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MEETING NOTES  
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NOTES ON FOREIGN POLICY MEETING  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1968

FAMILY DINING ROOM

THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING:

The President  
Secretary Rusk  
Secretary Clifford  
General Wheeler  
General Taylor  
CIA Director Helms  
Walt Rostow  
George Christian  
Tom Johnson

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NLJ 87-38  
By LS NARA, Date 5-18-89

The President: What do we have from Saigon?

Secretary Rusk: A new peace plan. Thieu won't see Bunker until tomorrow. We should see how Nixon can get out of this as soon as possible. Bill Bundy or I could go down to Key Biscane.

I would be opposed to Nixon going to Saigon. He may want to send an emmissary like William Scranton.

He may want to send a message to Thieu. I can't imagine Nixon wanting to stand in the way.

The President: Are things quiet along the DMZ, Bus?

General Wheeler: Absolutely quiet on the DMZ. Only 2 incidents on the first day -- mortar fire. Nothing since that time.

There were a couple of small attacks against small population centers in the last 24-hours.

The President: I figured they would do this to save a little face.

General Wheeler: The North Vietnamese understand about Saigon, Hue, and Danang.

The propaganda from Hanoi stresses attacks against "military facilities."

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SERVICE SET

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No action against any reconnaissance planes -- drones or manned reconnaissance planes. Apparently they have passed the word.

General Taylor: I agree we should play it loose. We are trying to protect urban population centers.

CIA Director Helms: We have had 24 attacks since November 1.

Secretary Rusk: I would draw a distinction between isolated attacks and major attacks.

General Taylor: We have trouble defining what attacks are.

General Wheeler: Bunker blames attack on Saigon for Thieu backing off.

The President: I think Hanoi has done unexpectedly well. I don't trust them, though. I its not calculated, substantial attack I would do nothing more than talk a hard game. I think it has been a good trade.

I was amazed with the disapproval it got throughout the country. The Polls show 65% against it. The telegrams against it-- mail is running 50 - 50.

Chuck Robb said every man approved of it.

General Wheeler: The message Abrams sent showed the men in I Corps applauded it.

Secretary Clifford: I have a memo on the increase in bombing in Laos. Our men are going about their work with great will.

Walt Rostow: Don Hornig has a memo on new interdiction devices for use in Laos -- including laser bombs.

The President: I was proud of all of you on backgrounding -- particularly Dean Rusk, Clark Clifford and General Wheeler.

Secretary Clifford: The bombing in Laos up from 181 sorties to 405 - 456 between November 1 and November 5.

November 1	181
November 2	393
November 3	407
November 4	456
November 5	405

Walt Rostow: They will feel it in Laos.

The President: Let's point out how quiet it has been in the DMZ and the cities.

It justifies our action on the bombing.

Secretary Clifford: Our casualties are up.

The President: The Marines are out there chasing them.

Secretary Rusk: They are from our own initiative.

George Christian: A lot of casualties were a result of one booby-trap.

General Wheeler: Marine engineers were caught in a trap.

The President: We had a party last night for the military people from Randolph and Bergstrom. I am proud of their dedication to duty.

Told story about one fireman whose father worked in a coal mine. Said his father did it: Saw the Ocean, Rode in airplane, met a President.

Secretary Rusk: I would like all of us to go out to Andrews and thank them.

Secretary Clifford: We are under pressure to get the New Jersey back to Bay.

The President: I have been thinking about how to handle Nixon. I think he wants both Rusk and Humphrey in his Administration. (laughter).

I think Rusk should talk with him. You may want to go down or talk with him on the phone.

I will see Dirksen this afternoon.

Secretary Rusk: It is a question of how Nixon communicates with Thieu.

A. Send Cable

B. Call Bui Diem -- telling him he will send a messenger to Saigon.

Secretary Clifford: At some stage the President and Nixon should talk. We should by then have a set course of action for President Thieu to take.

Now we are getting a lot of stalling.

The President: The message is the first thing we should get through.

How are we with troop-contributors.

Secretary Rusk: We have marginal problem with Thailand and South Korea -- because of Thieu. We need to get this thing ironed out before all of them are called together.

The President: I agree. The Press would have a field day otherwise.

What is our situation in Paris?

Secretary Rusk: There is not much they can say until Thieu is aboard.

I am inclined to let Paris mark time while we are getting Thieu aboard. The NLF are getting all of the news.

Secretary Clifford: During the next 70 days -- if the GVN still won't go -- can we go into bilateral meetings?

Secretary Rusk: Hanoi might object to public meetings.

Secretary Clifford: We might have leverage to meet bilaterally with Hanoi -- not suck up to Saigon.

Kosygin might help.

General Taylor: We can't sit 70 days and let Saigon hold us up. We should start moving after a reasonable period of time.

Secretary Clifford: Fundamentally, we are faced with the fact that we and South Vietnam have different goals.

We -- want to finish fighting, get peace and get out.

I believe they prefer fighting go on:

- a. Winning militarily.
- b. Keeps the government going.
- c. Keeps them from facing tough negotiating problems.
- d. Psychologically important.

Secretary Rusk: During the GOP administration, the North Vietnamese began to roll in Laos. During the GOP administration, Vietnam was divided.



In 1960 Eisenhower said we would never let a Communist regime be established in this hemisphere. At that time we had on Ike's desk an intelligence report that Cuba was Communist.

Secretary Clifford: I reported on my last trip to Vietnam that the GVN did not want the war to stop.

1. They are content to have the U. S. present,
2. No danger,
3. The flow of money goes on.

Thieu and Hwong are honest, but there are a lot of them with their hands in the till.

4. We are equipping, arming and training the South Vietnamese army.

We do have separate goals.

