see on the other things except the GVN at the table.

The President: I don't believe we can sell it that way.

Secretary Clifford: We proceed on the assumption they won't take

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advantage of the cessation. We could say this would be our assumption.

I would take out the words "without conditions." This is a fallback position.

General Wheeler: The escape hatch is "on the basis of our discussions." I agree with Clark, and Dean. I would not let negotiations fail on that point.

General Abrams' executive order could be printed on the front page of the Washington Post.

-- If they come across the DMZ, he destroys them.

-- If they use artillery, he attacks sites.

A commander is always responsible for security of his troops. In instructions, reprisals are permitted.

General Taylor: Hanoi will see this as a victory for them, not as a victory for us.

The President: Read UPI Ticker item (UPI 61:12:09) Attachment A.

The President: We won't stop the bombing unless -- GVN is at the table, and they respect the DMZ and they won't shell the cities.

You can't say I don't have conditions. I think they will do it just to make asses of us -- accept this -- then hit us -- and force us to resume the bombing. I think they are trying to use this to affect the election.

We must have a reasons to believe the GVN will come in. While that is going on, they will respect the cities and the DMZ.

Secretary Rusk: They said they could be at the meeting on November 2.

We must stay with this if we go with it. Time is putting pressure on them. Let's keep this language out.

Secretary Clifford: If this deal goes through, could you have a cable from Harriman and Vance that:

- a. The GVN will be at the table
- b. That there is a chance for productive talks.

We have told Hanoi if they shell the cities and take advantage of the DMZ, we must protect ourselves. They could say that on the basis of our discussions we believe this.

I am not sure it is more than a hope.

Secretary Clifford: We misled the President on the 19th parallel. You aren't giving up much with the weather like this.

Take out "without conditions." What about Dean's suggestion of using "without preconditions."

Secretary Rusk: We lay out the three facts of life. They attack, we resume the bombing.

What do we tell the leadership?

The other side knows we won't keep bombing off if they attack.

The President: I have had one of three conditions.

Walt Rostow: We said to the Candidates: The facts of life are:

1. GVN
2. The Cities
3. The DMZ

The President: I am not sure Hanoi knows this.

Walt Rostow: Cy said he had done it eight times.

The President: Take out the condition stuff.

Secretary Rusk: I would say that we do not recognize the NLF by just listing them.

Secretary Clifford: I would not put in the line about recognition of the parties.

Secretary Rusk: South Vietnam is concerned about our recognizing the NLF.

The President: We imply recognition.

We'll have a hard time explaining this between now and the election.

Secretary Clifford: It's a test of good faith.

The President: Reads UPI ticker on LeMay. (Attachment B)

UPI-61

6)

(NIXON)

NEW YORK--RICHARD M. NIXON TODAY ACCUSED TOP ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS OF ATTEMPTING TO BRING ABOUT A BOMBING HALT AND POSSIBLY A VIETNAM CEASE-FIRE "IN THE IMMEDIATELY FUTURE" TO HELP THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY OF DEMOCRAT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY.

THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE PRESIDENT JOHNSON WAS INVOLVED IN WHAT HE CALLED A "CYNICAL, LAST-MINUTE ATTEMPT TO SALVAGE THE CANDIDACY" OF HUMPHREY.

THE NIXON CAMPAIGN STAFF FOR SEVERAL DAYS HAS BEEN CHECKING ON REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON THAT KEY ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS WERE PRESSING FOR A SMASHING PEACE DEVELOPMENT CONCERNING THE VIETNAM WAR PRIOR TO TELELECTION DAY, POSSIBLY THIS WEEKEND.

THEIR VERSION HAS BEEN THAT MEETINGS WERE BEING CONDUCTED ON LEVELS BENEATH THE PRESIDENT IN AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A PEACE DEVELOPMENT WHICH THE DEMOCRATS HOPE WOULD ENHANCE HUMPHREY'S CHANCES AT THE POLLS NOV. 5.

JOHNSON HELD A NEWS CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON THURSDAY AND SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO BREAKTHROUGH IN THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH NORTH VIETNAM.

10/25--SW1209PED

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B

UPI-23

(LEMAX)

BOSTON--CURTIS LEMAY IS CONCERNED PRESIDENT JOHNSON IS COOKING UP A "FALSE PEACE" FOR VIETNAM. LEMAY SAYS HE SMELLS A POLITICAL BREV WHICH COULD ONLY HELP HUBERT HUMPHREY.

