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<del>#2 report</del>	<del>summary notes of 593rd NSC meeting</del> <del>secret</del> open 10-23-84 NLS 82-189	<del>10/31/68</del>	<del>A</del>

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

SUMMARY NOTES OF 593rd NSC MEETING  
October 31, 1968; 6:40 to 6:50 P. M.

Vietnam - Bombing Halt

(Messrs Hardesty, Levinson and Middleton attended this meeting for the purpose of recording the President's presentation. Their full notes are filed with the President. These notes are merely confirmatory.)

The President: Reviewed in summary form the Vietnam negotiations since October 9 when the new phase opened in Paris.

- a. On October 14 he informed the three Presidential candidates that the DRV was prepared to sit down with representatives of the South Vietnamese government to negotiate.
- b. Based on the San Antonio formula, we accepted their agreement to talk with the South Vietnamese. They understand that the talks cannot continue unless the DMZ remains quiet and there are no attacks on urban areas in South Vietnam.
- c. We have talked to Soviet leaders.
- d. We will go ahead with a bombing suspension and test the good faith of the North Vietnamese.

The President: Said he was going on the air at 8:00 P. M. this evening and would shortly order the bombing of North Vietnam halted at 8:00 A. M. tomorrow.

- a. The first meeting with South Vietnam in attendance would be held on November 6, hopefully, or as soon thereafter as the South Vietnamese come to Paris.
- b. Secretary Rusk and Secretary Clifford recommended that he proceed with the bombing suspension as proposed.
- c. At an earlier meeting, the Chiefs of Staff had approved the proposed suspension. General McConnell, General Chapman, General Palmer, and later General Westmoreland and Admiral Moorer had all approved.

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- d. General Abrams had been called back quietly and had subscribed 100% to the proposed suspension.

The President: Said he believed it was worth going the last mile and that he was ready to take the chance involved in finding out whether a bombing suspension under the conditions proposed would get negotiations started to end the war.

- a. He wanted to hear now any differing opinions.
- b. He must leave the room promptly in order to await a call from Saigon from Ambassador Bunker who would know whether President Thieu would join in an announcement of the bombing suspension.

The President: Asked each person in turn whether he had any doubts as to the action proposed. Every person agreed with the proposed action.

- a. Two weeks ago we had a firm agreement with President Thieu to go along with us. Now, however, Thieu was hesitant and we are still in doubt as to whether South Vietnam would make a joint announcement.
- b. Hard fighting is ahead of us.
- c. He could not wave a wand to end the war in Vietnam.

NOTE: Following the conclusion of the NSC meeting, the President talked with several members as he was leaving the Cabinet Room. He explained to General Westmoreland that he had asked General Abrams to come to Washington to ask him face-to-face what had been reported by cable from Saigon, namely, from a military point of view, General Abrams fully supported the bombing suspension. To Air Force Secretary Brown, the President said he did not know why President Thieu had not gone along with us after first agreeing completely with the conditional bombing suspension. He said that members of the "China Lobby" may have gotten to someone in Saigon to suggest that if Saigon would hold out until after the elections, they might receive a better deal from a new Republican Administration.

*Brouley Smith*

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LIST OF ATTENDEES

593rd NSC Meeting, October 31, 1968

The President

Secretary of State Rusk  
Under Secretary Katzenbach

Secretary of Defense Clifford  
Deputy Secretary Nitze  
Secretary of the Army Resor  
Secretary of the Navy Ignatius  
Secretary of the Air Force Brown

Secretary of Treasury Fowler

CIA Director Helms

JCS Chairman Wheeler  
Army Chief of Staff Westmoreland  
General Palmer  
Admiral Moorer, CNO  
Acting Chief of Staff, Air Force, General Ryan  
Commandant, Marine Corps, General Chapman

OEP Director Daniel

USIA Director Marks

Walt Rostow  
George Christian  
Tom Johnson  
Bromley Smith  
Robert Hardesty  
Lawrence Levinson  
Harry Middleton

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