We have prevented subjugation of South Vietnam by force; we have strengthened the government.

The President: What do you think of briefing all leaders?

Secretary Clifford: It's profitable to keep them informed.

#### NATO MEETING

Secretary Rusk: Not much we need to do today. We could meet Monday.

Should Nixon be represented at the NATO meeting? I would have no problem with Scranton or Dillon or somebody we trust.

The President: Is Scranton qualified?

Secretary Rusk: Yes, he is qualified.

There is something about keeping channels of responsibility very clean. The next step is having somebody in the Paris talks.

#### BIAFRA RELIEF

Secretary Rusk: McCormack wants us to help with aircraft. I see no problem with providing \$500,000 for fund to pay for charter.

Palmer came back impressed by the Federal Government. They may have been influenced by the fact that he thinks they will win.

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PERSONNEL

Secretary Rusk: Freeman wants to leave Mexico City.

The President: That's okay.

NPT

The President: What do you think?

Secretary Rusk: I would like to see the NPT approved -- but I would hate to see the Senate in town. I hope they will do it the first of the year.

I have misgivings about a special session.

The President: My general inclination is "no."

We have: Budget problems; economic message; State of the Union; Phantoms; Germany; Middle East; Saigon; Cohen wants \$1 billion for HEW.

On the State of the Union, I may remind them of the commitments we've made (with the Congress too). Poverty, Education, Health. Hope they carry them out.

We may have to recommend continuance of the tax surcharge.

# # #

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10/1/67

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NLJ 87-38  
By W, NARA, Date 2-25-91

Nov. 7 1968  
Thursday  
Family Dining Room

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| 1 Pres     | 5 Taylor    |
| 2 Rusk     | 6 Helms     |
| 3 Clifford | 7 Rostow    |
| 4 Wheeler  | 8 Christian |
|            | 9 Johnson   |

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Pres: what do we have from Saigon?

Rusk: A new peace plan. Thieu won't see Bunker until tomorrow. We should see how ~~Best~~ Nixon can get out of this as soon as possible. Bill Bundy or I could go down to Key Biscayne.

I would be opposed to Nixon going to Saigon. He may want to send an emissary like Tom Scranton

He may want to send a message to Thieu

[1]

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W: Absolutely quiet on DMZ.  
Only 2 incidents on 1st day—  
mortar fire. Nothing since  
that time.

Couple of small attacks  
against small population  
centers in last 24 hours.

Pres: I figured they would do this  
to save a little face.

W: NVZ understands about  
Saigon, Hue, and Danang

Propaganda from Hanoi  
stress attacks against  
"military facilities"

No action against any  
recon. planes — drones  
or manned recon  
planes.

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Taylor: I agree we should play  
it loose. We are trying  
to protect urban population  
~~at~~ centers.

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attacks are.

N: Bunker claims attack on Saigon  
for Thieu backing off

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<sup>Ribb</sup>  
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Roscoe: Don Hornig has memo on new interdiction devices for use in Laos — including laser bombs.

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151

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P: Marines are out there chasing them.

Rush: They are from our own initiative.

Ch: A lot of casualties were a result of one booby trap.

W: Marine engineers were caught in trap.

Pres: We had party last night for military people from Randolph & Bergstrom. I am proud of their dedication to duty.

Told story about one prisoner whose father who worked in coal mine. Said father did it:

Saw ocean

Rode in airplane

Met President

Rush: I would like all of us to go out to Andrews & thank them

161



CC: We are under pressure to get  
New Jersey back to Subic  
Bay

Pres: That's OK.

I have been thinking about how to  
handle Nixon.

I think he wants both Rush and  
Humphrey in his administration  
(laughter)

I think Rush should talk with  
him. You may want to go down  
or talk with him on phone.

I will see Dicksen this afternoon.

Rush: Question of how Nixon communicates  
with Thieu

- (A) Send cable
- (B) Call Bao Dai — telling  
him he will send messenger to  
Saigon.

[11]

CC: at some stage Pres + Nixon should talk. we should by then have a set course of action for Pres Thien to take.

Now we are getting a lot of stalling.

Pres: Message is 1st thing we should get through.

How are we with troop-contributors

Rusk: we have marginal problem with Thailand and S. Korea — because of Thien. We need to get this thing ironed out before all of them are called together.

P: I agree. Press would have a field day otherwise.

P: What is our situation in Paris.

181

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can say until Thieu is  
aboard.

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mark time while we are  
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NLF are getting all of the news

CC: During next 70 days — if  
GVN still won't go — can  
we go into bilateral meeting.

R: Hanoi might object to public  
meetings.

CC: We might have leverage to  
meet bilaterally with Hanoi —  
not suck up to Saigon.

Kosygin might help

Taylor: We can't sit 70 days & let  
Saigon hold us up.  
We should start moving  
after reasonable period of time. 1/1

CC: Fundamentally, we are faced  
with fact we & SVN have  
different goals

We - finish fighting - get peace  
get out

I believe they prefer fighting  
go on.

- A) winning militarily
- B) keeps going
- C) keeps them from facing tough negotiating probs.
- D) Psychologically important.

Russ: During GOP adm, NVN began to roll  
in Laos. During 90P adm, Vietnam  
was divided

In 60 Iho said we would never  
let Communist regime be  
established in this hemisphere.  
At that time we had on Iho's  
desk an Intelligence Report  
that Cuba was Communist

[10]

cc I regretted on last trip to  
On that GUN did not want  
war to stop.

- (1) Content to have US presence
- (2) No longer
- (3) Flow of money goes on

Thieu & Huong are honest, but there  
are a lot of them with hands in till.

