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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#58 notes	Notes from 10/29/68 - 2:30 a.m. meeting with the President's Foreign Policy Advisors [Sanitized NLJ-CBS 36 and per Donor's Deed of Gift] Secret 24 pp. <i>C removed 9-6-91</i>	10/29/68	A and C
#59 notes	Additional notes on meeting in Cabinet Room - 7:05 a.m. 10/29/68 "C" closing sanitizations removed and document moved to open 7-10-91 Possible Classified Information 5 pp. declassified 4-24-91 per NLJ 89-20	10/29/68	A + "C"
#60 report	Briefing Paper Secret 8 pp. NLJ 94-221 <i>open 5-26-95</i>	10/28/68	A
#63 notes	Handwritten notes from 10/29/68 - 2:30 a.m. meeting Secret 55 pp.	10/29/68	A and C

FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 4

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FOREIGN POLICY GROUP ⁵⁷
MEETING

October 29, 1968

THOSE ATTENDING:

The President
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
General Abrams
General Wheeler
Richard Helms
Walt Rostow
Harry McPherson
George Christian
Tom Johnson

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October 29, 1968

Meeting Began: 2:30 a.m.

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH

Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
General Wheeler
General Abrams
General Taylor
Director Richard Helms
Walt Rostow
Harry McPherson
George Christian
Tom Johnson

The President: I thought I'd review how this developed.

On June 5, I received a letter from Chairman Kosygin telling me that he and his colleagues had grounds to believe that a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam could contribute to a breakthrough in the situation and produce prospects for a peaceful settlement.

After a further series of exchanges, I communicated the following to the Soviet leaders on September 15:

"Setting all political arguments aside, the simple fact is that the President could not maintain a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam unless it were very promptly evident to him, to the American people, and to our allies, that such an action was, indeed, a step toward peace. A cessation of bombing which would be followed by

-- abuses of the DMZ,

-- Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacks on cities or such populated areas as provincial capitals.

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-- or a refusal of the authorities in Hanoi to enter promptly into serious political discussions which included the elected government of the Republic of Vietnam, could simply not be sustained."

On October 2 we were informed that a further exchange of views could prove useful. Such an exchange did take place between Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Gromyko in New York on October 6.

Meanwhile, I discussed our three points with Ambassador Harriman, whom I saw on September 17, and with Ambassador Vance, whom I saw on October 3. Both fully understood our position.

At a meeting in Paris on October 11, the Hanoi delegation put to us this question: Would we stop the bombing when we had a clear answer to the question of GVN participation as a party in the negotiations that would follow a cessation of the bombing?

After underlining our other two positions -- on the DMZ and the cities -- Harriman said he would have to refer the question to Washington.

At this point we consulted Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams, asking them their frank views on an instruction to Harriman which would demand a prior agreement on GVN participation -- and an understanding of what would be required to continue a bombing cessation: namely, that the DMZ be respected and the South Vietnamese cities not be attacked.

They responded as follows: "General Abrams and I interpret the exchange with Hanoi as a fairly clear indication that Hanoi is ready for a tactical shift from the battlefield to the conference table. We concur in the instruction to Harriman and Vance, and believe Hanoi will give indications that it finds paragraph one (GVN participation) 'acceptable,' and paragraphs two and three (DMZ and the cities) 'understandable.' We would regard such a response as meeting our essential requirements for a cessation of the bombing."

Meanwhile, we received through the Soviet Embassy in Paris a side message from the Hanoi delegation that they would agree to the participation of the GVN after bombing stopped.

On this basis, we went to President Thieu. He said "so long as we are going to press the offensive in the South and in Laos, and so long as we are prepared to resume the bombing if they violate the DMZ or attack the main cities," he is ready to go along. "After all," he said, "the problem is not to stop the bombing, but to stop the war, and we must try this path to see if they are serious."

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On Monday morning, October 14, Secretary Clifford and General Wheeler, just back from Europe, were briefed along with Mr. Helms and General Maxwell Taylor. It was the strong recommendation of Secretary Rusk, Secretary Clifford, and General Wheeler that we should interpret the shift in Hanoi's position as representing a possibility of serious movement towards peace. They believed that the risks were low and manageable. Mr. Helms and General Taylor concurred.

At 1:30 p.m. on Monday, October 14, I met with all the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We went over the same ground. I polled the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff individually. They concurred unanimously.

We then consulted the other troops contributing countries. They all supported the course of action that President Thieu and I had agreed was wise.

We then instructed Harriman and Vance to put the proposition to the North Vietnamese, including a meeting with the GVN present "the next day." They had earlier said substantive discussions could start the day after the bombing cessation.

At this point Hanoi balked. They said the next day was impossible.

We have just had two weeks of very hard negotiations in which Hanoi sought the following:

-- first, a communique in which we accepted the concept that a bombing halt was "unconditional,"

-- second, a period of -- at first -- "weeks" then two weeks; then one week between the bombing halt and the first meeting with the GVN present.

-- third, a statement about the subsequent talks which would elevate them to being a "four-power conference." This was designed to inflate the status of the NLF and greatly embarrass Saigon.

On our side we insisted that -- although we did not plan to have representatives of the government talk about "conditions" -- we would not sign a document which said the bombing halt was "unconditional."

We insisted that the gap between bombing cessation and the first talks could not be more than about three days.

In a meeting on Sunday afternoon in Paris, October 27, they fully met our position. We have reached a rather simple understanding, the

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essence of which is that we will stop all air, naval and artillery bombardment, and all other acts involving the use of force against North Vietnam, as of 7 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, October 29th.

We have agreed that a meeting dealing with the substantive issues will be held in Paris on Saturday, November 2. The meeting will include representatives of the U.S., South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the NLF.

Let me summarize the understanding.

-- Hanoi has agreed in a secret minute and in our discussions to begin serious talks toward peace in Vietnam -- talks which would include representatives of the Government of South Vietnam.

-- We have made it clear to them that a continuation of the bombing cessation was dependent, first, on respect for the DMZ, and second, upon their being no attacks on the cities.

