

# WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#52 notes	Notes from 10/27/68 - 7:45 p.m. meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors [Sanitized NLJ 87-38] Secret 8 pp.	10/27/68	A
#53 notes	Handwritten notes from 10/27/68 meeting Secret 47 pp.	10/27/68	A

FILE LOCATION Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 4

## RESTRICTION CODES

- A) Closed by Executive Order 12356 governing access to national security information.
- B) Closed by statute or by the agency which originated the document.
- C) Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in the donor's deed of gift.

51  
MEETING WITH FOREIGN  
POLICY ADVISERS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1968

Beginning: 7:45 p.m.

Ending: 10:00 p.m.

THOSE ATTENDING:

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

*George Christian*

~~MEETING NOTES~~  
COPYRIGHTED

Meeting began: 7:45 p.m.  
Meeting ended: 10:00 p.m.

9

NOTES ON PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH GROUP  
OF FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS ON  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1968

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~  
~~Publication Requires~~  
~~Permission of Copyright~~  
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

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

SANITIZED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NJ 87-38  
By SS NARA, Date 5-18-89

(Attachment A -- Rostow Packet to President -- Eyes Only -- 10/27/68).

Secretary Clifford: The President stops the bombing on Tuesday. He says four-way talks begin Saturday.

The President: Isn't that longer than three days?

Secretary Rusk: It is three days plus 9 - 15 hours.

The President: What do we do?

Secretary Rusk: We go ahead with it.

The President: Why?

Secretary Rusk: I smell Vodka and Caviar in it. We have substantial compliance with this. The Soviets have moved in.

The President: Why do we have to yield?

Secretary Rusk: They have made the major step.

Secretary Clifford: If ten steps separated us, they have taken eight and we have taken 2.

Secretary Rusk: I would say it is nine to one.

The President: What is the reason for the extra day?

Secretary Rusk: Both have proposed the 30th. It is just a different hour.

The Russians have the major effort here. We can't break it up over a matter of hours. I say that although you know I was a next day man.

~~MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED~~  
~~Publication Requires~~  
~~Permission of Copyright~~  
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED  
Publication Requires  
Permission of Copyright  
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

The President: So was I. What happened?

Secretary Rusk: Does it hurt us?

The President: I think so. Every minute we delay the more dangerous it is for us, for the South Vietnamese. Every moment will be agony for us until we get the GVN in the talks.

Walt Rostow: A report that there are no shells across the DMZ will be more important than the timing of the talks. Thieu is concerned about the NLF being separate entity. This might leak out of Saigon.

Secretary Rusk: It might leak out on basis of the orders issued.

General Wheeler: Yes, it might. They will pick up the fact that the planes are flying in a different direction. I think it will leak from Washington first -- either from State or the Pentagon.

The President: I agree.

The President: No other civilian except me.

General Wheeler: Only NMCC message men. It goes out on "red rocket".

Secretary Clifford: Can you do that tomorrow?

Secretary Rusk: I would send Bunker the last cable from Paris.

General Wheeler: I need twenty-four hours. Otherwise, some aircraft may be airborne and can't get the word.

Secretary Clifford: From October 30 to November 2 is three days on Greenwich Mean time.

General Wheeler: What is the next step beyond this. What will North Vietnam lay on as next proposal? I guess it will be a cease-fire in places. This is dangerous. It would give them sanctuaries within South Vietnam. We should negotiate a cease-fire rather than accept one.

This is the most dangerous proposal we could tie on to.

Secretary Rusk: A cease-fire has to be associated with a withdrawal of forces.

General Taylor: I would echo those views. I am for bombing halt under the circumstances mentioned.

Walt Rostow: I wouldn't argue time, but we need to get Harriman back.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED  
Publication Requires  
Permission of Copyright  
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

NOI SET

Walt Rostow: I agree with the points on a cease-fire. We want a total peace package.

General Wheeler: Harriman--Vance have been intrigued by 5000 man withdrawal on each side. We can't check their withdrawals.