(4) We are equipping, arming  
& training SVN army

We do have separate goals

We have prevented subjugation  
of SVN by force; we have  
strengthened gov't

P: What do you think of briefing  
all leaders

cc It's profitable to keep them  
informed.

## NATO Meeting

R: Not much we need to do today.  
We could meet Monday.

Should Nixon be represented  
at NATO meeting? I would  
have no problem with Scranton  
or Dillon or somebody we  
trust

P Is Scranton qualified?

R: Yes, he is qualified.

There is something about keeping  
channels of responsibility very  
clean.

Next step is having somebody  
in Paris talks.

## BIAFRA Relief

R. McCormack wants us to help  
with aircraft. I see no  
problem with providing \$500,000  
for fuel to pay for charter.

[12]

Palmer came back impressed by  
Federal govt. They may have  
been influenced by fact he  
thinks they will win.

## Personnel

P: Freeman wants to leave Mexico City

P: That's OK.

## NPT

P: What do you think

P: I would like to see NPT  
approved — but I  
would hate to see Senate  
in town. I hope they  
will do it first of Jan.

I ~~have~~ have misgivings  
about Special Session

P: My general inclination is "no."

We have

Budget Problems  
Econ Message  
State of Union  
Pranlos

Germany  
Middle East

Saujon

Cohen wants \$16. for H+E

on State of Union, I may remind them  
of commitments we've made (w/ Congress to)

Poor boy

Education

Health

Hope they carry them out.

We may have to recommend  
continuance of tax surcharge.

[14]



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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00 WTE15  
DE WTE10 190SA  
EEA707  
00 WTE10  
DE WTE 4246

FROM WALT ROSTOW  
TO THE PRESIDENT  
INFO GEORGE CHRISTIAN  
CITE CAP82699

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

TOR  
SAN ANTONIO COMMEN

3:51 P.M. CST 5 NOV 68

DETERMINED TO BE AN  
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING  
NOT NAT'L SECURITY  
INFORMATION, E. O. 12356,  
SEC. 1.1(c)

BY DCW ON 3-5-91

NOVEMBER 5, 1968

HEREWITH A TRANSCRIPT OF BUNKER'S BACKGROUNDER OF NOVEMBER  
4 ON EVENTS OF LAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

1. FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF OPENING STATEMENT AND PARAPHRASING  
OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AT BACKGROUND BRIEFING HELD BY  
AMBASSADOR FOR EIGHTEEN AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS, NOVEMBER 4,  
1800 HOURS. ATTRIBUTION IS TO BE "INFORMED SOURCE" OF "KNOWLEDGE-  
ABLE SOURCE." NO ATTRIBUTION TO AMERICANS.

2. THE AMBASSADOR: UNFORTUNATELY I HAVEN'T BEEN AS COMMUNICATIVE  
AS USUAL DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS, BUT I AM GLAD THAT I CAN  
BE NOW, AT ANY RATE, BECAUSE I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU SOME INFOR-  
MATION ABOUT THE EVENTS OF THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS. I KNOW THAT  
A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT VERSIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THE PRESS. SOME  
I THINK INVOLVED SOME SERIOUS INACCURACIES. CONSEQUENTLY I THINK  
IT IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE YOU WITH THE FACTS AS THEY OCCURRED, IN  
ORDER TO KEEP THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

3. FIRST, I WANT CLEAR THAT NOTHING OCCURRED WHICH WILL  
IN ANY WAY AFFECT OUR VERY STRONG, VIGOROUS SUPPORT OF THE GVN  
AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. THIS SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE AND ON  
PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S INSTRUCTIONS I HAVE ASSURED PRESIDENT THIEU  
OF THIS. WE PROPOSED TO CONTINUE WITH OUR PROGRAMS HERE ON  
EVERY SIDE WITH ENERGY AND VIGOR. WE DO NOT COMTEMPLAATE ANY  
LETUP IN ANY WAY.

4. AT THE OUTSET I SHOULD POINT OUT THAT WE HAVE HELD REGULAR  
CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GVN ON POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI  
FOR THE PAST MONTHS. IN FACT, EVER SINCE THE TALKS BEGAN ON  
THE 13TH OF MAY IN PARIS, WE HAVE MET QUITE REGULARLY WITH THE  
PRESIDENT, THE VICE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE  
PRESIDENT'S ADVISOR. WE HAVE GONE INTO VERY CONSIDERABLE  
DETAIL OVER THE PROBLEMS WE FELT WOULD ARISE AND THAT WOULD  
HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH WHEN THE NEGOTIATIONS  
GOT TO A SUBSTANTIVE STATE. AND WE DISCUSSED OUR CONCEPTION OF  
HOW FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT DEVELOP.

5. FIRST, LET ME OUTLINE THE BASIS FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING WITH HANOI. ON AUGUST 19, YOU RECALL, THE PRESIDENT SAID, "THIS ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT INTEND TO MOVE FURTHER UNTIL IT HAS GOOD REASONS TO BELIEVE THAT THE OTHER SIDE INTENDS SERIOUSLY TO JOIN US IN DE-ESCALATING THE WAR AND MOVING SERIOUSLY TOWARD PEACE." FOR ITS PART, HANOI INSISTED ON "UNCONDITIONAL" CESSATION OF ALL ACTS OF WAR AGAINST ITS TERRITORY. AS YOU REMEMBER IN ALL THE MEETINGS IN PARIS THEY KEPT CONTINUALLY COMING BACK TO US, THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY BASIS ON WHICH TALKS COULD MAKE ANY PROGRESS. THEY ALSO VERY CONSISTENTLY DERIDED THE GOVERNMENT HERE AS A PUPPET OF THE UNITED STATES AND FOR A LONG TIME THERE SEEMED VERY LITTLE PROSPECT OF AGREEING TO NEGOTIATIONS AT WHICH THE GVN WOULD BE REPRESENTED.