-- The Soviet Union, which has played a part in this negotiation, knows these circumstances intimately. Their understanding has been reaffirmed at the highest level in the last few days.

-- Both Hanoi and Moscow are clear that we shall continue reconnaissance of North Vietnam. That is why we agreed to stop only acts of force and not acts of war.

As we have always said, there is no obstacle to the NLF having an opportunity to express its view on a settlement. But no recognition of the NLF is involved.

That is where we stand.

It is the universal judgment of our diplomatic and military authorities that North Vietnam's acceptance of GVN participation is a major event -- potentially setting the stage for an honorable settlement of the war. Many experts felt Hanoi would never do this. Until now Hanoi has endlessly repeated they would never talk to the Thieu government. But there can be no settlement without the assent of the constitutional government of Vietnam in Saigon. We have consistently maintained that position, because the whole purpose of our involvement in this conflict required that the people of South Vietnam participate in deciding their own destiny.

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As for the DMZ and the cities, we expect that they will act on their understanding that the continuance of the bombing cessation is dependent on their restraint. It is important that we not talk publicly about these two understandings as formal "conditions." But you should know that we are thoroughly prepared to respond if they violate those conditions. General Abrams has standing orders which he believes will protect his forces and our allies at the DMZ, should a violation be attempted.

The agreement at which we have arrived is, then, precisely the one which -- as I have told all three Presidential candidates -- we have been seeking in recent months. We have given away nothing to reach this agreement. It is wholly consistent with my public statements.

The President: Every single military and diplomatic adviser has urged me to take this step.

Because election is Tuesday, it will be said there is political implication to what is being done.

As of Sunday, they agreed to have GVN present.

We went back to the Soviets about the seriousness of NVN. The Soviets say Hanoi has told them about the "seriousness of this" -- our doubts are "without foundation."

This is the first time Moscow has been responsive to this matter on seriousness.

We have raised the matter in 12 separate meetings since June in Paris -- on matter of cities and DMZ.

Our negotiators believe DRV will abide by our command. Always possible there will be small violations. We believe if it is a major violation we should resume.

The President: Do you think they will violate the DMZ and the cities?

General Abrams: I think they will abide by it on DMZ.

On cities, I am not sure. I am concerned about Saigon.

In 3rd Corps area, they are strong. They are along Cambodian border.

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It's the only place left they could cause any trouble.

I moved First Cavalry into that area. They have reduced capability along DMZ.

They have some capability at DaNang.

Everything we see (intelligence officer) indicate they will go at Saigon again. They haven't given up the idea.

Walt Rostow: What is earliest they could hit Saigon?

General Abrams: I am talking about a half dozen rockets or a few (25 - 50) sappers into Saigon. The threat is of half dozen rockets or 25-50 sappers.

The President: If the enemy honors our agreement, will this be an advantage militarily?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: Will it compensate for lack of bombing up to the 19° parallel?

General Abrams: Yes, sir, it will.

We think they have shifted tactics from the battlefield to the conference table (on October 12).

Evidence since then is more convincing that this is a sound move.

The President: Do you think they will honor the DMZ?

General Abrams: Yes.

Secretary Rusk: Saigon is easy.

General Abrams: It is easy for him to stop it with orders.

The President: Can we return to full-scale bombing easily if they attack?

General Abrams: Yes, very easily.

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The President: In August we said stopping the bombing will increase enemy capability several fold. Why can we stop bombing now?

General Abrams:

- 1) Interdiction in Panhandle has been successful.
- 2) They haven't replaced it in the region.

There isn't enough enemy left in I Corps to keep 1st Cavalry Division up there. The enemy has not been found in Quang Tri. The enemy moved out.

He cannot cause mischief he could have caused in August.

I have no problems standing behind what I said in August and behind what I say now.

Secretary Rusk: In August we said nothing about protecting the DMZ.

General Abrams: That's right.

The President: We said we could do this without causing further casualties. Can we do this now?

General Abrams: Yes Sir, we can.

The President: I am going to put more weight on your judgment than anybody else. Can we do this without additional casualties?

General Abrams: Yes, we can.

The President: How would you reapply air power? I understand weather is bad in the DMZ and Panhandle. Can we get more mileage pound-for-pound in Laos and the DMZ rather than in NVN?

General Abrams: Yes Sir. The weather is beginning to change in Laos. The bulk of bombing in Laos.

We had 1,000 trucks a day sighted in Laos last year. We are seeking a

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better balance of power between Laos and Cambodia.

This is kind of same thing we would be doing anyway.

We have new, 90-day sensors. We could be completed in placing these above and in the DMZ to check the pattern of their activity. if they do go back on their word.

The President: What will this do to the morale of our men and the ARVN?

General Abrams: I don't believe it will have measurable effect on the morale.

As we saw it, military campaign for 1968 had proven to be a failure for the enemy from his standpoint.

He still has local forces, guerillas, and infrastructure. We agreed we had to make intensive drive at guerillas and infrastructure. We have now come to the stage of war we have always wanted to get. Rolls of NVN is rolled back -- we can hit infrastructure.

Focus of commanders was to hit infrastructure.

Everybody is focused on this. It fits the situation to tea.

Attention already has been directed to dirty work that has to be done.

The President: Is there any deterioration in quality of enemy?

General Abrams: Yes, Sir.

We picked up more weapons than number of enemy dead in one action along the DMZ.

In Delta, Chu Hoi defector rate is 50 per day. Situation has begun to deteriorate there. In Base Area 270, principle staff offers were hurt badly.

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Difficult part is infrastructure and guerillas. We must get them out.

The President: What is the quality of ARVN?

General Abrams: Good. They are giving better account of themselves. They killed 40% - 50% of enemy; lost 50% - 60% of allied KIA.

We have one problem division -- 18th. It's no good. They will replace commander.

The President: How many divisions?

General Abrams: 11 with airborne.

The President: How many poor?

General Abrams: One.

The President: How many superior?

General Abrams: 4; 1 unsatisfactory, 6 satisfactory. They keep improving.

