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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#119 notes	Sanitized 8-15-90 NLJ 90-84 Meeting at 10:40 a.m. 10 pages secret SANITIZED OPEN 3/2/98 FRUS 64-68 VOL III ITEM 71	7/21/65	A
#119b notes	Meeting at 3:00 p.m. 3 pages possible classified information open 9-13-85 NLJ 85-256	7/22/65	A
#119d notes	Meeting at 12:30 p.m. first page declassified, next 12 pages classified [see note below]	7/26/65	A
#119e notes	NSC Meeting, at 5:45 possible classified information sanitized 10-28-85 NLJ 85-257 3 pages "SECRET" 3/2/98 OPEN STATE DEPT GUIDELINES	7/27/65	A
NOTE: #119d first page declassified; next 12 pages will be re-numbered #119d-1			
#119d-1 notes	pages 26 thru 37 classified info 12 p sanitized 10-28-85 NLJ 85-257 Sanitized 6/13/90 NLJ 90-196 More info released Sanitized 2-21-01 NLJ/RAC 00-61 FRUS, Vol. III	7/26/65	A

FILE LOCATION

[July 21-27, 1975 Meetings on Vietnam]

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6-28-85

Cabinet Room, Wednesday, July 21, 1965

Meeting began at 10:40 am

Subject: Viet Nam

Present: McNamara Gen. Wheeler Helms McNaughton
Rusk Geo. Ball Raborn Moyers
Vance Bill Bundy Lodge Valenti
Mac Bundy Len Unger Rowan

(McNamara passed TOP SECRET paper to all in room to read. The paper was returned to McNamara).

McNamara made it clear that the paper was his own view of the situation - his specific recommendations had been concurred in by Lodge, Sharp, Taylor, Johnson, Westmoreland but the rest of the paper had not -- he did not seek or receive their concurrence

LODGE: If I thought a diplomatic move would be successful, I would be for it. Now, it would harden the enemy. This is not the time to do it. Clearly, an objective is good for the world public, but not necessary for governments. They understand it.

MCNAMARA: Seems to me our call-up and increase in troops is evidence that we are not taking over North Vietnam.

M. BUNDY: Our public utterances will make it clear that we are not trying to take over North Vietnam.

MCNAMARA: Our public actions must do this. We must show that we are not in with Ky's objective to invade NVN. We are building such a force that NVN might think that is what we are trying to do.

LODGE: Remember this "on to NVN" movement is part of a propaganda move and nothing more.

M. BUNDY: Isn't it true that most of the diplomatic moves come from other nations rather than the U.S. (in rebuttal to Lodge's hard position)

MCNAMARA: This is exactly what I am talking about.

LODGE: The President has done a remarkable job of forming public opinion so far. Very skillful.

M. BUNDY: Are there divergences between GVN and US in troop use?

MCNAMARA: GVN wants us to use troops in the Highlands. This is unacceptable to us. While NVN originally recommended this, they are now in agreement with us.

RUSK: What is the capability of NVN to mobilize their own forces?

MCNAMARA: They are trying to increase by 10,000 per month. Country team is optimistic. I am not. Desertion rate is great. They say it is lessening, but I do not agree. We did not find any thread of discontent.

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Priority FRUS 64-68, vol. III, item 71

NARA, Date 3-2-98

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(con't MCNAMARA)

among our troops. U.S. morale is of the highest order. Proud of their dedication and devotion. It reflects the belief they are doing something worthwhile.

WHEELER: Agree. Advisors are pleased with Vietnamese. They speak very highly of Vietnamese common soldier. Officer corps very different. Some officers are not of highest quality. Not total however. Weakness in VN's forces are lack of adequate officer corps-- in their training and attitude -- but they are getting better.

RUSK: Any summary of enemy troubles?

MCNAMARA: No, nothing more than we already know. They are suffering heavy losses. They are well supplied with ammunition. I suspect much of inflow of supplies is water-borne. Only part of our action that is unsatisfactory is our patrol of the seashore. But even if we did have tight control, it would make little difference in the next six to nine months.