6. THE QUESTION IS THEN HOW DID WE GET AGREEMENT? WE GOT IT IN EFFECT BY GETTING "GOOD REASONS TO BELIEVE" CERTAIN THINGS WOULD FOLLOW CESSATION WITHOUT CALLING THEM "CONDITIONS". WE MADE IT CLEAR TO HANOI THAT BY DEFINITION "SERIOUS TALKS" MEANT GVN PARTICIPATION. WITH RESPECT TO THE OTHER REASSURANCES THAT WE WANTED, WE MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT A CESSATION OF BOMBING WHICH WAS FOLLOWED BY ABUSES OF THE DMZ, OR BY VC AND NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACKS ON CITIES OR SUCH POPULATED AREAS AS PROVINCIAL CAPITALS SIMPLY COULD NOT BE SUSTAINED.

7. IT WAS EARLY IN OCTOBER THAT WE GOT FIRST INDICATIONS FROM HANOI THAT THIS KIND OF UNDERSTANDING MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. WE WERE ASSURED BY WASHINGTON THAT FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT HERE WAS INTENDED AND WOULD BE HELD BEFORE ANY ACTION WAS TAKEN.

8. WE HAD LONG CONSIDERED THAT SUCH A MOVE BY HANOI WOULD BE LIKELY AT SOME TIME AND HAD DISCUSSED IT MANY TIMES WITH THE GVN. WE INTERPRETED THE EXCHANGE WITH HANOI AS A FAIRLY CLEAR INDICATION THAT HANOI WAS READY FOR A TACTICAL SHIFT FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE. IN LIGHT OF WHAT HAS DEVELOPED SINCE, I SHOULD ALSO EXPLAIN HOW WE PROPOSED DEALING WITH THE GVN AND NLF PARTICIPATION. HANOI OF COURSE WANTED A "FOUR-POWER CONFERENCE", GIVING THE NLF THE MAXIMUM INTERNATIONAL STANDING. WE, ON THE OTHER HAND, INSISTED ON WHAT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE "OUR SIDE/YOUR SIDE" FORMULA, UNDER WHICH EACH SIDE COMPOSES OR ORGANIZES ITSELF AND LOOKS AT THE OTHER SIDE IN ANY WAY IT WISHES. THIS HANOI FINALLY AGREED TO. AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE NLF AS A SEPARATE ENTITY. WE MADE THAT CLEAR MANY TIMES. WE HAVE SAID ALL ALONG THAT THEY WERE AN INSTRUMENT ORGANIZED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF NORTH VIET-NAM, WHICH WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE, AND DO NOT REGARD THEM AS INDEPENDENT. WE HAVE ALSO SAID, OF COURSE, THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY WITH HAVING THEIR VIEWS HEARD AT TALKS THAT MIGHT DEVELOP. SO FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW THERE WOULD BE THE GOVERNMENT OF HANOI AND WHOEVER THEY WISH TO BRING ALONG, WHILE WE ON OUR SIDE HAVE TWO SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENTS RECOGNIZED ALMOST UNIVERSALLY IN THE WORLD. HANOI WOULD OF COURSE LOOK AT IT QUITE DIFFERENTLY.

9. WE HAVE BEEN OVER THIS FORMULA MANY TIMES WITH THE GVN. WE HAVE HELD REGULAR CONSULTATIONS ON POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI FOR MANY MONTHS BEFORE THIS BREAKTHROUGH CAME. IT HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GVN IN THE COURSE OF THESE CONSULTATIONS AS THE ONLY WAY, PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, THAT WE COULD HOPE TO HOLD TALKS WITH THE OTHER SIDE. I THINK VICE PRESIDENT KY SAID ONCE THAT AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE WE OUGHT NOT TALK WITH THEM, BUT AS REALISTS AND PRACTICAL MEN WE HAVE TO.

10. WE WERE INSTRUCTED AROUND THE MIDDLE OF THE MONTH TO OBTAIN PRESIDENT THIEU'S CONCURRENCE IN APPROACHING THE DRV WITH A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL FOR HALTING THE BOMBING ON THE BASIS OF THE UNDERSTANDING I HAVE OUTLINED. WE WENT THROUGH THIS WITH HIM VERY CAREFULLY, IN GREAT DETAIL, AND HE GAVE HIS CLEAR CONCURRENCE TO OUR GOING AHEAD. IN THE INTEREST OF SECURITY, WE ASKED HIM NOT TO TALK TO OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT IT AS YET. WE THOUGHT AT THIS STAGE OF THESE VERY DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS WE SHOULD HOLD THIS VERY CLOSE AND DEAL ONLY WITH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE TROOP-CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES.

11. A FEW DAYS LATER, HOWEVER, WE WERE ABLE TO SUGGEST TO PRESIDENT THIEU THAT HE MIGHT BRING A FEW ADDITIONAL TOP OFFICIALS-- NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS AND THE ASSEMBLY LEADERSHIP, --THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY AND THE LOWER HOUSE-- INTO THE PICTURE, AND OUR EMBASSIES IN THE TROOP-CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES WERE INSTRUCTED ALSO TO INFORM THE HEADS OF STATE OF THE HOST GOVERNMENTS.

12. FOLLOWING HIS FIRST MEETING WITH THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, AND THE ASSEMBLY HEADS, PRES THIEU BEGAN TO RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT A NUMBER OF PROCEDURAL MATTERS WHICH REQUIRED A NUMBER OF SESSIONS TO IRON OUT, WHICH WERE IRONED OUT. MEANWHILE, WE WORKED OUT THE LANGUAGE OF A JOINT STATEMENT ON CESSATION AND THE SUBSEQUENT MEETING, WHICH THEY AGREED TO.