The President: Do they all have M-16's?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: Has that made a difference?

General Abrams: Yes. They have more confidence.

General Abrams: RF and PF have M-16's. It is quite a prestige item. It's membership in club.

The President: How are you going to keep the pressure on?

General Abrams: Keep pressure on main force. Redouble efforts on guerillas and infrastructure. It's hard work, but it is pressure that is needed now.

The President: Does he think he is in deep trouble?

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General Abrams: Yes.

The President: Since when?

General Abrams: Some time in September he came to this conclusion. Sometime in September instructions went out from Hanoi. They made new assessment that they were in trouble.

Lot of changes in movement in highlands.

The President: Should we mount massive psychological warfare campaign in South against the enemy?

General Abrams: General Goodpaster and I have talked about this. We must revamp and redesign the psychological warfare.

The President: Does General Goodpaster think we should stop it?

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: What about 7th Air successor?

General Abrams: He'll be for it.

The President: General Momeyer was for it. Said in effect this is what we would do anyway.

General Abrams: I am blessed with four good men: Goodpaster, Brown, Thumvalt and Mr. Hrum. They don't belong to any service. They belong to the U. S. Government.

The President: Is there anything we could do here to enable you to increase pressure in remaining months?

General Abrams: We are working hard on equipping and training ARVN. The ARVN is having to readjust tactics. Americans have been flexible.

ARVN is doing what they learned to do two years ago. We have new techniques. First ARVN Division has been quick to change.

The President: What about enemy strength along the Cambodian border? Are you prepared to handle it and the situation in Saigon?

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General Abrams: Yes, Sir.

General Wheeler: More and more supplies are now being found in Cambodia. We are going to have to go after Cambodian sanctuaries. It is intolerable. We must do something about it.

Secretary Rusk: Do they get arms through Sihanoukville?

General Abrams: Yes, they do.

They are moving supplies through there, according to agent reports.

We have had prairie fire teams in there.

In 3 and 4 Corps, arms and ammunition are coming through Sihanoukville.

General Wheeler: The [REDACTED] there isn't worth a damn. He told me there wasn't a single NVN in Cambodia. 5

The President: This is a critical period here. In light of what you know, do you have any reluctance or hesitation to stop the bombing?

General Abrams: No, sir.

The President: If you were President, would you do it?

General Abrams: I have no reservations about doing it. I know it is stepping into a cesspool of comment.

I do think it is right thing to do. It is the proper thing to do.

The President: Will the men accept it?

General Abrams: Yes, sir.

Secretary Clifford: For 5 1/2 months we have had negotiations. North Vietnam had been adamant against permitting GVN to sit. Now, they have agreed. Why - what is your estimate of reasons?

General Abrams: What I think is not too profound.

Sometime in 1967 they made the decision to make an all-out military

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effort to topple the South Vietnamese people - drive wedge between the U. S. Government and the GVN.

They put on massive infiltration, 246,000 infiltrated in 1968.

Brought in new rockets, AK-47, mortars, artillery, recoilless rifles.

In 1968 they sent everything that was practicable.

They made that effort and tried to sustain it. We were in a certain defensive role.

If they look at it, they must see:

- 1) GVN is stronger.
- 2) ARVN are stronger.

Faced with that, they must find some other way to achieve what they seek than this particular route.

They now accept the role of sitting down at the table and insulting the GVN.

Secretary Rusk: We have lost 28,000 men. We can't stand another coup. Do they understand this can't happen?

General Abrams: Yes, they understand that.

Secretary Rusk: Will this action precipitate a coup?

General Abrams: No, Sir.

They know it's the end of the U.S. Government in Vietnam if they have a coup. Berger has done good work on this.

Secretary Clifford: In shifting bombing, can you use all air strength - including naval air?

General Abrams: Yes, I think so.

I need to meet Admiral McCain, 7th AF and 7th Fleet to integrate naval air into this effort. It can be done.

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Secretary Clifford: You have been there for quite some time. What will be the effect on the VC when they learn Hanoi has permitted GVN to sit at conference table?

General Abrams: The whole structure in South Vietnam will have problems with this thing. This whole thing will cause them problems. It will be tough to keep hard ^{core} corps with them.

Secretary Clifford: Is it your opinion Hanoi will get into talks with sincere effort to find peace -- or is this a ploy on their part?

General Abrams: Top people in Hanoi can't abandon their objectives.

(3:58 a.m. - Rostow hands President a cable.)

General Abrams: They will talk a lot about administrative machinery. Terrorism will continue. I would doubt that large unit engagements will continue. They will try to make more of a government out of NLF.

General Taylor: I want views on ceasefire.

The President: You want to comment on that?

General Abrams: First, public image is in favor of ceasefire.

How a ceasefire is arranged is important. We must talk about how to make it work.

We have to see that mechanics of ceasefire won't place GVN in a difficult position. They must be able to exercise authority over their country.

GVN would want good bit to say about it.

It is something that should come on terms acceptable to us.

General Taylor: How would you go about it?

General Abrams: You could experiment with it by increments.

General Wheeler: I don't see how negotiations of cease-fire can precede pace of political settlement in Paris. Cart is Paris; Horse is situation in South Vietnam.

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Secretary Rusk: I do not expect this to be wound up in a month.
This may go on while you men wrap it up in South Vietnam.

General Abrams: I subscribe to that 100%.

The President: Will they make their 1-million-man mark this year?

General Abrams: They may already have passed it. They are at 835,000.

The President: How much trouble is the President having?

General Abrams: He is stronger. The Prime Minister is a great boost to him.

The President: Is Ky a threat, a dangerous threat?

General Abrams: He's not helpful. Thieu can't bring himself to trust him. These fellows have survived a few bad turn of events. There is some justification for their suspicions.

Thieu may enjoy keeping Ky's suspicions aroused.

But the Vice President is smart enough and sensitive enough not to do anything to overturn the apple cart.

General Abrams: A few spirited fellows might be tempted to do something on their own.

General Brown keeps a close eye on the SVN aircraft loading. Some of Ky's old squadron are in Bien Hoa. We watch them.