RUSK: What is the timing on how we should proceed?

MCNAMARA: There ought to be a statement to the American people no later than a week.

BUNDY: It is quite possible the message to Congress will be a message to the public.

RUSK: We ought to get civilians in the Congressional testimony to abuse the feeling that the military is making the decisions.

WHEELER: Perhaps Rusk should follow up the President's speech with statement of total unanimity.

BALL: It is one thing to ready the country for this decision and another to face the realities of the decision. We can't allow the country to wake up one morning and find heavy casualties. We need to be damn serious with the American public.

MCNAMARA: We discussed the command arrangements they are to be left as they are -- parallel commands.

The President entered the meeting at 11:30 am

MCNAMARA: To support an additional 200,000 troops in VN by first of the year the reserves in the US should be reconstituted by like amount. I recommend calling up 235,000 a year from now, replace the reserves with regulars.

In mid-1966 we would have approximately 600,000 additional men.

PRESIDENT: What has happened in recent past that requires this decision on my part? What are the alternatives? Also, I want more discussions on what we expect to flow from this decision. Discuss in detail.

Have we wrung every single soldier out of ^{every} ~~enemy~~ country we can? Who else can help? Are we the sole defenders of freedom in the world? Have we done all we can in this direction? The reasons for the call up? The results we can expect? What are the alternatives? We must make no snap judgments. We must consider carefully all our options.

We know we can tell SVN "we're coming home." Is that the option we should take? What flows from that.

The negotiations, the pause, all the other approaches-- have all been explored. It makes us look weak -- with cup in hand. We have tried.

Let's look at all our options so that every man at this table understands fully the total picture.

MCNAMARA: This is our position a year ago (shows President a map of the country with legends). Estimated by country team that VC controls 25% -- SVN 50%-- rest in white area, VC in red areas.

VC tactics are terror, and sniping.

PRESIDENT: Looks dangerous to put US forces in those red areas.

MCNAMARA: You're right. We're placing our people with their backs to the sea--for protection. Our mission would be to seek out the VC in large scale units.

WHEELER: Big problem in Vietnam is good combat intelligence. The VC is a creature of habit. By continuing to probe we think we can make headway.

BALL: Isn't it possible that the VC will do what they did against the French -- stay away from confrontation and not accommodate us?

WHEELER: Yes, but by constantly harrassing them, they will have to fight somewhere.

MCNAMARA: If VC doesn't fight in large units, it will give ARVN a chance to re-secure hostile areas.

We don't know what VC tactics will be when VC is confronted by 175,000 Americans.

RABORN: We agree -- by 1965, we expect NVN will increase their forces. They will attempt to gain a substantial victory before our build-up is complete.

PRESIDENT: Is anyone of the opinion we should not do what the memo says -- If so, I'd like to hear from them.

BALL: I can foresee a perilous voyage--very dangerous--great apprehensions that we can win under these conditions. But, let me be clear, if the decision is to go ahead, I'm committed.

PRESIDENT: But is there another course in the national interest that is better than the McNamara course? We know it's dangerous and perilous. But can it be avoided?

BALL: There is no course that will allow us to cut our losses. If we get bogged down, our cost might be substantially greater. The pressures to create a larger war would be irresistible. Qualifications I have are not due to the fact that I think we are in a bad moral position.

PRESIDENT: What other road can I go?

BALL: Take what precautions we can -- take losses -- let their government fall apart -- negotiate--probable take over by Communists. This is disagreeable, I know.

PRESIDENT: Can we make a case for this -- discuss it fully?

BALL: We have discussed it. I have had my day in court.

PRESIDENT: I don't think we have made a full commitment. You have pointed out the danger, but you haven't proposed an alternative course. We haven't always been right. We have no mortgage on victory.

(con't President)

I feel we have very little alternative to what we are doing.

(should) I want another meeting before we take this action. We look at all other courses carefully. Right now I feel it would be more dangerous for us to lose this now, than endanger a greater number of troops.

RUSK: What we have done since 1954-61 has not been good enough. We should have probably committed ourselves heavier in 1961.