"I'VE BEEN WORRIED THERE MIGHT BE SOME FALSE PEACE COOKED UP TO KEEP THE PEOPLE IN OFFICE WHO GOT US INTO THIS MESS," LEMAY SAID YESTERDAY AT A NEWS CONFERENCE.

"I SAW NOTHING IN VIETNAM TO INDICATE THAT PEACE IS IMMINENT," HE SAID, REFERRING TO HIS RECENT FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THE COMBAT ZONE. "THERE IS NO SIGN THERE IS GOING TO BE A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES.

"I DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING TO HAPPEN AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE IN PARIS UNTIL WE TWIST THE COMMUNIST'S ARM SOME MORE," THE FORMER HEAD OF THE STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND SAID.

10/25--EG1027AED

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By JW, NARA, Date 5-7-71

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- ① Pres ⑤ Taylor
② Rusk ⑥ Rostow
③ Clifford ⑦ Johnson 12:38
④ Wheeler

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Taylor: This looks like a ploy
to me.

Pres: you fool the world with this
You do it with no
conditions attached.
whatsoever. That old
dog won't hunt

Rusk: Hanoi would surface
this secret message
on "without conditions"
~~and~~ if we had to
resume bombing

Taylor: It's tricky

CC: Is it a condition?

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[1]

Pres. Credibility would be a word of yesterday if this happened

CC: We could say we can't go on ~~to~~ with talks if they attacked cities or moved across DMZ

If they are peaceful, will be peaceful. If they aren't, we won't be either.

Rostow: Backgrounding would say they held their concept in "unconditional" - we held our language in terms of facts of life. Plus we could say we gave

Abrams standing orders

CC: What did Pres. get for halt
in bombing?

Presence of GMA at negotiating
table.

Bush: we could say you will have
to wait a few days to see
on other things except GMA table.

Pres: I don't believe we can
sell it that way, Ben

CC: we proceed on assumption
they won't take advantage
of cessation.

we could say this would
be our assumption.

CC: I would get out
words "without
conditions"

This is a fallback
position

Wheeler: Escape hatch
is "on basis of our
discussions" I agree
with Clark, and
Dean.

I would not let
negotiations fail
on that point.

Abrams' execute
order could be printed
on front page of Washington
Post.

[4]

- If they come across DMZ
he destroys them.
- If they use artillery, he
attacks sites.

A commander is always ^{responsible} ~~afraid~~
for security of his troops.

In instructions, reprisals
are permitted.

Taylor: Hanoi will see
this as a victory
for them, not a
victory for us

Pres read UPI ticker item (insert)
Pres said he was afraid it
was incorrect. UPI 61

Pres: We won't stop bombing
unless
- GUN are at table

AND

- respect DMZ

AND

- won't shell cities

You can't say I don't
have conditions

I think they will do it
just to make asses of
us — accept this —
then hit us — and force
us to resume bombing.

I think they are trying
to use this to effect the
election.

We must have reason
to believe GVN will
come in. While that
is going on, they will
respect cities and DMZ.

Rusk: They said they
could be at meeting
on Nov. 2.

We must stay with
this if we go with it.

Time is putting pressure
on them.

| Let's keep this language
out.

CC: If this deal goes through
could you have a cable
from Harman and Vono
that

- (A) GUN will be at table
- (B) Chance for structured

We have told Hanoi if they
~~we~~ shell cities & take
advantage of DMZ
we must protect ourselves.
They could say
On basis of our discussions
we believe this.

|| I am not sure it is more ||
|| than a hope. ||

CC: We misled the Pres on
19th Parallel.

You aren't giving up
much with the wealth
like this

CC: Take out "without conditions." What about Dean's suggest using "without preconditions."

Rusk: We lay out 3 facts of life. They attack. We resume bombing. What do we tell leadership.

Other side knows we won't keep bombing off if they attack.

Pres: I have had one of 3 conditions.

Rostow: We said to candidates,

- ① gun —
 - ② Cities —
 - ③ DMZ —
- } were "facts of life."

Pres: I am [REDACTED] not sure
Hanoi knows this.

Rostow: Cy said he had done it
8 times.

Pres: Take out condition
stuff.

Rush: I would say that
we do not recognize NLF
just by listing them.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WHY isnt THIS just
AS GOOD AFTER election
AS Before election
IF THEY ARE Acting
in GOOD faith.

[12]

P: will have had time
explaining this ~~matter~~ before
now + election.

CC: It's a test of good faith.

! One reads UPI
takes on Le May

CC: I would not put in the
line about recognition of
the parties.

Rusk: SUN concerned about
our recognizing NLF.

Pies: We imply recognition.