

~~MEETING NOTES~~
~~COPYRIGHTED~~

Meeting began: 5:31 p.m.
Meeting ended: 6:20 p.m.

107

NOTES ON PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY MEETING
DECEMBER 5, 1968

THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING:

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

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

~~NOT REPRODUCED~~

General Wheeler: Things are quiet in Vietnam today. It may be a repositioning in the War Zone D near Saigon.

The President: Anything to report something big may be planned?

General Wheeler: Yes, sir. There could be something big. We're looking for them.

Secretary Rusk: I personally would not change directives in the DMZ now. We should get Cy to press the DMZ issue.

General Wheeler: General Abrams and I talked Tuesday. He said he needs to continue patrols in the DMZ. He wants to keep the enemy north of PMBL.

This would give friendly forces better security.

The President: Does he ask for more than he has now?

General Wheeler: He wants more authority. He wants to use up to a battalion (900 to 1200 men).

(General Wheeler showed maps showing the DMZ area. He said enemy platoon and company-size units had been seen.)

General Abrams wants to drive the enemy forces back north of the PMBL.

This does not have to be decided tonight.

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

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

SERVICE SET

COPY LIBRARY

North Vietnam has encroached on the southern half of the DMZ.

The President: Is this dangerous?

General Wheeler: Yes, sir. ____

The President: Should we say to the North Vietnamese that they should get people out of the DMZ -- give them warning?

General Wheeler: You have done that already.

If this goes on for three weeks to a month I don't know what will happen.

The President: Clark?

Secretary Clifford: We had one solid agreement -- to get the GVN to the Conference table.

The President: What did we say at Paris?

Ambassador Harriman: We said "major cities".

Secretary Clifford: Averell and Cy sought advance agreement on the DMZ and the cities.

We said talks couldn't go on if the cities were attacked and the DMZ abused.

Talks haven't started. They have not violated any agreement. It has been 35 days. Talks haven't started. I do not attach as much importance to violations in the DMZ as the JCS.

Only on three separate occasions did they actually fire on us. To build up in the DMZ wouldn't be good at this time.

We first went in to find prisoners. To increase the level of the forces sent in would heighten the level. They'll move them in.

This is a bad time to increase the level.

First element in the talks is to take up a firm agreement in the DMZ.

Technically, we do not have any agreement on the DMZ until talks start.

General Wheeler: If we have no agreement on the DMZ, there is no reason we can't move in and clean these people out. This is South Vietnam territory.

Secretary Rusk: We want the enemy to perform on the understanding we had at the time the bombing halted.

The President: Let's assume talks started and they still abuse the DMZ. What would you do?

Secretary Clifford: I would like to see what they had in mind. We were general -- "abuse" the DMZ.

Walt Rostow: It was much more specific.

Secretary Rusk: We had four points.

Secretary Clifford: I think we are moving in the direction of peace.

Ambassador Harriman: We were specific that shelling from across the DMZ -- massing of troops in the DMZ -- infiltration of the DMZ would not be permitted.

I agree with Secretary Clifford. If they violate the understanding when the talks start that is a different matter. There was plenty of talk.

We need a method of verification.

The President: Let's proceed on Clark's theory that we can't do anything until the talks start.

Ambassador Harriman: We must stress this even before the talks start.

The President: We must let them know we consider this an abuse.

Secretary Rusk: If we put in squad, then put in platoon -- I don't see why we put limitations on Abrams' ability to rescue his own men.

I agree we shouldn't occupy the DMZ.

Secretary Clifford: I would refrain from bringing about incidents in the DMZ.

We finally have Saigon in Paris. Why start this up?

General Wheeler: Only way to identify them.

The President: If you don't do this we may be caught with our pants down.

General Wheeler: That's right.

The President: Ask General Abrams to minimize incidents. If there are men involved and he needs superior force, you use it.

Secretary Clifford: When we talked about halting the bombing we were worried about an increase in danger to the men in I Corps.

We don't have any evidence of infiltration through the DMZ into South.

First Air Cavalry pulled out of the DMZ into the 3rd Corps.

Secretary Clifford: Sending men into the DMZ was a result of request from Paris. It is unwise to send our men in. We accomplish this through aerial reconnaissance.

The President: Do you agree with that, Bus?

General Wheeler: I do not, sir.

Secretary Rusk: We asked do they understand three facts of life -- DMZ, cities, GVN.

If the enemy gets away with the DMZ, what else do we let them get away with.

Ambassador Harriman: I don't want an argument, but I was surprised they pulled out enemy troops from the DMZ.

The President: I do not want to endanger our men. I want my military commander to do this probing if it's necessary.

If he needs bigger force to help them he has it.

The President: Let's do one thing at a time.

Secretary Clifford: In November of 67 there were 4399 sorties against Laos. In November of 68, 12,803 sorties against Laos.

Total: In November '67 28,000 -- In November '68 31,000 sorties.

B52's hit them in November '67 816 times, in November '68 1786 times.

#

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

108

Thursday, December 5, 1968
5:00 p. m.