13. WHILE THIS WAS GOING ON HERE, TOUGH SESSIONS WITH HANOI DELEGATION WERE ALSO GOING ON IN PARIS. THERE WAS A PROBLEM ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE MEETING TO FOLLOW THE BOMBING CESSATION. THEY WANTED A COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES WOULD ACCEPT THE CONCEPT THAT THE BOMBING HALT WAS "UNCONDITIONAL." WE HELD THE LINE FIRMLY ON THESE FRONTS.

14. THEN ON SUNDAY, OCT 27TH, A BREAKTHROUGH CAME IN PARIS. HANOI INDICATED A READINESS TO MOVE TOWARD THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD SOUGHT FROM THE BEGINNING, I.E., THERE WOULD BE A BOMBING CESSATION, THE GVN COULD PARTICIPATE IN THE TALKS WHICH WOULD FOLLOW, AND HANOI UNDERSTOOD WHAT WE REQUIRED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DMZ AND THE CITIES IF THE BOMBING HALT WAS TO BE MAINTAINED, ALTHOUGH WE WOULD NOT LABEL THEM PUBLICLY AS "CONDITIONS." WE WERE INSTRUCTED THEN TO BEGIN DISCUSSING WITH THE GVN THE SPECIFIC PROPOSAL WHICH WITH SLIGHT MODIFICATIONS, ULTIMATELY RESULTED IN THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BOMBING HALT. ONE OF THE THINGS THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT ASKED FOR WAS MORE TIME TO GET READY BETWEEN THE CESSATION AND THE MEETING AND THIS WE ARRANGED. DURING THE WEEK WE HELD A SERIES OF LONG MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT, THE VICE PRESIDENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER WHICH TOWARD THE END LITERALLY WENT AROUND THE CLOCK. THE TROUBLE, WHICH AROSE ONLY DURING THE LAST TWO DAYS, WAS THAT THEY NOW WANTED ASSURANCES, NOT FROM US, BUT FROM HANOI, THAT THE NLF WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE A SEPARATE ENTITY AT THE TALKS. NOW, WE HAD GIVEN THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT EVERY POSSIBLE ASSURANCE THAT WE WOULD NOT OURSELVES RECOGNIZE THE NLF AND THAT AS FAR AS WE WERE CONCERNED, THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT A "FOUR-POWER CONFERENCE," WHICH OBVIOUSLY HANOI WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THEM APPEAR; BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO ATTEMPT TO GET A PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT FROM HANOI OF THE KIND THAT THE GVN WANTED US TO OBTAIN. WE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT WE WOULD STATE PUBLICLY THAT WE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE NLF AS AN ENTITY INDEPENDENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTH VIETNAM. THIS WAS INCLUDED IN THE JOINT STATEMENT TO WHICH THEY HAD AGREED. SINCE WE HAD MADE THE INITIAL PROPOSALS TO HANOI, WITH THE FULL AGREEMENT OF THE GVN AND THE TROOP-CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES, WE HAD TO GO AHEAD WHEN THEY ACCEPTED OUR CONDITIONS. WE TRIED UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE OF COURSE TO BRING THE GVN AROUND, BUT WE COULD NOT. THEN AS YOU KNOW, PRESIDENT THIEU ON SATURDAY MADE HIS POSITION PUBLIC, I.E. THAT HANOI MUST SAY IT IS READY TO TALK DIRECTLY AND SERIOUSLY WITH THE GVN, AND THAT THEY MUST NOT TRY TO BRING THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT INTO THE TALKS AS A SEPARATE DELEGATION. AND HE ADDED THAT SUBSTANTIVE TALKS MUST NOT SIMPLY BE A CONTINUATION OF THE PARIS TALKS BUT MUST START ANEW AND BE TOTALLY SEPARATE FROM THOSE TALKS.

15. WELL THAT IS WHERE WE STAND NOW. WE ARE CURRENTLY TRYING TO WORK OUT WITH THE GVN A BASIS ON WHICH WE CAN PROVIDE. WE OF COURSE BELIEVE THEY AND WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF HAD THEY GONE AHEAD ON THE BASIS OF OUR EARLIER UNDERSTANDING. BUT THEY DIDN'T, AND WE MUST NOW TRY TO GO ON FROM HERE. IT HAS BEEN A DIFFICULT NEGOTIATION, AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE. BUT OBVIOUSLY WE FELT FROM THE BEGINNING IT COULD NEVER BE EASY TO END A CONFLICT SUCH AS THIS ONE.



16. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS MATTER WILL BE WORKED OUT. I THINK IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH COUNTRIES - THE GVN AND OURSELVES - THAT IT SHOULD BE. I'D LIKE TO EMPHASIZE, TOO, AS PRESIDENT JOHNSON, HIMSELF, HAS DONE THAT THE HALTING OF THE BOMBING IS BY NO MEANS TO BE REGARDED AS THE END OF THE WAR. THERE MAY WELL BE A LOT OF FIGHTING AS WELL AS A VERY TOUGH POLITICAL STRUGGLE AHEAD. WELL THERE ARE THE ESSENTIAL POINTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS WHICH I DID WANT TO PUT BEFORE YOU BECAUSE I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT. AS FAR AS POLICY GOES AS I SAID THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF MADE THE STATEMENT IN HIS SPEECH CONCERNING THE NON-RECOGNITION OF THE FRONT, AND THERE IS NO ISSUE BETWEEN US ON THE QUESTION OF COALITION. WE MADE IT CLEAR MANY TIMES THAT LIKE THE GVN WE ARE OPPOSED TO THE IMPOSITION OF ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT ON SVN. I ALSO MADE IT CLEAR WE CAN'T GUARANTEE THAT HANOI WON'T ENGAGE IN ANY PROPAGANDA; IN FACT, WE HAVE SAID JUST THE OPPOSITE. WE HAVE TO OUT-PROPAGANDA THEM. BUT WE MADE OUR POSITION ON THE FRONT AND ON COALITION CRYSTAL CLEAR, I THINK, A GOOD MANY TIMES TO THE GOVERNMENT HERE. THESE ARE THE ESSENTIAL FACTS. ANY QUESTIONS.