General Taylor: Will General Minh be a help or hindrance?

General Abrams: So far, he has been neutral.

Walt Rostow: Do you believe offensive is primarily answer to maintaining the morale of our men and ARVN?

Does the maintenance of offensive seem to be main bargaining tool in Paris?

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General Abrams: That's right. This is just one step. There is still much to be done. The loudest voice in Paris is what we accomplish in South Vietnam.

Walt Rostow: We agree.

Secretary Rusk: That's right.

General Wheeler: I want to sit down with Abe on execute orders and rules of engagement. Rules of engagement were largely drawn up by Abe. I need to get messages off.

The President: What if they hit cities? What if they hit Saigon?

General Abrams: One of the things to be considered would be resumption.

The President: What are cities most likely to be hit?

General Abrams: Saigon and Danang are most likely to be hit. They have people west of Danang.

Resuming the bombing will be difficult. A most difficult problem is also Cambodia - those sanctuaries.

The President: Let's put high priority on that, Dean.

Walt Rostow: Soviets plan diplomatic mission to Cambodia. Secretary Rusk may talk to Dobrynin on this.

The President: Do I issue order to stop all acts of force against NVN in light of indication they will sit with GVN - get into serious talks promptly -- knowing they must not abuse DMZ and cities?

Will we ever know more to test them than now?

The next few days will be difficult.

Secretary Rusk, do you have any hesitancy or reluctance in my taking this action?

Secretary Rusk: No. We should know it does not mean peace. There

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is a reasonable chance. I will return to where we are if there is no response.

Secretary Clifford: This is a culmination of events begun with San Antonio speech. It has taken a year of setbacks and losses before they will sit down and negotiate.

Militarily, we are protected by:

- 1) Reconnaissance against North Vietnam
- 2) They know they must exercise restraint at DMZ and cities.

We'll resume bombing if they fail to show good faith.

I recommend this without reservations.

General Wheeler: I think this is as much a symbol of defeat as erection of Berlin Wall. They have been clobbered. If they don't act in good faith, I would urge resumption and really let them have it. I would use five hose rather than eye-dropper.

Dick Helms: I think it would be a mistake not to take this step. Having GVN recognized will be psychological blow to NLF.

General Taylor: I predate this to 1965 when you committed troops. You changed game.

I fear delay, a long drag-out. I fear reaction at home, temper this a good step, progress but victory is not with us.

The President: You, Clark Clifford, Dean Rusk, and Harry McPherson should work on a speech. All of you go over Kosygin letter (Attachment B).

Also, go over Abrams letter (Attachment C).

Get Russ Wiggins down here at once. Get the JCS to talk about this today.

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General Wheeler: General McConnell is in Southeast Asia. Talk to General Ryan.

The President: When do we hear from Bunker?

Secretary Rusk: He started a meeting an hour ago. We'll get phone call and flash message.

General Wheeler: We've selected 15 targets in the Than Ho^u area in the event of major attack on the cities.

Walt Rostow: If in public statement, you asked Ambassador Harriman to return to Washington for consultation prior to Saturday meeting?

The President: It is difficult to have a visit from them without problems, but I'll consider that.

(Secretary Rusk read message that NLF delegation may be on way through China to Paris.)

/Let's wait until we get word from Bunker on talks with Thieu./

Walt Rostow: We must deal with troop contributors.

The President: When do we plan to do this? We want to delay as much as possible. We'll tell our candidates at 5:30 or 6:00

Secretary Rusk: We do not want to wait too long on troop contributors.

Walt Rostow: Korea and Thailand held.

Clark Clifford: [REDACTED]

(5)

The President: General, will you be missed in Saigon today?

General Abrams: No sir, I would like to think so. I don't have much dealings with the press.

General Abrams: Foreign Minister called in fellows before, including fellow from Philippines.

Walt Rostow: We must inform Paris.

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Secretary Rusk: We must predict they will use word "unconditional."
Do we honor Dobrynin's request of advance word?

The President: Do it as late as you can. I must tell candidates before
anybody else.

George Christian: Any clue today will tip our hand.

Jim Jones:

Times:

Saigon	13 hours ahead
Australia	15
Korea	14
Thailand	13

The President: Don't give it 2 hours before announcement.

Secretary Rusk: We don't want allies to flare up on us.

At 5:00 a.m.

The President: How long has Bunker been there?

Walt Rostow: 1 1/2 hours.

5:00 Went to Mansion: General Abrams, Harry McPherson, Jim Jones

5:12 Up to 'Sitting Room':

The President, Harry, Jim, George and Tom.

The President: It's good to be the last one. It was unanimous.

Tough to be a candidate and peace seeker at the same time.

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Where will Nixon be at 5:00 p.m.? Where will Wallace be at 5:00?
HHH?

Have a phone they can cram right up their butts.

5:30 President answers phone.

Haven't heard from Bunker yet.

5:43 Phone Call -- Harry answers and hands phone to the President.

Bunker had not seen him as late as 4:55. They are fumbling.

5:50 Signed letter to Kosygin.

Gave letter to Jim Jones

President sat around waiting for phone call.

6:04 Phone call to President from Dean Rusk.

The President held the phone in his right hand. He held his glasses in his left hand - the sides of glasses in his mouth. George Christian was on the President's left.

"He says Thieu says 3 days is too short and that he can't get delegation there.

Ky must be talked to. Can't do until 9:00 a.m. our time.

We'll meet back.

"Wants to send Ky as adviser. Can't do it in 3 days.

Looks like delay. May be something to report that Nixon is trying to handle this like another Fortas matter.

That's the old Nixon. He may be jittery. May have made mistake attacking him on Sunday, but I had to. He told me at Al Smith Dinner we could really do business after his election.

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6:15 To the Cabinet Room

The President, Jim Jones, George Christian and Walt Rostow.

The President showed the cables.

6:17 Rusk enters.