Walt Rostow: They have got to be withdrawals to North Vietnam, not Cambodia.

The President: I smell blitzing. There is a lot in the air. Let's don't do anything that is fatal to us. See what it is we are getting. I still think this is a political move to affect this election.

Secretary Rusk: Even if it were so, it is in our interest to do this.

General Taylor: I have been a hard-nosed man, Mr. President, but I am for this. They are hurting. There also may be these ulterior motives.

The President: What do we have on cities and the DMZ from them. Do the Soviet's know what we mean?

Secretary Rusk: The Soviets understand the three facts of life.

The President: We will call Abrams in to be damn sure he is ready to do this.

Secretary Rusk: I outlined these things to Gromyko.

The President: Is there anything we can put our teeth into?

Secretary Rusk: Yes, their willingness to proceed with clear understanding that if we don't get cities and the DMZ, we'll restart.

The President: What is the Soviet attitude? Do they think they'll respect it?

Secretary Rusk: They can't sign a contract.

Walt Rostow: We have statement in Oslo.

The President: Do we have time to talk to the Soviets?

Secretary Rusk: I thought we crossed that bridge. It would be serious to reverse our field.

The President: I wanted to look at this again. I want the Soviets to fully understand this.

The President: I think we are being herded into this under pressure.

Do we need to talk to them again?

Secretary Rusk: I told the Foreign Minister that the DMZ and the cities were essential.

General Wheeler: What kind of contract do we have on the DMZ and the cities?

Secretary Rusk: No contract.

The President: I do not have any firm evidence to go on.

1. Do the Soviets really think this will go?
2. Do they understand we'll restart if the DMZ and the cities are not respected?

A. Tell the Soviets we don't see the reasons for the extra day.

B. Get Soviet assurance the GVN will be accepted.

I don't trust these people. I would like the Soviet's assurances on the DMZ and the cities. They might play that trick on us.

November 2 is a bad, dangerous date. Nearly everybody will interpret it as being connected with the campaign.

I don't know who the people are in Hanoi and Paris -- their integrity or their trust. What is their reaction to the cities and the DMZ.

Secretary Rusk: They understand if the cities or the DMZ are violated, the deal is off.

Walt Rostow: They have positioned artillery so they could honor this.

Secretary Rusk: We said to Soviet's to concentrate on the GVN problem and we'll concentrate on the other two points in Paris.

The President: Should we push them.

Secretary Rusk: I am concerned over the timing. It would be unfortunate to delay because of the elections.

General Taylor: What you say to the country is of utmost importance.



General Taylor: You can say all bets are off if the DMZ is violated.

The President: Close these gates.

1. Add-on on time.
2. Be very sure they understand all -- that Abrams responds if they violate the DMZ or the cities.

I want:

- A -- Vance and Harriman
- B -- Soviets
- C -- Abrams
- D -- JCS

Then:

- E -- Leadership
- F -- Candidates

We may be motivated by evils we know not of. I would rather be stubborn and adamant rather than ticky, slick politician. They think everybody is working toward electing Humphrey by doing this. This is not what motivates us. I want to take it slow.

Do all of these people understand it?

- A -- Harriman and Vance: That Abrams would respond.
- B -- The Soviets: That Hanoi knows if the DMZ and the Cities are not respected it means a resumption of the bombing immediately.
- C -- Abrams.
- D -- The JCS.

Tell Dobrynin we don't want 18 hours.

Be sure it isn't a 37 - day pause. I want to invite your comment on the DMZ and the Cities.

I want to be more positive about what the Soviets said to us -- not what we said to them.

I was disturbed when General Wheeler sent out a cable asking Abrams what would happen if we did stop the bombing. That, it seemed, anticipated us.

Walt Rostow: [REDACTED]

The President: Does his government believe it?

(A) 5  
(3, 5)

Isn't it your assumption?

General Wheeler: You have [REDACTED] statement. [REDACTED]  
Also, letter from Chairman Kosygin.

