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| #2 memo | meeting with Lodge and Vietnam advisors 2 p. possible classified info. re-review 3/31/83 Meeting 11/24/63 C closing removed 9/16/83 sanitized 9-27-85 NLS 84-36 open 11-17-94 (dup. #4, Melane Memoranda) | 11/25/63 | A |

FILE LOCATION

Notes
Meeting ~~Notes~~ File, Box 1

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1964 Leadership Notes

"Put that on my desk - I'll need it every day."

LBJ:JRJ
8/27/67

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 25, 1967

Mr. President:

Here is a revision of the notes for the Leadership meeting. There are a few places even my friend could not read, but we have done the best we could. Attached is a copy of the original memorandum he wrote right after the meeting which summarizes the meeting. Most of it is covered in the transcription.

Mildred

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NOTES TAKEN AT LEADERSHIP MEETING ON AUGUST 4, 1964

PRESIDENT: I want to counsel with you. It is dangerous to have the leaders come here. The reporters see they are coming and they go back and report all over the Hill. Some of our boys are floating around in the water. The facts we would like to present to you are to be held in the closest confidence and are to be kept in this room until announced.

HALLECK: I did not tell a damn person.

PRESIDENT: I know no one did, but it is on both tickers anyway. We have to be very careful. Please don't discuss what goes on in this room. I have asked Secretary McNamara to brief you and it would be unjustifiable to refer to it at all.

MCNAMARA: The first indication we had of another attack on the destroyers, the Maddox and Turner Joy, was received at 7:30 A. M. today.

PRESIDENT: I asked the Secretary of State to give us a report on the political situation.

RUSK: For months and months we have been trying to get to them a signal, etc. This was a serious decision to attack our vessels on the high seas. It was planned to take place forty to sixty miles away from port on the high seas. We should not look on anything as accidental and they look for us to come back in a relevant fashion. At the source of the trouble we would run the great risk that they would misinterpret what the positions are in South East Asia. We must make it quite clear that we are resolved not to overlook the threat that is posed to our forces. We would propose to call for the Security Council and also report to our Allies.

PRESIDENT: The Security Council of the United Nations.

RUSK: We would make it clear as we can that we are not going to run out of South East Asia, but that we have no national ambitions nor either in a war to the north. They made the choice themselves. They will have some doubts there if it comes to the choice, but if we go back in a limited fashion, there would still be a showing that we want to limit the escalation. We have not had time to consult our Allies.

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PRESIDENT: I would like to ask Mr. McCone to give us his estimate of enemy action--what their responses would be.

RUSSELL: Mr. McCone, I notice you did not mention the submarine. Does anybody know what kind of anti-submarine warfare there is in that area?

MC CONE: We discussed that today. Our forces there have ample forces to take care of it. We expect to move close to the China Seas.

MCNAMARA: They can be there before any submarines can. The carriers can take care of themselves.

PRESIDENT: We do not seriously anticipate that.

RUSSELL: It would more likely be through the air.

RUSK; They can disguise their air power by pretending they are Viet Nameese.

RUSSELL: The submarine can come nearer disguising itself.

HICKENLOOPER. Do I understand the reasoning behind your analysis on one phase is that if we do not do something here then the Communist forces will be in a position to deal from strength in any proposed settlement? If we do react, it may put us in a position to deal from strength.

RUSSELL: That is part of the problem. It is possible we would be giving up the right to sail through the Gulf. If we did that, psychologically our prestige possibly would be seriously affected in Hanoi and other places. They might come to the wrong conclusion about what we are willing to do, which would be much more serious.

HICKENLOOPER; They attacked and we will deal from here on out and we are trying to counteract.

RUSK: We are trying to get across two points: (1) leave your neighbors alone and (2) If you don't, we will have to get busy.

HICKENLOOPER: May I ask if there is a comparison between Cuba and this? Cuba was a bold and dangerous operation as far as Washington is concerned. No one knows what would have

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happened had we not reacted. Is it possible this follows the same route? If we don't react, what kind of position does it put us in with the North Viet Nameese?

RUSK: What the Russians learned in Cuba could have an influence on the entire world.

SPEAKER: There is no question but what it is an act of war-- an attack on American vessels. Deliberate from our angle. In the lives of Nations you must take calculated risks. If we don't take some action, what would flow from it? Inaction may be more important than action.

BOLTON: Ammunition available to the ship was not powerful enough to do the job.

MCNAMARA: We have the most modern ammunition available anywhere.

SALTONSTALL: The Secretary said they are going to protest to the Security Council tomorrow.

RUSK; I will get the notes for you on this issue.

SALTONSTALL: If you ask for action and did not get it, wouldn't you be in a weak position?