New Meeting with:

The President	Walt Rostow
Secretary Rusk	George Christian
Secretary Clifford	Jim Jones
General Taylor	Tom Johnson
Richard Helms	

The President: We may give serious thought to say this would rock the world if it were said he was conniving with Republicans. We are going to get what we can out of not bombing.

This is an execute order. There is plane there to take them. Can you imagine what people would say if this were to be known; that we have all these conditions met and then Nixon's conniving with them kept us from getting it.

If we go public - and they object - we have a real problem on our hands.

Thieu is seeing Ky.

He said 3 days are ^{too}₃ short.

The President: Didn't he say one day originally?

Secretary Rusk: We should let Thieu know that we know this. Tell him we know this from political circles.

We may have to put this thing off 24 hours. We must make major effort to get this thing lined up.

EYES ONLY

EYES ONLY

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The President: The only way to line it up is to proceed.

/The President read Eugene Rostow's note of October 29:

"Walt:

I had a further talk with my informant about the luncheon conversation he attended yesterday.

The man who spoke was a member of the banking community, a colleague, a man he has known for many years, and one in whose honesty he has absolute confidence. The speaker is reputed to be very close to Nixon -- as close as Gabriel Hauge (it was not Hauge). (He feels he cannot give me his name.)

The conversation was in the context of a professional discussion about the future of the financial markets in the next term.

The speaker said he thought the prospects for a bombing halt or a cease-fire were dim, because Nixon was playing the problem as he did the Fortas affair -- to block. He was taking public positions intended to achieve that end. They would incite Saigon to be difficult, and Hanoi to wait.

Part of his strategy was an expectation that an offensive would break out soon, that we would have to spend a great deal more (and incur more casualties) -- a fact which would adversely affect the stock market and the bond market. NVN offensive action was a definite element in their thinking about the future.

These difficulties would make it easier for Nixon to settle after January. Like Ike in 1953, he would be able to settle on terms which the President could not accept, blaming the deterioration of the situation between now and January or February on his predecessor.

Gene."

EYES ONLY

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The President: It all adds up.

Thieu delayed seeing Bunker.

Tell Thieu we cleared this before. Tell him we are going to try to have peace talks. If we let this country know he blocked us, we wouldn't have much support for SVN in this country.

I don't think you'll get anything out of Ky.

We can't have different positions.

Go ahead and execute orders.

Secretary Clifford: What word do we have from Bunker?

Secretary Rusk: Bunker tried to see him at 12. Wouldn't see him before 4. Said he could not give us an answer until 9:00 a.m.

Walt Rostow: One more point -- The President of the United States remains President until January 20, 1969.

The President: I have no doubt there is some substance in this. This is honest, reliable, prominent man who reports this.

Secretary Rusk: Bunker was disturbed that he wasn't able to budge Thieu off this.

Secretary Rusk: Do we move now or take more time and work this out? SVN are ok, but they are capable of being nuts.

General Wheeler: I would like to make one additional point: MACV does not command directly the Vietnamese forces. They do have Air Forces. They could fly across DMZ and drop bombs. They could shoot artillery across DMZ.

Clark Clifford: What reasons does Thieu give?

Secretary Rusk: 3 days is too short.

Clark Clifford: Is this just a ploy -- or does it have merit to it? They can get a man to Paris in 24 hours. They could utilize SVN Ambassador to Paris.

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Walt Rostow: They could have organized a delegation.

General Wheeler: I have 12 hours to get orders out.

Walt Rostow: We could gain time by telling delegation there might be some lapover in first 12 hours with possibility of incidents.

Clark Clifford: They said 3 days are too short.

Secretary Rusk: The under-the-table stuff is what may be responsible.

Clark Clifford: Did Thieu have to meet with Ky?

Secretary Rusk: Yes, between now and 9 p.m. Saigon time.

Clark Clifford: If they have understood it all along, it does not appear to be a meritorious suggestion. Their objection does not have merit. They can get a man to Paris. It seems to me they are playing extraordinary games.

Their situation could become so grave under President Johnson's term in office that it would be untenable. We need to take hard look at this. It seems reprehensible and utterly without merit.

Secretary Rusk: I'll call Bunker back.

- Got all we wanted in Paris.
- Political circles tell us they have intervened in Saigon.
- Same circles gave assurances to Hanoi.
- If became known it would be disaster.
- President is best friend South Vietnam has.
- President has made decision -- expects SVN to cooperate.
- Let's not give orders until we get one bounce-back there.
- Tell Hanoi we would understand if meeting went to late Saturday.

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EYES ONLY

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Clark Clifford: There are two courses:

- 1) Hold up Wheeler - wait and see what Thieu says.
- 2) Tell Thieu this is plan --

If they refuse to go along, would be extremely serious.
Under 2), we would say it is too late to turn back. It is will of President and American people.

Secretary Rusk: Unless we have Thieu aboard, we cannot tell other troop contributors he is aboard. That would hurt us with South Koreans and Thais.

I would tell Thieu we have made decision - not issued orders.

Dick Helms: I ^{feel} you should go ahead. I think we should get Thieu aboard. Price they would like to charge is too high. This is a psychological moment. It is undesirable to have these people believe they have highjacked us out of this. Thieu will be harder to deal with at 9 than at 4.

Secretary Rusk: Ky is a guy who is capable of committing suicide.

We've invested 29,000 killed and \$70 billion.

The whole thing could blow up.

The allies could come apart.

If we had public blowup it would be a disaster.

October 29, 1968

SUBJECT: Additional Notes on Meeting in the Cabinet Room -
7:05 A.M., Tuesday, October 29, 1968

CLARK CLIFFORD: The question is do we go back to Thieu at nine o'clock to get his answer, or to tell him what we are going to do and to tell him that we are going to do it tonight. They will either break with us or they will go with us. If we go back to get Thieu's answer, they might use this to raise other problems and just cause more delay.

SECRETARY RUSK: I think we can say this is what the President has decided to do. I think we should speak first.

CLARK CLIFFORD: Should we wait until nine o'clock to see Thieu?

SECRETARY RUSK: If Bunker calls him and says he has to see Thieu right away, we might be better off and we might have a chance for Bunker to see both Ky and Thieu together.