17. Q. AS YOU SAY WE ARE GOING INTO EXTREMELY DELICATE POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS, IS IT YOUR ASSESSMENT THAT WE HAVE HELPED THE GVN IN THAT PERIOD BY GOING TO PARIS WITHOUT THEM AND IF NOT, WHY WAS IT NECESSARY AFTER TWO WEEKS OF NEGOTIATIONS TO MAKE THIS ANNOUNCEMENT ON NOVEMBER 1?

18. BUNKER: BECAUSE WE OURSELVES HAD MADE THIS PROPOSAL TO HANOI; THIS IS SOMETHING WE HAD BEEN INSISTING ON FOR A LONG TIME AND ONCE THEY AGREED TO IT, WE HAD TO GO AHEAD. WE COULDN'T BACK OUT. WE HAD BEEN INSISTING FOR MONTHS THAT THIS IS WHAT THEY HAD TO DO AND THEY HAD BEEN SAYING "NO".

19. Q. DID YOU SET THE NOVEMBER 1 DATE EARLIER?

20. BUNKER: NO. WE SAID IN EFFECT, THAT WE WILL NOT GO INTO NEGOTIATIONS UNLESS THE GVN PARTICIPATES AND WE MADE CLEAR THIS UNDERSTANDING WHICH I'VE DESCRIBED. WE SAID ALSO THAT THE MEETING MUST TAKE PLACE PROMPTLY AFTER A CESSATION OF THE BOMBING. NOW, THEY ACCEPTED OUR TERMS WHICH THEY HAD RESISTED FOR A LONG TIME, AND WE COULD NOT BACK OUT. IT WAS NOT THEIR PROPOSITION, IT WAS OURS.

21. Q: ON OCTOBER 27, YOU SAID THERE WAS A BREAKTHROUGH. I SAID THAT SHORTLY AFTER THAT YOU RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC PROPOSALS WITH THE GVN. HAD WE NOT DISCUSSED SPECIFIC PROPOSALS WITH THEM EARLIER?

22. BUNKER: THE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS DISCUSSED AFTER OCT 27 WERE VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL TO THE EARLIER ONES WHICH PRESIDENT THIEU HAD APPROVED.

23. Q. YOU SAID THAT AFTER THE GVN HAD EARLIER ASSENTED TO THE PROPOSAL, PRESIDENT THIEU HELD A MEETING WITH THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND THEN THERE WAS A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE. WHY DO YOU THINK THIS CHANGE CAME ABOUT?

24. BUNKER: THERE WERE ACTUALLY TWO DRAFTS AGREED TO. THE FIRST WAS AGREED TO BY THE PRESIDENT, THE VICE PRESIDENT AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER. THEN THE SECURITY COUNCIL RAISED SOME POINTS. WE THEN HAD INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS, AND WE REDRAFTED THE PROPOSAL. THEY AGREED TO IT. THEN THESE OTHER QUESTIONS AROSE, PERHAPS LARGELY DUE TO APPREHENSION ON THE PART OF OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE "GUT ISSUE" WAS THE QUESTION OF THE NLF -- AS TO HOW THEY WOULD APPEAR, AND HOW THEY WOULD BE REPRESENTED AT THE MEETINGS.

25. DID THE GVN BEGIN TO HEDGE AFTER THE FIRST PROPOSAL WAS AGREED UPON BY YOU OR WAS IT AFTER THE PROPOSAL WAS AGREED UPON BY HANOI?

26. BUNKER: IT WAS AFTER THEY HAD AGREED UPON THE LANGUAGE OF THE PROPOSAL, THAT THEY HAD APPREHENSIONS AND BEGAN TO HEDGE ON IT. AS I SAID IT WAS AFTER THIS "OUR SIDE/YOUR SIDE" FORMULA HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT LENGTH WITH THEM, AND THEY HAD APPROVED, THAT THEY BEGAN TO HAVE APPREHENSIONS.

27. Q. HAD VICE PRESIDENT KY AND THE OTHER OFFICIALS WHO HAD PARTICIPATED GENERALLY ACCEPTED THE FORMULA?

28. BUNKER: WE DID NOT HAVE SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS. WE HELD THEM JOINTLY WITH THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER.

29. Q. I UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES AROSE AT 12:30 ON THURSDAY MORNING WHEN THE GVN RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM LAM IN PARIS: THAT HE WAS VERY EXERCISED, THAT HE HAD GOTTEN A DIFFERENT IMPRESSION FROM HARRIMAN THAN THE ONE YOU HAD BEEN GIVING TO OFFICIALS IN SAIGON. AND FROM THAT POINT ON THINGS BEGAN TO DETERIORATE RAPIDLY.