RUSK: Our preliminary thought is that we are in a stronger position to make it if we do not ask the Security Council.

AIKEN: Get Mr. McCone to give us a report on the Chinese.

MCNAMARA: I do not think they will join in any physical reaction and I do not think that there will be any other reaction.

HALLECK: Could they think that they could withdraw from the Bay to ease tension?

PRESIDENT: Maybe you would want to consider that General Taylor follow the instrument. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have gone over it all. General Wheeler is here. I would like for him to report on the recommendations of General Taylor in Viet Nam." (General Wheeler then explained the recommendations.)

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RUSK: We do expect to be in contact with the co-chairmen of the 1954 settlement. We want to get the main hand in disengagement and try to keep it under control.

RUSSELL: Are you sure you have enough stuff to do this job? We don't want to do it half way.

MCNAMARA: We have two carriers and definitely enough power to do the job. We do propose to use bombers.

RUSSELL: You will have to make more than one strike. How many sorties do we have planned?

MCNAMARA: We have issued orders for only a single night's action. These orders are already in being.

RUSSELL: Is it daytime over there?

MCNAMARA: Our attacks will be in daylight hours.

RUSSELL: I hope you will keep going until they get the last one of them. We had a Formosan type resolution in the Middle East. It was taken before the positive action -- or subsequent to the positive action.

PRESIDENT: I think they were taken before this debate was critical of Korea. Felt they would come and see the seriousness of the situation. If I recall, _____ speech would have said he had supported it.

HALLECK: That is tantamount to a declaration of war.

SPEAKER: I think the fleet was pretty well in preparation. All plans were made.

HICKENLOOPER: It seems to me there should be no desire to have a confrontation. There should be no doubt as to whether the President should have the right to order the Armed Forces into action. Should not have to quarrel for weeks as to whether he had the authority or not. It is my own personal feeling that it is up to the President to prepare the kind and type of resolution he believes would be proper. It is up to Congress to say whether they will pass it or not. I have no doubt in my mind that concrete action would be taken.

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PRESIDENT: I had that feeling but felt I wanted the advice of each of you and wanted to consult with you. We felt we should move with the action recommended by the Joint Chiefs, but I wanted to get the Congressional concurrence. I think it would be very damaging to ask for it and not get it.

(Rusk then discussed Laos and Cambodia)

RUSSELL: Does that include Burma?

RUSK: We considered specifying certain countries but felt we could not do this without getting into problems.

SALTONSTALL: The only comment I have is this: How far does it go and where does it go from there.

PRESIDENT: We thought there were two decisions to make after we were attacked yesterday and today and nine torpedoes were shot at our destroyers 40 miles on the high seas. We had to answer that attack. There are four bases. There have been many discussions and recommendations by people in the country that we go into the northern area and not allow them to murder us from bases of safety. These boats came from these bases and have been shooting at American ships. I think I know what the reaction would be if we tucked our tails. I thought I should get the Security Council and get the Leadership and after the orders are executed I would plan to make a statement something like this. (The President then read the proposed statement.)

SALTONSTALL: Three times in that little statement you use the word 'limited.' Why not use the word 'determined' and let the limitations speak for themselves. If you will use the 'limited' maybe we won't go any further. Turned for the time being.

PRESIDENT: That is why we use it. We want them to know we are not going to take it lying down, but we are not going to destroy their cities. We hope we can prepare them for the course we will follow.

SALTONSTALL: I agree with what you are doing. If you put it in, someone will pick it up.

BOLTON: I would do it. Keep them a little bit in the dark on what we are doing.

RUSK: I think there is some advantage in not leaving it in but that we are using this as a pretext for a larger war. With the time factors involved I have not had a chance to discuss this with all the governments that will have to be consulted. We can cut down the emphasis.

HICKENLOOPER: I agree that the word limited should not be used three times. I wonder if the connotation is that we are limited at this time.

PRESIDENT: We say our response for the moment will be limited. I suppose if you look at the paragraph phrase it could include Burma, but we don't consider Burma would be involved.

HUMPHREY: Better get a little task force to put the fine points to it.

SALTONSTALL: Just ask the Secretary to show me that paragraph again. Doesn't ask any other Nations to join us at all. We would have to go alone. Other Nations could say--go to it.

RUSK: We can't tie ourselves to what they could do.

HALLECK: We thought you ought to consider the words and phrases.

PRESIDENT: We will probably make some changes in it. Maybe we will say 'desirable' action. I don't ask you to draft the message or any bill we want. We have taken the resolutions you have had in the past. I don't think any resolution is necessary, but I think it is a lot better to have it in the light of what we did in Korea.