The most interesting thing is that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam dropped "without conditions." They may be trying to play American politics.

General Wheeler: The Soviet's understand it -- loud and clear.

The President: I want the Soviet's to understand it; I want Harriman--Vance to understand it; and Nixon understands it.

General Wheeler: To go to the other governments would be dangerous.

The President: Thieu?

General Wheeler: No. Bunker should talk to Thieu.

Secretary Rusk: I want to hear back first on these two points.

The President: Do we let them announce it as "unconditional."  
I won't stand for that.

Let's not leave them under the impression that it is unconditional. We can't sell Nixon's and Russell's on that.

Secretary Rusk: I am not under any hallucinations.

The President: We can't say there are conditions and they say there are not any. I have my own credibility problems already.

Walt Rostow: We are free to say anything to our people. So are they.

The President: Read Harriman--Vance cable. (Incoming).  
( Attachment B)

I am troubled by two things:

- A. Their saying "unconditional" and our saying "conditional."
- B. The time being moved forward on the meeting.

Secretary Rusk: I'll see Dobrynin tonight. I'll also call Cy. (Cy Vance).

The President: Tell Cy he may come back.



- 1 -  
Secretary Rusk: It would be good for Abrams to come back.

General Wheeler: It would be good to have Abrams back.

Secretary Clifford: I agree.

Secretary Rusk: I agree.

General Taylor: I agree.

The President: Bring him back without publicity.

Secretary Clifford: I am not sure Wheeler can't do everything Abrams can do and do it better. Abrams does not add anything to what General Wheeler can say.

The President: I disagree. He has color of military commander who is in field. He can say here are the conditions -- he can assure that this won't risk lives. I want him to talk straight and direct. Russell said Abrams would be most effective.

All of you are playing with this like you have been living in another world -- with a bunch of doves.

The Democrats and George Ball have been putting out that we were about to do this.

General Taylor: Abrams will say he can stand the bombing pause if the DMZ is respected and the cities are not attacked.

The President: All of you know how much I want peace, but we don't have anything to show for it.

General Taylor: I think they will respect the cities and the DMZ.

Secretary Clifford: You have a good story to tell. For five months we have told Hanoi we couldn't go ahead without the GVN present. Finally, they changed their position. They chose the time -- not us.

The President: They say, so what?

Some say, sure, we get the GVN in -- but Hanoi gets the NLF.

Secretary Clifford: What we wanted was to get to substantive discussions. They have capitulated. Since San Antonio, we have said we would stop the bombing and proceed on certain assumptions.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED  
Publication Requires  
Permission of Copyright  
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED  
Publication Requires  
Permission of Copyright  
Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

The President: I want to show people more than we have got.

Secretary Clifford: We have a lot to show. We could say we have informed them if they shell the cities and do not respect the DMZ the deal is off. We have told the Soviets that.

The conversation with Gromyko had this as part and parcel of the agreement.

We have Hanoi, [REDACTED] understanding that.

The President: I don't think that. I do not see much they can quote that they have said to us.

Secretary Rusk: Let's not make a point with the Russians on these hours. We went to three days with your full knowledge and permission. This is the substantial agreement with our demands.

Secretary Clifford: I agree. We tell people we have agreed to talk on Saturday. I can't see where it is so important to do it Friday.

The President: I think they are whittling away at this.

Secretary Rusk: This isn't a difference we can stand on. It would seem to the Soviets that we are playing games.

Walt Rostow: What is the question.

The President: Tell them it gives us problems.

Walt Rostow: Is it advice we should proceed on understanding that Soviets know we will resume if the DMZ or the Cities are violated?

Secretary Rusk: Soviets might go ahead and advise us to stop bombing.

Walt Rostow: If Bus needs 24 hours, we have to issue orders tomorrow at 7:00 p.m.

General Wheeler: I do not want to violate any agreement you all make.

Secretary Clifford: On the Soviet ship -- the pilot jettisoned bombs about three miles away.

General Wheeler: One of our aircraft overflew islands.