30. BUNKER: PERHAPS LAM WAS NOT AS KNOWLEDGEABLE AS MR HARRIMAN. I THINK FRANKLY THAT HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND CLEARLY WHAT MR. HARRIMAN HAD SAID, BECAUSE WE CLEARED THAT UP SUBSEQUENTLY WITH THEM. MR HARRIMAN MADE THE STATEMENT TO HIM THAT THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HARRIMAN AND BUNKER. AND HE CONFIRMED ENTIRELY WHAT I HAD SAID TO THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. I THINK IT WAS PARTLY A DIFFICULTY IN COMMUNICATIONS, AND FRANKLY THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES ARE NOT THE BEST. AND I THINK LAM HIMSELF HAS NOT BEEN KEPT FULLY INFORMED AS TO OUR DISCUSSIONS HERE.

31. Q. THE VIETNAMESE ARE SAYING THAT HARRIMAN HAD TOLD LAM THERE WERE NO GUARANTEES GAINED FROM THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WHEREAS YOU WERE SAYING THERE WERE GUARANTEES. IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THERE COULD BE MUCH MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THIS.

32. BUNKER: THERE NEVER A QUESTION OF GUARANTEES. I NEVER USED THE WORD "GUARANTEE." IT WAS A QUESTION OF UNDERSTANDING. WE MADE THAT CLEAR FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

33. Q. THEN THESE THREE CONDITIONS WHICH WE THINK WE HAVE FROM HANOI ARE ON THE BASIS OF NO GUARANTEES OR...

34. BUNKER: I HAVE EXPLAINED TO YOU JUST HOW THEY ARE. WE MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR WHAT WE WOULD EXPECT AND THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT WE EXPECT.

35. Q. JUST WHAT IS THE "OUR SIDE/YOUR SIDE" FORMULA?

SECRET

36. BUNKER: OUR POSITION IS THIS: THAT ON OUR SIDE THERE WOULD BE TWO DELEGATIONS REPRESENTING TWO SOVERIGN GOVERNMENTS AND SO FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED ON THE OTHER SIDE THERE WOULD BE A DELEGATION WHICH WE WOULD TREAT AS THE OTHER SIDE. WE WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE THE FRONT AS AN INDEPENDENT ENTITY.

37. Q. I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THAT DIFFERS FROM WHAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS STANDING FOR. AREN'T THEY OBJECTING TO THE NLF AS A SEPARATE DELEGATION?

38. BUNKER: YES, THEY ARE OBJECTING TO THE NLF AS A SEPARATE DELEGATION. WE'VE SAID THEY CAN ORGANIZE AS THEY PLEASE AND WE DON'T HAVE TO RECOGNIZE IT.

39. Q. PRESIDENT THIEU IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE 19TH SAID WE DON'T CARE WHO IS IN THE HANOI DELEGATION AS LONG AS NOBODY SAYS THEY ARE THE NLF.

40. BUNKER: THAT'S RIGHT.

41. Q. ISN'T THAT WHAT THEY SAID, AND THAT WAS NOT PARTICULARLY AT VARIANCE WITH OUR STAND?

42. BUNKER: WE'VE SAID THEY CAN ORGANIZE THEIR SIDE AS THEY PLEASE. THEY CAN CLAIM ANYTHING FOR IT; WE DON'T HAVE TO RECOGNIZE IT. BUT WE SAID WE CANNOT DICTATE TO HANOI HOW THEY ORGANIZE THEIR SIDE.

43. Q. PRESIDENT JOHNSON IN HIS ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THE NLF WOULD BE PRESENT AND THAT STIRRED THEM UP HERE...

44. BUNKER: THEY HAVE KNOWN THAT RIGHT ALONG, THEY HAVE KNOWN THAT FOR SIX MONTHS.

45. Q. BUT, THE PRESIDENT DID SAY "HANOI AND THE NLF"; HE DIDN'T SAY "HANOI AND ITS DELEGATION..."

46. BUNKER: WELL THAT WAS NO SECRET TO THEM. WE HAVE NEVER SAID THE NLF WOULD BE INCOGNITO. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US. THAT IS WHY THEY (THE GVN) ARE NOT IN PARIS.

47. Q. THIS SEEMS TO BE A PROBLEM THAT IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION. DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT THIEU...

48. BUNKER: NO. I HAVEN'T AN APPOINTMENT AT THE PRESENT TIME. AS I SAID, I THINK WE CAN WORK IT OUT.

49. Q. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THAT YOU WERE IN CONTACT WITH WASHINGTON BEFORE PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S SPEECH? AND DID HE KNOW HOW CLOSE YOU WERE TO AGREEMENT DURING THE NIGHT?

50. I WAS IN TOUCH WITH WASHINGTON PRETTY CONSTANTLY. WE WERE HOPEFUL RIGHT UP TO THE END.

51. Q. YOU SAID EARLIER THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE OUR SUPPORT TO THE GVN. WHEN DID SUCH INSTRUCTIONS ARRIVE AND WHEN DID YOU CONVEY THEM TO PRESIDENT THIEU?

52. BUNKER: I CONVEYED THEM TO HIM JUST AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ANNOUNCING THE CESSATION.

SLIDE SET

53. Q. SOME VIETNAMESE THINK MR. NIXON WILL BE VICTORIOUS. DO YOU THINK THIS HAS PLAYED A PART IN THE ATTITUDE THE VIETNAMESE ARE TAKING?

54. BUNKER: I DON'T KNOW. I WILL LET YOU FORM THAT OPINION.

55. Q. DID PRESIDENT THIEU GIVE YOU ANY INDICATION ON WHAT HE WAS GOING TO SAY IN HIS SPEECH NOVEMBER 1?

56. BUNKER: HE INDICATED HE WAS GOING TO SAY SOMETHING, YES.

57. Q. WHAT WAS THE LAST POSITION OF PRESIDENT THIEU, AS YOU UNDERSTOOD IT, BEFORE HE GAVE THE SPEECH? DID HE INDICATE THAT THEY WOULDN'T GO TO PARIS, OR DID HE INDICATE THAT HE MIGHT CHANGE HIS MIND?