SPEAKER: I think Congress has a responsibility and should show a united front to the world.

HALLECK: The President knows there is no partisanship among us. Are we getting fouled up here on something we could put off? There was never any hesitation when we had the deal about Cuba. I was the first to speak up and say--Mr. President, count me in.

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PRESIDENT: I would hope we could pretty well work out a resolution which is good with a minimum of doctoring. I wanted to see if you felt it was the wise thing to do.

HICKENLOOPER: I think the resolution is appropriate and proper, but I doubt you should mention the resolution in your remarks this evening.

PRESIDENT: I did not plan to mention it tonight.

FULLBRIGHT: Are they expected to urge these provocations?

RUSK: Maybe you have seen some of the broadcasts. They are highly inaccurate. They have not talked about what did happen but what did not happen. Actions of that sort are a low level minimum we have to take seriously.

FULLBRIGHT: What bases do you plan to destroy -- Haiphong?

MCNAMARA: No, we will not destroy any in the Haiphong area.

AIKEN: You spoke of airplanes. Do you conclude they are airplanes? Viet Nam has no combat aircraft. Communist China will move combat aircraft in shortly.

RUSSELL: There are some Chinese here--perhaps in the nearby area.

MCCONE: There are four bases in North Viet Nam.

RUSSELL: Aren't there some in _____ Island?

MANAMARA: Two of them.

MANSFIELD: When the call came I looked at the ticker and I suppose you want us to be frank. I don't know how much good it will do. I would point out as far as the Island of Kinon is concerned, it is fortified. There is a sharp question between this and Cuba, Russia, and the United States. In this instance, Russia is remote. China is not involved directly. May be getting all involved with a minor third rate state. Then what is to come in response, if not Korea for China? The Communists won't be faced down. A lot of lives to mow them down.

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PRESIDENT: Do you give me a formula?

MANSFIELD: Two, make them isolated acts of terror. Three, the United Nations, four, call on 54 countries to consider it a matter of urgency.

RUSK: Principal problem, however, is that China has not committed itself. It would be wonderful if she could get them to pull away. Cuba is quite different in a number of respects. If we concentrate in a limited fashion on the source of the attack, it gives the other side a chance to pull away.

MANSFIELD: In North Viet Nam there are jet airfields. In addition, have you considered actions that might happen in Formosa.

RUSSELL: What purpose do we have for drawing China into this? I am sure you will give some thought to it. If we have to fight them, we will whip them. But I would like to know you have come to some assumption.

RUSH: Some Chinese were planning to come in in any event. The general reaction to mounting pressures and to impress the seriousness of their whole attitude.

FULLBRIGHT: The point the Secretary has made is that the provocation is important. It could go on for several days. I think you ought to leave it in for the moment.

DIRKSEN: If I had it to do I would put our references to the word 'limited' in deep freeze. It connotes we would be like sitting ducks. We should make it clear we would meet every enemy threat. I have one other observation -- at 3 P.M., three of the most responsible reporters say we get word out of the Pentagon. They could tell me six particular shots were involved. They knew much more about it than I did. Maybe there is some whispering going on.

MCNAMARA: I heard the same story and have some idea of where it came from. I am sure you understand what we told you last night has to be kept because the North Viet Nameese could use the boats and their defenses could be alerted.

HALLECK: If we are going to have it, it has to be overwhelming.
(He indicated a desire to hear from the Speaker and the Majority Leader.)

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PRESIDENT: I have told you what I want from you.

FULLBRIGHT: I will support it.

MANSFIELD: It will go before the Foreign Affairs Committee.

SALTONSTALL: I hope you make the United Nations a little more effective.

RUSSELL: I share that hope.

HALLECK: I think it will pass overwhelmingly as far as I am concerned. I have made my position here clear in all cases.

AIKEN: By the time you send it up there won't be anything for us to do but support you.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 24, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR

MR. JENKINS

Your summary of the Leadership meeting of August 4 gives me everything I need, and it bears out the recollection of others present. I am sure that on this basis we can deal with Halleck sharply as and when we need to.

Many thanks.

McG. B.

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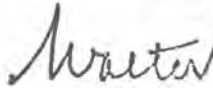
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 21, 1964

Mac:

If you want me to, I will dictate all of the notes. I only put excerpts of the people that you mentioned, but I cannot find anything that remotely bears out the charge that was made. This particular subject was gone in more fully at the Security Council than at the leadership meeting.



Walter

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~~TOP SECRET~~

SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP MEETING AUGUST 4, 1964

The meeting opened with the President complaining about reports on the tickers about the meeting being held and stating that "the facts we would like to present to you are to be held in the closest confidence and are to be kept in this room until announced." Halleck said: "I did not tell a damn person." The President said: "I know no one did, but it is on both tickers anyway. We have to be very careful. Please don't discuss what goes on in this room."

