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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~

April 5, 1965

SUMMARY OF NSC MEETING ON APRIL 2, 1965

Cabinet Room, 2:00 p. m.

(List of those attending, and the Agenda, are attached)

Secretary Rusk briefed the Council on the diplomatic and political aspects of the Vietnam situation. He noted that a group of 17 unaligned nations presented an appeal to the U. S. and other governments to undertake early negotiations without pre-conditions. He recommended that our reply be serious, restrained and positive. If the other side makes a shrill and unyielding response we will achieve a major propaganda advantage; if they react in a positive way, we will get some clues as to what they may have in mind with respect to possible negotiations.

Mr. Rusk noted that the House of Commons debate on Vietnam went well and that the "gas" issue was overshadowed by the evidence that the UK had used it frequently in the Middle East.

The Secretary concluded by pointing out that the Government in Saigon appears to be stable and effective and that Washington agencies and our Embassy in Saigon were developing some proposals for non-military actions in Vietnam.

Secretary Vance reported that VC actions during the past week declined somewhat -- except for the dramatic bombing of the Embassy. The Department of Defense is in process of following through on General Johnson's "21 points". In particular, early action is being taken in connection with additional helicopter companies, recce aircraft, more military support personnel, and more Marines.

Mr. McGeorge Bundy referred to the pending Presidential speech and discussed the proposed plan for a Southeast Asia Development Association. Mr. Gaud (AID) and Mr. Rusk both indicated their

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approval of the plan and their desire to move ahead in that direction.

Ambassador Taylor, who had spent the morning on Capitol Hill, indicated that he had no trouble in the House. The mood of some Senators was one of concern, but not disapproval. Senator Fulbright was worried about reports that the U. S. might send as many as 3 or 4 divisions to Vietnam. The Senator also pointed out that the Joint Resolution might not cover the dispatch of large ground units to Vietnam. Senator Church was interested in the nature of our "carrot" and its relationship to negotiations and bombing. In general, there was considerable interest in the "diplomatic track". Secretary Rusk confirmed, on the basis of his recent experience, that there appeared to be general support for our policy, albeit some worry as well.

The President indicated that he didn't think the sending of U. S. military forces to Vietnam would require a new Congressional Resolution. He felt that our sending troops to Europe in the early '50s was not a relevant analogy.

The President asked the group what Ambassador Taylor would be taking back to Vietnam.

Mr. Gaud stated that there were no new AID projects.

Mr. Rowan reported on the progress being made in staffing and training for the increased Psy War program.

General Wheeler stated that new logistical arrangements and support were being provided and that there would be an early deployment of two more Marine Battalions.

Ambassador Taylor stated that he had a helpful, useful week in Washington. He felt that he had everything he needed in terms of authority and resources. He indicated the line he would take with the Press: No dramatic change in strategy; we will try to do better what we are doing now.

Mr. Bundy suggested that until the Presidential speech (or next Presidential press statement) all present should be guided by the President's Press Conference of 1 April. Under no circumstances should there be any reference to the movement of U. S. forces or other future courses of action.

Mr. McCone expressed the view of CIA analysts that the Communist position was hardening rather than the reverse as a result of the air strikes. The U. S. should take this into account in future policy decisions, especially in connection with sending additional troops to South Vietnam.

The Press was then admitted to question both the President and Ambassador Taylor.

Following the Press Conference, Mr. Rusk, Mr. McCone and Mr. Vance expressed their appreciation of Mr. Vinson's services and contributions to peace and national security.

The President expressed his appreciation and pride to Ambassador Taylor for his leadership and performance in South Vietnam. He also commended Ambassador Johnson for the manner in which he handled the crisis in Ambassador Taylor's absence, as well as all the other U. S. personnel who serve in Vietnam.

Ambassador Taylor noted his own appreciation and admiration in the members of the U. S. team.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15.

Chester L. Cooper
Chester L. Cooper

Atchmts - a/s

ATTENDANCE LIST FOR THE 551st NSC MEETING
APRIL 2, 1965, AT 1 PM IN THE CABINET ROOM
OF THE WHITE HOUSE

The President of the United States, Presiding

Congressman Vinson, Guest

CIA

John A. McCone, Director

DEFENSE

Cyrus Vance, Deputy Secretary

John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary (ISA)

JCS

General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman

STATE

Dean Rusk, Secretary

William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs
Ambassador Maxwell Taylor

TREASURY

Henry H. Fowler, Secretary

AID

William Gaud, Deputy Administrator

USIA

Carl T. Rowan, Director

WHITE HOUSE

McGeorge Bundy

Bill Moyers

George Reedy

Jack Valenti

Chester Cooper