GENERAL TAYLOR: This is an ultimatum. I know Thieu and he is not a man to commit suicide. He knows that without the U.S. he will be ruined.

PRESIDENT: To save him from himself, you have to tell him we made a conditional decision when we last talked and he agreed. We followed through and got all we asked for from the other side. We have positioned our orders, made our decisions. We realize political forces are saying things to him and

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLJ 89-207

By 4-27 NARA. Date 4-24-91

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to Hanoi, but we are going to act in the best interests of South Vietnam. We should tell him that we have got to go to the meeting Saturday and we hope that they will be there . We should tell him that before he and Ky tell us what they have decided. (The President then read a report from a business leader who said that another business man from Wall Street indicated that Nixon is trying to frustrate the President's peace efforts so that Nixon can come in after the election and give better terms to Hanoi and put the blame on the Johnson Administration.

GENERAL TAYLOR:

Have we heard from Paris?

SECRETARY RUSK:

No, they are waiting on pins and needles to hear from us.

PRESIDENT:

Tell Bunker first that we have these intercepts from the political forces here. Next, say that we have sent orders out based on Thieu's clearance. Tell him that we can delay those orders for a few minutes, but not for much longer. The question is whether we go with him or without him.

WALT ROSTOW:

Joint communique states the meeting will be November 2nd and Thieu will be present, am I right?

CLARK CLIFFORD:

This is not the end of the war. This is just the beginning of talks to end the war. There are no restrictions on them. There is no valid objection that they can make. I think it is a bluff on their part. If we are going to call their

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bluff, we must do it without equivocation and be willing to throw in our stack. Bunker should notify Thieu that he has to see him immediately and not wait until nine o'clock. Then say to Thieu, who all is aboard; you (Thieu) have not objected; the President is going to proceed on the order; and he (President) will report to the American people directly. Bunker is to get Thieu's reply and to report back he is going along.

PRESIDENT:

When did he clear this?

WALT ROSTOW:

On October 17th (Walt then read from a cable) the draft joint announcement had three days in it and ~~two~~ ^{three} agreed to that.

PRESIDENT:

Did Thieu ever tell Bunker he was aboard.

WALT ROSTOW:

Cable #40220 out of Saigon on October 14th reporting Bunker's meeting of October 8 says he did.

PRESIDENT:

What did we say to Bunker?

WALT ROSTOW:

Check also cable #40178 of the meeting with Thieu on October 13th saying that Thieu concurs with the instructions to Harriman and Vance. This is a total breach of faith.

PRESIDENT:

So he agreed twice on the one day and in the communique for three days he agreed and now we've added 16 hours more and it is not long enough. Now tell Bunker to insist on seeing Thieu right away and tell him this.

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And tell him also that we are responsible for the conduct of the Government until January 20th and tell him that we have issued these orders.

CLARK CLIFFORD: Thieu might say that in addition to the time problem, he also has other problems. Bunker must be ready to say no - that we can not turn back now that the orders are issued. We must also think of our overall relationship with the Soviet Union.

SECRETARY RUSK: This is fundamental to that relationship.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Thieu should also know that we could not hold out if he pulled this and if it got to the American public.

Secretary Rusk left the meeting at 7:32 A.M. and the meeting then adjourned.

At 7:40 A.M. the President briefed General Abrams in the third floor guest bedroom at the White House. The President explained what went on at this second meeting in the Cabinet Room. Abrams agreed that this was the proper course to follow.

GENERAL ABRAMS: I don't think Thieu can stand without the United States. What's being done is right and we are moving from strength and not weakness. Now Thieu gets tormented by his political problems there, but I don't believe he thinks he can go it alone or that he can force us to go with terms.

PRESIDENT: But he may not understand our constitution that we are still in office until January 20.

SECRET

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At 7:50 a.m. the President called Secretary Rusk on the telephone and had a note sent into him. Rusk was at that time talking to Bunker. The President dictated a note to Rusk's secretary to tell Bunker that Abrams agrees that Bunker should inform Thieu as suggested in the morning meeting.

At 7:54 a.m. the President left Abrams room and returned to the second floor where he read the morning newspapers, showered and then took a nap.

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2:30 A.M.
Oct 29, 1968

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(A)

~~SECRET/NODIS~~

October 28, 1968

BRIEFING PAPER

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NJ 94-221

By ug, NARA, Date 5-5-95

On the basis of recent developments in the Paris talks, I have just issued orders to stop the bombing of North Vietnam.

I want to give you an account of the circumstances that led up to this decision. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that what I am about to say to you must be treated in the strictest confidence.

Begin(A)

On June 5, I received a letter from Chairman Kosygin telling me that he and his colleagues had grounds to believe that a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam could contribute to a breakthrough in the situation and produce prospects for a peaceful settlement.

After a further series of exchanges, I communicated the following to the Soviet leaders on September 15: "Setting all political arguments aside, the simple fact is that the President could not maintain a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam unless it were very promptly evident to him, to the American people, and to our allies, that such an action was, indeed, a step toward peace. A cessation of bombing which would be followed by

-- abuses of the DMZ,

-- Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacks on cities or such populated areas as provincial capitals.

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-- or a refusal of the authorities in Hanoi to enter promptly into serious political discussions which included the elected government of the Republic of Vietnam, could simply not be sustained."

On October 2 we were informed that a further exchange of views could prove useful. Such an exchange did take place between Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Gromyko in New York on October 6.

Meanwhile, I discussed our three points with Ambassador Harriman, whom I saw on September 17, and with Ambassador Vance, whom I saw on October 3. Both fully understood our position.

At a meeting in Paris on October 11, the Hanoi delegation put to us this question: Would we stop the bombing when we had a clear answer to the question of GVN participation as a party in the negotiations that would follow a cessation of the bombing?

After underlining our other two positions-- on the DMZ and the cities-- Harriman said he would have to refer the question to Washington.