Then at the President's request, Secretary McNamara gave a briefing on what was planned. The President then asked Secretary Rusk to give a report on the political situation. The President then asked Mr. McCone to give his estimate of any enemy action that might be expected--what response there might be.

On being questioned by Senator Russell, General Wheeler discussed the type of anti-aircraft installations that were in the area. After some discussion with Fulbright, Aiken, and Hickenlooper Mansfield read a paper expressing general opposition. Then Hickenlooper and Rusk had a discussion comparing this situation with the Cuban situation. Following some conversation with Secretary Rusk by Mrs. Bolton and Senator Saltonstall, Senator Aiken asked for Mr. McCone to give information on the provocation, if any. McCone explained the activity in the area prior to the attack. The President then asked General Wheeler to report on the recommendations of General Taylor in Viet Nam. Senator Russell then asked if we were sure "that we had enough stuff to do this job" and commented he did not want to do it half way. McNamara reiterated the extent of the equipment in the area.

Senator Russell then asked how many sorties were planned and Secretary McNamara then said: "We have issued orders for only a single night's action. These orders are already in being. Russell asked if the attack would be in daylight over there and McNamara replied: "our attacks will be in daylight hours."

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority SEC 1-7-78 NSC 3-1-79 OSD 3-77

By DCH, NAM Date 7-22-81

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Senator Russell expressed the hope that they would keep going until they get the last one of the bases. Saltonstall expressed agreement that we had no choice after we had been attacked twice. The President then said as follows:

"We thought there were two decisions to take. After we were attacked yesterday and today and nine torpedoes were shot at our destroyers forty miles on the high seas we had to answer that attack. There are four bases where they use these boats. There is a relatively small civilian population around them. We can tuck our tails and run, but if we do these countries will feel all they have to do to scare us is to shoot the American flag. The question is how do we retaliate. We have worked out this plan on these four bases. There have been many discussions and recommendations by people in the country that we go into this the northern area and not allow them to murder us from bases of safety. These boats came from these bases and have been shooting the American ships.

"I think I know what the reaction would be if we tucked our tails. I thought I should get the Security Council and get the leadership and after the orders are executed I would plan to make a statement something like this." The President then read the proposed statement. Senator Saltonstall pointed out that the word "limited" was used three times in the statement and suggested that the word "determined" be substituted for it and let the limitations speak for themselves. The President said: "We want them to know we are not going to take it lying down but we are not going to destroy their cities and we hope we can prepare them for the course we want followed."

Saltonstall said: "I agree with what you are doing." Mrs. Bolton said: "I would do it. Keep them a little bit in the dark on what we will do." Secretary Rusk said: "I think there is some advantage in not leaving in doubt that we are not doing this as a pretext for a larger war. I think the time factors involved are important. We have not had a chance to discuss this with all the Governments that will have to be consulted."

Senator Hickenlooper said: "I agree that the word 'limited' should not be used three times." The President then suggested a change in the word saying "our responses for the moment will be limited." Senator Dirksen said: "If I had it to do I would put our references to the word 'limited' in deep freeze. It connotes we would be like sitting ducks. We should make it clear we would meet every enemy threat."

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Senator Dirksen then pointed out that the newspaper people knew about the meeting just as soon or before he did. Secretary McNamara pointed out the importance of keeping security because the northern Viet Nameese could use the boats and their 'defenses' could be alerted."

Congressman Halleck then said: "If we are going to have it, it has to be overwhelming." He indicated a desire to hear from the Speaker and the Majority Leader. There was then a discussion of Korea where there was no resolution and Formosa and the Middle East where there were resolutions. Senator Hickenlooper said "It seems to me there should be no doubt as to whether the President should have the right to order the armed forces into action. It is my own personal feeling that it is up to the President to prepare the kind and type of resolution he believes would be proper. It is up to Congress to see whether they will pass it or not. I have no doubt in my mind that concrete action would be taken."

The President said: "I had that feeling but felt I wanted the advice of each of you and wanted to consult with you. We felt we should move with the action recommended by the Joint Chiefs, but I wanted to get the Congressional concurrence. I think it would be very damaging to ask for it and not get it."

The President then said: "We will probably make some changes in it. I don't ask you to draft the message. We have taken the resolutions you have had in the past. I don't think any resolution is necessary, but I think it is a lot better to have it in the light of what we did in Korea."

The Speaker said: "I think Congress has a responsibility and should show a united front to the world." Halleck said: "The President knows there is no partisanship among us. Are we getting fouled up here on something we could put off? There was never any hesitation when we had the deal about Cuba. I was the first to speak up and say Mr. President count me in."

