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~~FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY~~

By WJ, NARA, Date 1-19-96

SUMMARY NOTES OF 586th NSC MEETING
May 22, 1968; 12:15 to 1:10 P.M.

Vietnam -- France -- Germany

The President: Before discussing current problems with West Germany, Under Secretary Katzenbach will comment on the current crisis in France.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: DeGaulle can probably defeat a vote of censure in the French Assembly. His TV speech on Friday was tough, but it did offer a compromise to his opponents. He may well emerge as the leader who overcame current disturbances. If he has to use force to end disorder, he will encounter very serious problems. It is in our interest to have the situation in France calm down.

The President: Asked Under Secretary Katzenbach to comment on the talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: We are still in the propaganda phase. We have made serious proposals but have received no answer from the North Vietnamese who even refuse to acknowledge there are any North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. The Hanoi representatives are prepared to stay in Paris and even read the telephone directory if necessary to keep nonproductive talks going for a long time.

The President: The North Vietnamese made a pretty good trade. They get partial suspension of the bombing for merely sitting and talking in Paris.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: The fate of the discussions in Paris turns on the military situation in Vietnam.

The President: Why is Secretary Clifford optimistic?

Secretary Clifford: We are making progress in the talks in Paris.

a. The Paris talks are a propaganda-plus for us. The North Vietnamese public posture is suffering. Ambassador Harriman is taking a reasonable and positive position, resulting in public opinion gains for us. The absurd position taken by the North Vietnamese concerning their refusal to acknowledge that their troops are in South Vietnam is hurting them. This will lose them public support.

b. It is important that we have forced the North Vietnamese to talk even though we are still bombing a part of North Vietnam. For three years Hanoi has said it would not do this. In addition, the interdiction bombing which we are now doing is causing them more damage than our previous bombing program.

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Secretary Clifford (cont'd.):

c. Hanoi has not issued an ultimatum stating that it would break up the Paris talks unless all of our bombing of North Vietnam stops.

It is doubtful that the Paris talks were a good deal for the North Vietnamese. Our interdiction efforts continue and we are in a position to try for a deal more advantageous to us.

The North Vietnamese came to Paris to negotiate seriously. They hope to erode support for the war in the United States by causing high U.S. casualties. They will fail in this. They will conclude that they cannot prevail militarily and will then seek to negotiate a political solution of the war.

The President: Asked for a study from CIA within the next two weeks which would be sent to the JCS for their comment, giving: a. present rate of North Vietnamese losses and the length of time they can support such losses; b. the quality of the men being infiltrated into South Vietnam and the training they have received; and c. the number of officers available to them, i. e., the accuracy of reports that the North Vietnamese have a shortage of officers.

USIA Director Marks: World press reaction to the Paris talks has been good. A study made by USIA of the world press supports this conclusion.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: Turning to the German problem, he first commented on recent Italian elections in which the Communist Party did better than the Socialists. The result will be difficult negotiations before a new Government can be formed.

Current East German activity, such as travel restrictions now being imposed, indicate that the East Germans are dealing from weakness. They are concerned about political developments in the Eastern European bloc.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Stoessel: The major German problems summarized in the State paper are: Berlin, relations with the USSR, German resistance to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the offset negotiations, and the political problem raised by neo-Nazis.

Secretary Clifford: Even if the Germans are prepared to accept the figure of \$500 million, we will still have a \$300 million deficit in offsetting our balance of payment costs.

Secretary Clifford (cont'd.):

We cannot continue to keep 300,000 men in Europe indefinitely. We have worked out the problem of the control of tactical nuclear weapons. We must reduce the cost of our presence in Europe.

Secretary Fowler: We must find a long-range solution to the problem of the cost of our European policy. In our negotiations with the Germans, we should go no lower than \$675 million. We should do all we can to hold them to the \$750 million foreign exchange offset.

Under Secretary Katzenbach: The State Department is working on a project for the next Administration which deals with mutual troop withdrawals and the reduction of the cost to the U. S. of our NATO defense policy.

Secretary Fowler: We must insist, in addition to a reasonable offer on offset, that our European allies cooperate with us in international monetary affairs.

The President: Turning again to Vietnam, asked for a joint State/Defense/CIA paper recommending what policy should be followed if there is no break in the Paris talks. The options are to hold the bombing of North Vietnam down to the 19th parallel as is now being done, move the bombing up to the 20th parallel, return to the bombing pattern we had before March 31, or return to the pre-March 31 bombing pattern, plus intensification.

There is no evidence that the North Vietnamese will negotiate seriously. They will do no more than remain in Paris to talk rather than negotiate until the next Administration takes over. We should be cautious and not say anything which might divide us from our South Vietnamese, Australian, Korean, and Philippine allies.

Ho Chi Minh's objectives are to divide us from our allies and to divide us at home.

We should be cautious in making statements about what we expect to come out of the Paris talks. UK Foreign Minister Stuart may get something during his coming visit to Moscow. We are not making much progress. However, the North Vietnamese cannot do a Panmunjom, i. e., talk endlessly without progress, because time will run out on them on January 20 when a new Administration comes in.

Brouley Smith