At this point we consulted Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams, asking them their frank views on an instruction to Harriman which would

demand a prior agreement on GVN participation -- and an understanding of what would be required to continue a bombing cessation: namely, that the DMZ be respected and the South Vietnamese cities not be attacked.

They responded as follows: "General Abrams and I interpret the exchange with Hanoi as a fairly clear indication that Hanoi is ready for a tactical shift from the battlefield to the conference table. We concur in the instruction to Harriman and Vance, and believe Hanoi will give indications that it finds paragraph one (GVN participation) 'acceptable,' and paragraphs two and three (DMZ and the cities) 'understandable.' We would regard such a response as meeting our essential requirements for a cessation of the bombing."

Meanwhile, we received through the Soviet Embassy in Paris a side message from the Hanoi delegation that they would agree to the participation of the GVN after bombing stopped.

On this basis, we went to President Thieu. He said "so long as we are going to press the offensive in the South and in Laos, and so long as we are prepared to resume the bombing if they violate the DMZ or attack the main cities," he is ready to go along. "After all," he said, "the problem is not to stop the bombing, but to stop the war,

and we must try this path to see if they are serious."

On Monday morning, October 14, Secretary Clifford and General Wheeler, just back from Europe, were briefed along with Mr. Helms and General Maxwell Taylor. It was the strong recommendation of Secretary Rusk, Secretary Clifford, and General Wheeler that we should interpret the shift in Hanoi's position as representing a possibility of serious movement towards peace. They believed that the risks were low and manageable. Mr. Helms and General Taylor concurred.

At 1:30 pm on Monday, October 14, I met with all the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We went over the same ground. I polled the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff individually. They concurred unanimously.

We then consulted the other troop contributing countries. They all supported the course of action that President Thieu and I had agreed was wise.

We then instructed Harriman and Vance to put the proposition to the North Vietnamese, including a meeting with the GVN present "the next day." They had earlier said substantive discussions could start the day after the bombing cessation.

At this point Hanoi balked. They said the next day was impossible.

We have just had two weeks of very hard negotiations in which Hanoi sought the following:

-- first, a communique in which we accepted the concept that a bombing halt was "unconditional,"

-- second, a period of -- at first -- "weeks" then two weeks; then one week between the bombing halt and the first meeting with the GVN present.

-- third, a statement about the subsequent talks which would elevate them to being a "four-power conference." This was designed to inflate the status of the NLF and greatly embarrass Saigon.

On our side we insisted that -- although we did not plan to have representatives of the government talk about "conditions" -- we would not sign a document which said the bombing halt was "unconditional."

We insisted that the gap between bombing cessation and the first talks could not be more than about 3 days.

In a meeting on Sunday afternoon in Paris, October 27, they fully met our position. We have reached a rather simple understanding, the essence of which is that we will stop all air, naval and artillery bombardment, and all other acts involving the use of force against North Vietnam, as of 7 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, October 29th.

We have agreed that a meeting dealing with the substantive issues will be held in Paris on Saturday, November 2. The meeting will include representatives of the U.S., South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the NLF.

Let me summarize the understanding.

- in a secret minute and in our discussions*
- Hanoi has agreed ^{in a secret minute and in our discussions} to begin serious talks toward peace in Vietnam -- talks which would include representatives of the Government of South Vietnam.
 - We have made it clear to them that a continuation of the bombing cessation was dependent, first, on respect for the DMZ, and second, upon their being no attacks on the cities.
 - The Soviet Union, which has played a part in this negotiation, knows these circumstances intimately. Their understanding has been reaffirmed at the highest level in the last few days.
 - Both Hanoi and Moscow are clear that we shall continue reconnaissance of North Vietnam. That is why we agreed to stop only acts of force and not acts of war.

As we have always said, there is no obstacle to the NLF having an opportunity to express its view on a settlement. But no recognition of the NLF is involved.

That is where we stand.

It is the universal judgment of our diplomatic and military authorities that North Vietnam's acceptance of GVN participation is a major event -- potentially setting the stage for an honorable settlement of the war. Many experts felt Hanoi would never do this. Until now Hanoi has endlessly repeated they would never talk to the Thieu government. But there can be no settlement without the assent of the constitutional government of Vietnam in Saigon. We have consistently maintained that position, because the whole purpose of our involvement in this conflict required that the people of South Vietnam participate in deciding their own destiny.

As for the DMZ and the cities, we expect that they will act on their understanding that the continuance of the bombing cessation is dependent on their restraint. It is important that we not talk publicly about these two understandings as formal "conditions." But you should know that we are thoroughly prepared to respond if they violate those conditions. General Abrams has standing orders which he believes will protect his forces and our allies at the DMZ, should a violation be attempted.

The agreement at which we have arrived is, then, precisely the one which -- as I have told all three Presidential candidates -- we have been seeking in recent months. We have given away nothing to reach this agreement. It is wholly consistent with my public statements.

DRAFT -- October 27, 1968 -- 3:00 p.m.

My fellow citizens:

As you know, we have been striving to move towards peace through the talks in Paris since May. In the past six weeks those talks moved into a critical and intense phase.

As an agreement began to take shape, I have also conducted a series of intensive discussions with our allies, and with the principal military and diplomatic officers of our government, on the prospects for peace in Vietnam.

Tod ay -- jointly with President Thieu of the Republic of Vietnam -- I have ordered that all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam should cease as of _____, Washington time.

President Thieu and I have reached this decision in the belief that our action would lead to progress toward a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. Our conclusion is based on recent important developments in the Paris talks.

I have arranged briefings for the three candidates for the presidency and the congressional leadership.

The decision I am announcing today is wholly consistent with these statements I have made in the past on a bombing cessation.

On August 19 I said:

"This Administration does not intend to move further until it has good reason to believe that the other side intends seriously to join us in de-escalating the war and moving seriously toward peace."

On September 10 of this year:

"...the Commander in Chief has insisted that the bombing will not stop until we are confident that it will not lead to an increase in American casualties."

The decision to stop the bombardment was recommended to me, and is fully supported, by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Their recommendations and support are based not only on their own assessment but also on the views of Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams, and on those of Ambassadors Harriman and Vance.