The President said: "We can pretty well work out a good resolution with a minimum of doctrine. I wanted to see if you felt it was ^{the} wise thing to do."

Hickenlooper said: "I think the resolution is appropriate and proper, but I doubt you should mention the resolution in your remarks this evening."

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The President said: "I did not plan to mention it."
The President then said "I have told you what I want from you."
He then went around the table to each person and made
an expression of support one way or another.

Saltonstall and Russell expressed the hope that
the President could make the United Nations more effective
in fields like this. Halleck said: "I think it will be passed
overwhelmingly. As far as I am concerned I have made my
position clear here and in all other cases. Aiken said: "By
the time you send it up there won't be anything for us to do
but support you."

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

NOTES TAKEN AT LEADERSHIP MEETING ON AUGUST 4, 1964
(McNamara's and Rusk's statements not included)

The meeting opened with the President stressing the secrecy of the meeting and pointing out that the tickers already had about the meeting. The President said: "The facts we would like to present to you are to be held in the closest confidence and are to be kept in this room until announced."

Halleck: "I did not tell a damn person."

President: "I know no one did, but it is on both tickers anyway. We have to be very careful. Please don't discuss what goes on in this room."

At the President's request, Secretary McNamara gave a briefing on what was planned. The President then asked Secretary Rusk to give a report on the political situation. The President then asked Mr. McCone to give his estimate of any enemy action that might be expected--what response there might be.

On being questioned by Senator Russell, General Wheeler discussed the type of anti-aircraft installations that were in the area. After some discussion with Fulbright, Aiken, and Hickenlooper, Mansfield read a paper expressing general opposition. Then Hickenlooper and Rusk had a discussion comparing this situation with the Cuban situation. Following some conversation with Secretary Rusk by Mrs. Bolton and Senator Saltonstall, Senator Aiken asked for Mr. McCone to give information on the provocation, if any. Mr. McCone explained the activity in the area prior to the attack. The President then asked General Wheeler to report on the recommendations of General Taylor in Viet Nam.

Senator Russell: "Are we sure that we have enough stuff to do this job. We do not want to do it half way."

Secretary McNamara: "We have issued orders for only a single night's action. These orders are already in being."

Senator Russell: "I notice you do not mention the submarine. Does anybody know what kind of anti-sub warfare is in that area?"

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The submarine can come nearer disguising itself."

Hickenlooper: "Do I understand the reasoning behind your analysis on one phase is that if we do not do something here then the Communist forces will be in a position to deal from strength in any proposed settlement. If we do react, it may put us in a position to deal from strength."

Russell: "That is part of the problem. I notice in the papers that they came to the wrong conclusion about what we are willing to do. Much more serious."

Fulbright: "Are they expected to enlarge these projections?"

Rusk: "Maybe you have seen some of the broadcasts. They are highly inaccurate. Have not talked about what did happen but about what did not happen."

Fulbright: "What bases do you propose to destroy? Haifong?"

McNamara: "No, we are not destroying anything in the Haifong area."

Aiken: "You spoke of airplanes. Do we conclude they are airplanes. Viet Nam has no combat aircraft. Communist China will move combat aircraft in."

Russell: "There are some Chinese Communists perhaps in a nearby area."

McNamara: "There are four bases in North Vietnam."

Russell: "How many sorties are planned. Will the attack be in daylight over there?"

McNamara: "Our attacks will be in daylight hours."

Senator Russell expressed the hope that they would keep going until they get the last one of the bases.

Saltonstall: "Just asked the Secretary to show me that paragraph again. Doesn't ask any other nations to join with us at all. We would have to go alone. Other nations could say - go to it."

Saltonstall expressed agreement that we had no choice after we had been attacked twice.

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President: "We thought there were two decisions to take. After we were attacked yesterday and today and nine torpedoes were shot at our destroyers forty miles on the high seas we had to answer the attack. There are four bases where they use these boats. There is a relatively small civilian population around them. We can tuck our tails and run, but if we do these countries will feel all they have to do to scare us is to shoot the American flag. The question is how do we retaliate. We have worked out this plan on these four bases. There have been many discussions and recommendations by people in the country that we go into this the northern area and not allow them to murder us from bases of safety. These boats came from these bases and have been shooting the American ships.

"I think I know what the reaction would be if we tucked our tails. I thought I should get the Security Council and get the leadership and after the orders are executed I would plan to make a statement something like this." The President then read the proposed statement.

Saltonstall: "Three times in that little statement you used the word 'limited.' Why not use the word 'determined' and let the limitation speak for itself.