~~SECRET~~

MR. PRESIDENT:

SUBJECT: 5:30 p. m. Meeting on the DMZ

1. Present Military Situation (Gen. Wheeler)
2. Vance-Lau Meeting of Yesterday (Sect. Rusk)
Vance made a strong pitch as instructed. Lau was unmovable.
3. Options (Sect. Rusk and Sect. Clifford)
 - do nothing more and await "widened talks."
 - give Abrams authority to expand size of patrols.
 - give Abrams authority to move forces into position at the Ben Hai River and clean out southern half of DMZ.
4. Recommendations (Sects. Rusk and Clifford)
5. Other

W. W. Rostow

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By D.A., NARA, Date 3-4-91

~~MEETING NOTES~~
~~COPYRIGHTED~~

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

5:30

107

Dec. 5, 1968

Meeting

- 1 Pres.
- 2 Rusk
- 3 Clifford
- 4 Harriman
- 5 Wheeler
- 6 Helms
- 7 Kostov

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLJ 87-38

By ju, NARA, Date 2-25-91

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

WHEELER: Things quiet in VN today.
May be repositioning in War Zone D
near Saigon.

Pres: Anything to report something big
may be planned.

Wheeler: Yes, i.e., there could be something
big. We're looking for them.

Rusk: I personally would not change
directives in DMZ now. We should
get Cy to press DMZ issue.

Wheeler: Abrams and I talked Tuesday.
He said he needs to continue
patrols in DMZ. He wants to
keep enemy north of ~~PMBL~~
PMBL.

This would give friendly forces better security.

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

P: Does he ask for more than he has now.

W: He wants more authority. He wants to use up to a battalion ~~thirteen~~ (900 to 1200 men.)

(General Wheeler showed maps showing DMZ area. He said enemy platoon and company-size units had been seen).

Abrams wants to drive enemy forces back north of OPMBL.

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

This does not have to be decided tonight.

North Vietnam has encroached on southern half of DMZ.

P: Is this dangerous?

W: Yes, sir.

P: Should we say to NVN that they should get people out of DMZ — give them warning.

W: You have done that already.

If this goes on for 3 weeks to a month I don't know.

what will happen

P. Clark?

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

CC: We had one solid
agreements —
to get GUN to
conference table.

P. What did we say at Paris?

HARRIMAN: we said "major" cities

CC: Averill + Cy sought
advance agreement
on DMZ + cities.

We said talks couldn't
go on if cities attacked
and DMZ abused.

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

Talks haven't started.

They have not ~~any~~ violated
any agreement. It has
been 35 days. Talks haven't
started.

I do not attach as much
importance to violations
in DMZ as JC5.

Only ~~one~~ on 3 separate
occasions did they actually
fire on us

To build up in DMZ wouldn't
be good at this time.

We first went in to find
prisoners.

To increase the level of the
focus sent in would heighten
the level. They'll move
them in.

This is bad time to increase
level.

First element in talks is to
take up a firm agreement
in DMZ.

Technically, we do not have
any agreement on DMZ
until talks start

W: If we have no agreement
on DMZ, there is no reason
we can't move in & clean these
people out. This is ~~the~~ SUN
territory.

Rusk: We want enemy to perform on the understanding we had at the time bombing halted.

Pres: Let's assume talks started & they still abuse DMZ, what would you do?

AC: I would like to see what they had in mind.
We were general — "abuse" the DMZ.

Rostow: It was much more specific

Rusk: we had 4 points.

CC: I think we are moving
in direction of peace.

Harriman: We were specific
that shelling from ~~an~~
across DMZ — massing
of troops in DMZ —
infiltration ~~that~~ DMZ
would not be permitted.

I agree with CC.

If they violate understanding
when talks start that
is different matter.

There was plenty of talk.

We need a method of verification.

P. Let's proceed ^{on Clark's theory that} we can't do anything until talks start.

Harriman: We must stress this even before talks start.

P.: We must let them know we consider this an abuse.

Rusk: If we put in squad, then put in platoon—I don't see why we put limitations on Abram's ability to rescue his own men.

Rusik: I agree we shouldn't occupy DMZ.

CC: I would refrain in bringing about incidents in DMZ.

We finally have Saigon in Paris.

Why start this up?

Wheeler: Only way to identify them

P: If you don't do this we may be caught with our pants down.

P Wheeler: That's right.

Pres: Ask Abrams to
minimize incidents.
12 men involved and
need superior force,
you use it.

CC: When we talked
about halt in bombing,
we were worried
about increase in
danger to men in I
Corps.

We Don't have Any
Evidence of infiltration
thru DMZ into
South.

1ST AIR CAU Pulled out
OF DMZ into 3RD Corps

CC: SENDING ME.
DMZ WAS A RESULT
OF REQUEST FROM
PARIS.

It is unwise to send
our men. We
Accomplish this
thru Aerie
Reconnaissance.

P: Do ~~you~~ you agree
with that, BUS?

W: I do not, SIR.

Rusk: We ASKED DO
they understand 3 facts
of life — DMZ, Cities,
GUN.

CC: SENDING men into
DMZ was a result
of request from
Paris.

It is unwise to send
our men in. We
accomplish this
thru Aerie
reconnaissance.

P: Do  you agree
with that, Bus?

W: I do not, sir.

Rusk: We asked do
they understand 3 facts
of life — DMZ, Cities,
GUN.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

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

IF enemy gets away with
DMZ, what else do we
let them get away with.

HARRIMAN: I don't want
equipment, but I was
surprised they pulled out
enemy troops from DMZ.

P: I do not want
to endanger our men.

I want my mil.
commander to do this
probing if it's
necessary.

IF he needs bigger
force to help them
he has it.

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

P: Let's do 1 thing at
a time.

CC: In Nov 67
4399 sorties
Against LAOS

In Nov 68
12,803 sorties
Against LAOS.

Total

In Nov 67
28,000 sorties

In Nov. 68
31,000 sorties

BSA's hit them
in Nov 67
816 Times

Nov 68

1786 Times

MEETING NOTES COPYRIGHTED

Publication Requires

Permission of Copyright

Holder: W. Thomas Johnson

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