Every single military and diplomatic officer whom I have consulted -- and there have been many -- recommended this course to me, in the light of recent events. I doubt that any President has been able to take an equivalent major decision with such unanimity of opinion among his responsible advisers.

President Thieu, who has been thoroughly and constantly informed of all developments at the conference table, joins fully in this decision. It is concurred in, as well, by the governments of the other nations fighting with us in Vietnam: Australia, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Republic of the Philippines, and Thailand.

What we now expect -- what we have a right to expect -- are prompt, serious, and intensive negotiations in an atmosphere conducive to progress.

SECRET

A session of the Paris talks will be convened on November 2 in Paris, at which representatives of the government of South Vietnam will be present. We are informed by the representatives of the government in Hanoi that representatives of the NLF will also be present. Their participation in no way involves recognition; although we have always said their views could be heard in the course of making peace in Vietnam.

No understandings of the kind at which we have arrived, are foolproof. Even formal treaties are not foolproof. But, in the light of the progress made in recent weeks and considering the military and diplomatic advice rendered me, I have decided that we should take this step now -- to see if an early peace is possible.

We could be misled -- and we are prepared for that contingency. We pray God that it does not occur. The overriding consideration that governs us at this hour is to save human lives

-- to bring peace to that tortured corner of the world.

That chance -- that hope -- I cannot forego.

It should be clear to all of us that the new phase of negotiation which opens on November 2 does not mean that stable peace has come to Southeast Asia -- and stable peace is our objective. There may well be hard fighting ahead. There will certainly be hard negotiating ahead.

Extremely important and difficult issues lie before the negotiators.

For example:

-- There must be a fast withdrawal from Vietnam of North Vietnamese forces and our implementation of the Manila commitment, under verified conditions;

-- The way must be found to bring those now fighting with the Viet Cong into the peaceful political life of South Vietnam on the principles enunciated by President Thieu at Honolulu; namely, the principles of "national reconciliation" and participation in political activities to all individuals and members of groups who agree to renounce force and to abide by the Constitution of Vietnam.

-- Peace must come to Laos as well as to Vietnam, including the total withdrawal of the foreign forces now there.

-- There must be, in short, a settlement compatible with the principles of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962 under conditions which, this time, guarantee that those agreements will be effectively monitored.

These are ~~T~~ough problems. With good will and the intent to bring peace to the area, they can be solved. We know that negotiations can move swiftly when the common intent of the negotiators is peace.

And all should know that the American people, with memories of the Korean negotiations of 1951 to 1953, do not intend to accept deliberate^e delay and procrastination.
^

How has it come about that now -- on October 29th -- we have stopped the bombardment of North Vietnam?

I promise you that I would have given all I possess to have been able to stop it many months ago. For then there would have been no question of its relationship to our election on November 5th -- and substantive talks on a settlement of the war might have made real progress by now.

But I did not control the timing of events during the past few months. The decisions of men in Hanoi -- which very likely reflected conditions in South Vietnam and throughout the world -- determined when and whether it would be possible for us to stop the bombing altogether.

For a long time these men have known -- as you have -- that the United States would stop the bombing when that would lead to prompt and productive talks.

And for a long time we have made it clear to them that the Government of South Vietnam would have to participate in talks that affected that country's very existence.

We have been allied with South Vietnam in this struggle for many years, going back to the 1950's. But we have neither assumed nor demanded the role of determining the future of South Vietnam. The very principle for which we are engaged there -- the principle of self-determination -- requires that the South Vietnamese speak for themselves in the Paris talks.

Though our insistence on this was clear from the beginning, it was -- until now -- rejected by North Vietnam.

It was equally clear that we could not stop the bombing so long as doing so would jeopardize the safety of our troops and those of our allies.

For many months our representatives carried this message throughout the world, meeting with our allies, with those of North Vietnam, and with neutral parties. I travelled to Rome last Christmas and sought the help of His Holiness in bringing about an understanding with North Vietnam.

But by March of this year there had been no movement. It became urgent that something be done to break the deadlock and start the process of negotiations.

So, on March 31 I announced that the United States -- as a unilateral act of de-escalation -- would limit the bombing of North Vietnam over that part of the country where 90% of its people live. And I said:

"Even this very limited bombing of North Vietnam could come to an early end -- if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi. Whether a complete bombing halt becomes possible in the future will be determined by events."

When Ambassador Harriman and Ambassador Vance went to Paris, their instructions centered on two major points:

-- First, that the legitimate government of South Vietnam must take its place in any serious negotiations affecting the future of that country;

-- Second, that a total bombing halt would not be possible if the demilitarized zone were not respected.

For month after month there was no movement.

Now there is.

I cannot tell you exactly why it has come now. I do know that a series of hopeful events has occurred in South Vietnam and elsewhere:

-- The steady strengthening of the constitutional Government in South Vietnam;

-- The expansion of South Vietnam's armed forces, to the point where a million men are now under arms;

-- the superb performance of our own men, under the great leadership of General Westmoreland and General Abrams;

-- And the influence of some of North Vietnam's allies and ours.

As I have told you, I regret that it has taken so long to produce some movement in these talks. I regret that when the movement did come, it came near our elections. But, when it did come, I would have been unfaithful to our national purpose -- to seek an honorable settlement of this conflict -- and to the brave men who bear the burden of battle for

us and our allies -- if I did not recognize it and act upon it at once.

I know that your prayers will be joined with mine -- and with those of all humanity -- that the action I announce tonight will be a major step toward a firm and honorable peace in Southeast Asia.

-- and thus toward a safer world.

GENERAL ABRAMS' QUOTE:

"I am really no judge of your responsibilities in that office, but I have absolutely no reservations about doing this.

"I do think that it's the right thing to do. I think the war is at the stage where it is the proper thing to do."

October 28, 1968

Tom Johnson

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GENERAL ABRAMS' QUOTE:

"I am really no judge of your responsibilities in that office, but I have absolutely no reservations about doing this.

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October 28, 1968