President: "We want them to know we are not going to take it lying down but we are not going to destroy their cities and we hope we can prepare them for the course we will follow."

Saltonstall: "I agree with what you are doing. If you put it in, someone will pick it up."

Mrs. Bolton: "I would do it. Keep them a little bit in the dark on what we will do."

Secretary Rusk: "I think there is some advantage in not leaving in doubt that we are not doing this as a pretext for a larger war. I think the time factors involved are important. We have not had a chance to discuss this with all the Governments that will have to be consulted."

Hickenlooper: "I agree that the word 'limited' should not be used three times."

The President then suggested a change in the word saying "our responses for the moment will be limited."

Fulbright: "How the Secretary has made the projection is important. Could go on for several days. Think you should leave it in for the moment."

Dirksen: "If I had it to do I would put our references to the word 'limited' in deep freeze. It connotes we would be like sitting ducks. We should make it clear we would meet every enemy threat."

Senator Dirksen then pointed out that the newspaper people knew about the meeting just as soon or before he did. Secretary McNamara pointed out the importance of keeping security because the northern Viet Nameese could use the boats and their 'defenses' could be alerted.

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 24, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR

MR. JENKINS

Your summary of the Leadership meeting of August 4 gives me everything I need, and it bears out the recollection of others present. I am sure that on this basis, we can deal with Halleck sharply as and when we need to.

Many thanks.

McG. B.

SERVICE SET

5
5
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 21, 1964

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If you want me to, I will dictate all of the notes. I only put excerpts of the people that you mentioned, but I cannot find anything that remotely bears out the charge that was made. This particular subject was gone in more fully at the Security Council than at the leadership meeting.

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SERVICE SET

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56

SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP MEETING AUGUST 4, 1964

The meeting opened with the President complaining about reports on the tickers about the meeting being held and stating that "the facts we would like to present to you are to be held in the closest confidence and are to be kept in this room until announced." Halleck said: "I did not tell a damn person." The President said: "I know no one did, but it is on both tickers anyway. We have to be very careful. Please don't discuss what goes on in this room."

Then at the President's request, Secretary McNamara gave a briefing on what was planned. The President then asked Secretary Rusk to give a report on the political situation. The President then asked Mr. McCone to give his estimate of any enemy action that might be expected--what response there might be.

On being questioned by Senator Russell, General Wheeler discussed the type of anti-aircraft installations that were in the area. After some discussion with Fulbright, Aiken, and Hickenlooper Mansfield read a paper expressing general opposition. Then Hickenlooper and Rusk had a discussion comparing this situation with the Cuban situation. Following some conversation with Secretary Rusk by Mrs. Bolton and Senator Saltonstall, Senator Aiken asked for Mr. McCone to give information on the provocation, if any. McCone explained the activity in the area prior to the attack. The President then asked General Wheeler to report on the recommendations of General Taylor in Viet Nam. Senator Russell then asked if we were sure "that we had enough stuff to do this job" and commented he did not want to do it half way. McNamara reiterated the extent of the equipment in the area.

Senator Russell then asked how many sorties were planned and Secretary McNamara then said: "We have issued orders for only a single night's action. These orders are already in being. Russell asked if the attack would be in daylight over there and McNamara replied: "our attacks will be in daylight hours."

DECLASSIFIED
Authority State 7-7-78; NSC 3-1-79; OSD 2-3-77
By DCH; NARS, Date 7-23-81

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SERVICE SET

TOP SECRET

Senator Russell expressed the hope that they would keep going until they get the last one of the bases. Saltonstall expressed agreement that we had no choice after we had been attacked twice. The President then said as follows:

"We thought there were two decisions to take. After we were attacked yesterday and today and nine torpedoes were shot at our destroyers forty miles on the high seas we had to answer that attack. There are four bases where they use these boats. There is a relatively small civilian population around them. We can tuck our tails and run, but if we do these countries will feel all they have to do to scare us is to shoot the American flag. The question is how do we retaliate. We have worked out this plan on these four bases. There have been many discussions and recommendations by people in the country that we go into this the northern area and not allow them to murder us from bases of safety. These boats came from these bases and have been shooting the American ships.

"I think I know what the reaction would be if we tucked our tails. I thought I should get the Security Council and get the leadership and after the orders are executed I would plan to make a statement something like this." The President then read the proposed statement. Senator Saltonstall pointed out that the word "limited" was used three times in the statement and suggested that the word "determined" be substituted for it and let the limitations speak for themselves. The President said: "We want them to know we are not going to take it lying down but we are not going to destroy their cities and we hope we can prepare them for the course we want follow." "

Saltonstall said: "I agree with what you are doing." Mrs. Bolton said: "I would do it. Keep them a little bit in the dark on what we will do." Secretary Rusk said: "I think there is some advantage in not leaving in doubt that we are not doing this as a pretext for a larger war. I think the time factors involved are important. We have not had a chance to discuss this with all the Governments that will have to be consulted."