58. BUNKER: HE INDICATED, OBVIOUSLY, THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO GO ALONG WITH A JOINT STATEMENT. THAT WAS THE FINAL WIND UP OF OUR NEGOTIATION DURING THE LAST NIGHT, BECAUSE OF THIS PARTICULAR POINT ABOUT THE FRONT.

59. Q. CAN YOU SAY JUST WHY THEY WERE SUDDENLY APPREHENSIVE?

60. BUNKER: I DON'T KNOW. ONE THING WAS JUST MENTIONED. THERE MAY BE OTHERS TOO.

61. Q. IN THESE LONG SERIES OF MEETINGS YOU SAY WE FELT THAT WE HAD GVN AGREEMENT. DID WE EVER GET A SPECIFIC "I AGREE" TO THESE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS?

62. BUNKER: YES, I MENTIONED THAT WE DID GET A CLEAR AGREEMENT FROM PRESIDENT THIEU TO MAKE THIS PROPOSAL TO HANOI IN THE MIDDLE OF OCTOBER.

63. Q. WHAT DATE DID THIS HAPPEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE PALACE?

64. BUNKER: THIS WAS THE BEGINNING, BEFORE THE VERY INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS TOOK PLACE. THIS WAS THE FIRST MOVE. WE WANTED TO GET THE PRESIDENT'S ASSENT TO GO AHEAD, AND WE DID...

65. Q. NOW AT THAT POINT DIDN'T PRESIDENT THIEU FEEL THAT A GREAT DEAL MORE TALKING WOULD BE REQUIRED BETWEEN THE U.S. AND HANOI?

66. BUNKER: NOT NECESSARILY SO.

67. Q. WAS THERE ANY REASON NOT TO CARRY ON THE TALKS ANOTHER DAY OR TWO, CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT THE GVN WOULD NOT GO TO PARIS?

68. BUNKER: NO. BECAUSE THEY HAD ALREADY BEEN POSTPONED. WE HAD ALREADY INTIMATED THAT WE WERE READY TO GO AHEAD.

69. Q. DID WE HAVE AN ULTIMATUM FROM HANOI?

70. BUNKER: WE DID NOT HAVE AN ULTIMATUM, NO. WE HAD AN UNDERSTANDING. AS I HAVE TRIED TO EXPLAIN, WE MADE THE DEMANDS UPON THEM. AND HAVING MADE THE DEMANDS UPON THEM, WHEN THEY ASSENTED TO THEM, WE COULD NOT BACK DOWN. WE COULD NOT BACK OUT, AND WE COULD NOT KEEP DRAGGING OUR FEET.



71. AMBASSADOR BERGER: WE THOUGHT THE GVN WAS WITH US.

72. AMBASSADOR BUNKER: YES, WE HAD EVERY INDICATIONS THAT THE GVN WAS WITH US.

73. Q. WHEN DID WE FIND OUT THE GVN WAS NOT WITH US?

74. BUNKER: AT THE VERY END.

75. Q. THE LAST NIGHT?

76. BUNKER: THE LAST TWO NIGHTS.

77. Q. THERE ARE SOME RUMORS AROUND TOWN THAT PRESIDENT THIEU HAS DECLINED TO SEE YOU.

78. BUNKER: HE HASN'T DECLINED TO SEE ME, BECAUSE I HAVEN'T ASKED TO SEE HIM.

79. Q. WHAT IS THE PRESENT POSITION? YOU ARE NOT PRESENTLY NEGOTIATING? ARE WE WAITING FOR HANOI AND WASHINGTON TO WORK OUT SOMETHING SO WE CAN GO BACK TO THE GVN?

80. BUNKER: WELL, THERE HAVE GOT TO BE SOME TALKS GOING ON... THERE HAVE GOT TO BE ARRANGEMENTS ABOUT PROCEDURES, AND SO FORTH. I DON'T KNOW JUST WHEN WE WILL BE DISCUSSING THIS AGAIN WITH THE GVN.

81. Q. THERE ARE RUMORS HERE THAT THERE WAS NOT COMPLETE AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARIS, AND THE WHITE HOUSE, AND YOU ON EXACTLY WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN THE TERMS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE NLF AND HANOI?

82. BUNKER: NO. THAT IS NOT TRUE. THERE WAS COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING.

DTG: 051907Z NOV 68

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SECRET

SUMMARY OF STATEMENTS BY CONGRESSIONAL  
LEADERS, OCTOBER 31, 1968

MIKE MANSFIELD: I am 100% for it.

SPEAKER McCORMACK: I'm with you.

SENATOR KUCHEL: I'm all the way with you.

REPRESENTATIVE HALE BOGGS: I'm for you.

SENATOR DIRKSEN: You know how I feel. That's a good suggestion.

ALL SAID: We will back you.

make Manifest  $\rightarrow$  100% for it  
Speakers  $\rightarrow$  I'm with you  
Tommy Kuchel  $\rightarrow$  all the way  
Rep Hale Boggs  $\rightarrow$  for you  
Dirksen  $\rightarrow$  you know how  
I feel  
That's a good suggestion

~~All candidates. We will back you~~  
All said: ✓

190  
TOM --

This was in the files,  
filed along with our  
notes.

What do you want done  
with it? ?

connie

EXCHANGE OF COMMENTS BETWEEN THE  
PRESIDENT AND GENERAL WHEELER

Thursday, October 31, 1968

The President: We do recommend this, all the Joint Chiefs of Staff, don't we, Bus?

General Wheeler: Yes, Sir. We were cut in on this one -- we were not on the Bay of Pigs.

# # #