



TOP SECRET / SENSITIVE
FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

SUMMARY NOTES OF 552nd NSC MEETING
June 11, 1965; 12:15 P.M.

Vietnam -- Taylor Report

The President opened the meeting by discussing the Administration's authority to act in Vietnam which is now based on the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. The debate now going on in the Senate was referred to.

The President: We have a treaty obligation and we intend to keep our commitment. Some say we should get out of Vietnam while others say we should do more. We should seek ways of holding the situation so that we can carry out what we are committed to do.

General Taylor: It has been two months since my last personal report to you. General Quat is still in power. He managed to handle the South Vietnamese generals in such a way as to get General Khanh ousted and to end the Military Council. Political life is still determined by three groups -- the generals, the southerners, and the Catholics. Minor or even major changes are possible because the political impasse still continues. Elections last Sunday turned out well, with a large number of voters registering. There was no effective VC opposition.

As to the military situation, the recent tranquility was due to retraining and re-equipping. Ten days ago, the monsoon campaign began. Its intensity will be greater than in years past. The South Vietnamese manpower shortage in their military forces is serious. Their problem is to raise the total military force and substantially decrease desertions. The superiority of South Vietnamese military forces over the Viet Cong has dropped from 5.4 : 1 to 3.9 : 1. This lower ratio is the justification for the introduction of additional U. S. forces. There are about 50,000 U. S. forces which will soon go to 70,000.

The present VC campaign will be terminated without serious losses. With more U. S. combat troops and more U. S. air power, the hope is that we will be able to push Hanoi into negotiations.

General Wheeler: U. S. force levels are now: 12,000 ground combat men; 7,000 attached to air combat; and 30,000 supporting including advisers, communication forces and logistic support for the GVN.

General Taylor: We estimate the Viet Cong forces at 42-50,000.

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DECLASSIFIED
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By DCR
WARS, Date 8-18-82

Secretary McNamara: Our estimate of the future Viet Cong strength is 64,000 -- a huge increase over last year.

General Taylor: The increase in the Viet Cong forces came before our bombing. North Vietnam infiltration has been slowed down by our bombing.

General Wheeler: Our bombing has slowed down the entire North Vietnamese transportation system.

Secretary Rusk: We have listed 13 channels which have been used to probe enemy intentions. There are now few tracks open or operating. A Geneva type conference proposal is still alive. One thought would be to have the seventeen-nations issue invitations to a conference of governments for talks without pre-conditions. The other side will turn down such a proposal, awaiting the outcome of the monsoon campaign.

Today we see no possibility of talks. Although we are alert to all tracks, none appear promising. We should not be too timid about the present U.S. position on North Vietnam. We have more support than the Communists say we have. (Summary of the peace probes was handed by Secretary Rusk to several Council members, including the President.)

The President: We should get out the contents of this summary to the public by means of speeches and TV appearances. We should show what we have tried to do.

Ambassador Stevenson: The UN Secretary General should be asked to call for a cease-fire during negotiations. The Secretary General's proposal would probably be turned down by Hanoi. Even so, taking this initiative would prove that we have tried everything.

The President: This proposal should be explored with Secretary Rusk. When we tried a bombing pause, I didn't believe it would work, and it didn't. It did relieve the pressure of public opinion.

Secretary McNamara: General Westmoreland has sent us a proposal for the deployment of additional U.S. forces in Vietnam. He recommends that the 13 battalions--70,000 man level now authorized be increased to 23 battalions -- 123,000 men. The Chiefs are opposed to the deployment of U.S. forces in the highlands of South Vietnam and want the new forces to be used as a mobile reserve near the coast.

General Wheeler: The ARVN forces did not do as well as we expected. The Chiefs are impressed by General Westmoreland's presentation of the need for more U.S.

General Wheeler (continued)

forces. The ratio between friendly plus U.S. forces as opposed to Viet Cong forces is now unfavorable. The Defense Department's proposal calls for deploying fewer troops now than either General Westmoreland or the Joint Chiefs recommend. The Chiefs favor taking a decision now on sending the number of troops recommended by General Westmoreland. The McNamara plan would send fewer forces now and keep our option open to send additional forces later.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: There is no doubt of our legal position to increase force deployments in Vietnam. It is doubtful that we should go back to Congress to get additional authority every time we take a new action. The President already has, under the Constitution, all the power he needs to deploy additional forces abroad.

The President: We must delay and deter the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong as much as we can, and as simply as we can, without going all out. When we grant General Westmoreland's request, it means that we get in deeper and it is harder to get out. They think they are winning and we think they are. We must determine which course gives us the maximum protection at the least cost.

Bronley Smith

LIST OF ATTENDEES, 552nd NSC MEETING

June 11, 1965; 12:00 noon

The President

Secretary of State Rusk
Under Secretary Ball
Assistant Secretary Bundy
UN Ambassador Stevenson
Ambassador Maxwell Taylor

Secretary of Defense McNamara
Assistant Secretary McNaughton

Treasury Secretary Fowler

AID Administrator Bell

CIA Director Raborn

JCS Chairman Wheeler

OEP Director Ellington

USIA Director Rowan

Attorney General Katzenbach

McGeorge Bundy
George Reedy
Douglass Cater
Bromley Smith

Marvin Watson)
Horace Busby) were present for part of the time