Senator Hickenlooper said: "I agree that the word 'limited' should not be used three times." The President then suggested a change in the word saying "our responses for the moment will be limited." Senator Dirksen said: "If I had it to do I would put our references to the word 'limited' in deep freeze. It connotes we would be like sitting ducks. We should make it clear we would meet every enemy threat."

SERVICE SET

add
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Senator Dirksen then pointed out that the newspaper people knew about the meeting just as soon or before he did. Secretary McNamara pointed out the importance of keeping security because the northern Viet Nameese could use the boats and their 'defenses' could be alerted."

Congressman Halleck then said: "If we are going to have it, it has to be overwhelming." He indicated a desire to hear from the Speaker and the Majority Leader. There was then a discussion of Korea where there was no resolution and Formosa and the Middle East where there were resolutions. Senator Hickenlooper said "It seems to me there should be no doubt as to whether the President should have the right to order the armed forces into action. It is my own personal feeling that it is up to the President to prepare the kind and type of resolution he believes would be proper. It is up to Congress to see whether they will pass it or not. I have no doubt in my mind that concrete action would be taken."

The President said: "I had that feeling but felt I wanted the advice of each of you and wanted to consult with you. We felt we should move with the action recommended by the Joint Chiefs, but I wanted to get the Congressional concurrence. I think it would be very damaging to ask for it and not get it."

The President then said: "We will probably make some changes in it. I don't ask you to draft the message. We have taken the resolutions you have had in the past. I don't think any resolution is necessary, but I think it is a lot better to have it in the light of what we did in Korea."

The Speaker said: "I think Congress has a responsibility and should show a united front to the world." Halleck said: "The President knows there is no partisanship among us. Are we getting fouled up here on something we could put off? There was never any hesitation when we had the deal about Cuba. I was the first to speak up and say Mr. President count me in."

The President said: "We can pretty well work out a good resolution with a minimum of doctrine. I wanted to see if you felt it was ^{the} wise thing to do."

Hickenlooper said: "I think the resolution is appropriate and proper, but I doubt you should mention the resolution in your remarks this evening."

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The President said: "I did not plan to mention it."
 The President then said "I have told you what I want from you."
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Expression of Support of resolution
Fulbright = I will support it.

Saltonstall: I hope you make the UN a
little more effective.

Russell: I share that hope.

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NOTES TAKEN AT LEADERSHIP MEETING ON AUGUST 4, 1964
(McNamara's and Rusk's statements not included)

The meeting opened with the President stressing the secrecy of the meeting and pointing out that the tickers already had about the meeting. The President said: "The facts we would like to present to you are to be held in the closest confidence and are to be kept in this room until announced."

Halleck: "I did not tell a damn person."

President: "I know no one did, but it is on both tickers anyway. We have to be very careful. Please don't discuss what goes on in this room."

At the President's request, Secretary McNamara gave a briefing on what was planned. The President then asked Secretary Rusk to give a report on the political situation. The President then asked Mr. McCone to give his estimate of any enemy action that might be expected--what response there might be.

On being questioned by Senator Russell, General Wheeler discussed the type of anti-aircraft installations that were in the area. After some discussion with Fulbright, Aiken, and Hickenlooper, Mansfield read a paper expressing general opposition. Then Hickenlooper and Rusk had a discussion comparing this situation with the Cuban situation. Following some conversation with Secretary Rusk by Mrs. Bolton and Senator Saltonstall, Senator Aiken asked for Mr. McCone to give information on the provocation, if any. Mr. McCone explained the activity in the area prior to the attack. The President then asked General Wheeler to report on the recommendations of General Taylor in Viet Nam.

Senator Russell: "Are we sure that we have enough stuff to do this job. We do not want to do it half way."

Secretary McNamara: "We have issued orders for only a single night's action. These orders are already in being."

Senator Russell: "I notice you do not mention the submarine. Does anybody know what kind of anti-sub warfare is in that area?"

The submarine can come nearer disguising itself."

Hickenlooper: "Do I understand the reasoning behind your analysis on one phase is that if we do not do something here then the Communist forces will be in a position to deal from strength in any proposed settlement. If we do react, it may put us in a position to deal from strength."

Russell: "That is part of the problem. I notice in the papers that they came to the wrong conclusion about what we are willing to do. Much more serious."

Fulbright: "Are they expected to enlarge these projections?"

Rusk: "Maybe you have seen some of the broadcasts. They are highly inaccurate. Have not talked about what did happen but about what did not happen."

Fulbright: "What bases do you propose to destroy? Haifong?"

McNamara: "No, we are not destroying anything in the Haifong area."

Aiken: "You spoke of airplanes. Do we conclude they are airplanes. Viet Nam has no combat aircraft. Communist China will move combat aircraft in."

Russell: "There are some Chinese Communists perhaps in a nearby area."

McNamara: "There are four bases in North Vietnam."

Russell: "How many sorties are planned. Will the attack be in daylight over there?"

McNamara: "Our attacks will be in daylight hours."

Senator Russell expressed the hope that they would keep going until they get the last one of the bases.

Saltonstall: "Just asked the Secretary to show me that paragraph again. Doesn't ask any other nations to join with us at all. We would have to go alone. Other nations could say - go to it."

Saltonstall expressed agreement that we had no choice after we had been attacked twice.

President: "We thought there were two decisions to take. After we were attacked yesterday and today and nine torpedoes were shot at our destroyers forty miles on the high seas we had to answer the attack. There are four bases where they use these boats. There is a relatively small civilian population around them. We can tuck our tails and run, but if we do these countries will feel all they have to do to scare us is to shoot the American flag. The question is how do we retaliate. We have worked out this plan on these four bases. There have been many discussions and recommendations by people in the country that we go into this the northern area and not allow them to murder us from bases of safety. These boats came from these bases and have been shooting the American ships.

"I think I know what the reaction would be if we tucked our tails. I thought I should get the Security Council and get the leadership and after the orders are executed I would plan to make a statement something like this." The President then read the proposed statement.

Saltonstall: "Three times in that little statement you used the word 'limited.' Why not use the word 'determined' and let the limitation speak for itself.

President: "We want them to know we are not going to take it lying down but we are not going to destroy their cities and we hope we can prepare them for the course we will follow."

Saltonstall: "I agree with what you are doing. If you put it in, someone will pick it up."

Mrs. Bolton: "I would do it. Keep them a little bit in the dark on what we will do."

Secretary Rusk: "I think there is some advantage in not leaving in doubt that we are not doing this as a pretext for a larger war. I think the time factors involved are important. We have not had a chance to discuss this with all the Governments that will have to be consulted."

Hickenlooper: "I agree that the word 'limited' should not be used three times."

The President then suggested a change in the word saying "our responses for the moment will be limited."

Fulbright: "How the Secretary has made the projection is important. Could go on for several days. Think you should leave it in for the moment."

Dirksen: "If I had it to do I would put our references to the word 'limited' in deep freeze. It connotes we would be like sitting ducks. We should make it clear we would meet every enemy threat."

Senator Dirksen then pointed out that the newspaper people knew about the meeting just as soon or before he did. Secretary McNamara pointed out the importance of keeping security because the northern Viet Nameese could use the boats and their 'defenses' could be alerted.

Halleck: "If we are going to have it, it has to be overwhelming." He indicated a desire to hear from the Speaker and the Majority Leader. There was then a discussion of Korea where there was no resolution and Formosa and the Middle East where there were resolutions.

Hickenlooper: "It seems to me there should be no doubt as to whether the President should have the right to order the armed forces into action. It is my own personal feeling that it is up to the President to prepare the kind and type of resolution he believes would be proper. It is up to Congress to see whether they will pass it or not. I have no doubt in my mind that concrete action would be taken."

President: "I had that feeling but felt I wanted the advice of each of you and wanted to consult with you. We felt we should move with the action recommended by the Joint Chiefs, but I wanted to get the Congressional concurrence. I think it would be very damaging to ask for it and not get it."

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President: "We can pretty well work out a good resolution with a minimum of doctoring. I wanted to see if you felt it was the wise thing to do."

Hickenlooper: "I think the resolution is appropriate and proper, but I doubt you should mention the resolution in your remarks this evening."

President: "I did not plan to mention it. I have told you what I want from you."

The President then went around the table to each person and made an expression of support one way or another.

Saltonstall: "I hope you can make the UN a little more effective."

Russell: "I share that hope."

Halleck: "I think it will be passed overwhelmingly. As far as I am concerned, I have made my position clear here and in all cases."

Fulbright: "I will support it."

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
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August 24, 1964

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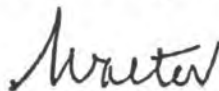
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DECLASSIFIED

Authority SEC 7-7-78, NSC 3-1-79, OSD 2-3-77
By DCH, NARS, Date 7-27-81

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add *7:45 bright* "Now the Secretary has made the projection is important, could go on for several" *SERVICE SET*

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ADVISED