ROWAN: What bothers me most is the weakness of the Ky government. Unless we put the screws on the Ky government, 175,000 men will do us no good.

LODGE: There is no tradition of a national government in Saigon. There are no roots in the country. Not until there is tranquility can you have any stability. I don't think we ought to take this government seriously. There is no one who can do anything. We have to do what we think we ought to do regardless of what the Saigon government does.

As we move ahead on a new phase -- it gives us the right and duty to do certain things with or without the government's approval.

PRESIDENT: George, do you think we have another course?

BALL: I would not recommend that you follow McNamara's course.

PRESIDENT: Are you able to outline your doubts -- and offer another course of action? I think it is desirable to hear you out -- and determine if your suggestions are sound and ready to be followed.

BALL: Yes. I think I can present to you the least bad of two courses. What I would present is a course that is costly, but can be limited to short term cost.

PRESIDENT: Then, let's meet at 2:30 this afternoon to discuss Ball's proposals. Now let Bob tell us why we need to risk those 600,000 lives.

(McNamara and Wheeler outlined the reasons for more troops.) 75,000 now just enough to protect bases -- it will let us lose slowly instead of rapidly. The extra men will stabilize the situation and improve it. It will give ARVN breathing room. We limit it to another 100,000 because VN can't absorb any more. There is no major risk of catastrophe.

PRESIDENT: But you will lose greater number of men.

WHEELER: The more men we have the greater the likelihood of smaller losses.

PRESIDENT: What makes you think if we put in 100,000 men Ho Chi Minh won't put in another 100,000?

WHEELER: This means greater bodies of men -- which will allow us to cream them.

PRESIDENT: What are the chances of more NVN men coming?

WHEELER: 50=50 chance. He would be foolhardy to put 1/4 of his forces in SVN. It would expose him too greatly in NVN.

PRESIDENT: (to Raborn) Do you have people in NVN?

RABORN: Not enough. We think it is reliable.

PRESIDENT: Can't we improve intelligence in NVN?

RABORN: We have a task force working on this.

1:00 pm Meeting adjourned until 2:30 pm.

Resume sat. meeting at 2:45pm

BALL: We can't win. Long protracted. The most we can hope for is messy conclusion. There remains a great danger of intrusion by Chicoms.

Problem of long war in US:

1. Korean experience was galling one. Correlation between Korean casualties and public opinion (Ball showed Pres. a chart) showed support stabilized at 50%. As casualties increase, pressure to strike at jugular of the NVN will become very great.
2. World opinion. If we could win in a year's time -- win decisively--world opinion would be alright. However, if long and protracted we will suffer because a great power cannot beat guerrillas.

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3. National politics. Every great captain in history is not afraid to make a tactical withdrawal if conditions are unfavorable to him. The enemy cannot even be seen; he is indigenous to the country.

Have serious doubt if an army of westerners can fight orientals in Asian jungle and succeed.

PRESIDENT: This is important--can westerners, in absence of intelligence, successfully fight orientals in jungle rice-paddies? I want McNamara and Wheeler to seriously ponder this question.

BALL: I think we have all underestimated the seriousness of this situation. Like giving cobalt treatment to a terminal cancer case. I think a long protracted war will disclose our weakness, not our strength.

The least harmful way to cut losses in SVN is to let the government decide it doesn't want us to stay there. Therefore, put such proposals to SVN government that they can't accept, then it would move into a neutralist position -- and I have no illusions that after we were asked to leave, SVN would be under Hanoi control.

What about Thailand? It would be our main problem. Thailand has proven a good ally so far -- though history shows it has never been a staunch ally. If we wanted to make a stand in Thailand, we might be able to make it.

Gissiny?

Another problem would be South Korea. We have two divisions there now. There would be a problem with Taiwan, but as long as (Gissiny) is there, they have no place to go. Indonesia is a problem--insofar as Malaysia. There we might have to help the British in military way. Japan thinks we are propping up a lifeless government and are on a sticky wicket. Between long war and cutting our losses, the Japanese would go for the latter (all this on Japan according to Reischaur)

PRESIDENT: Wouldn't all these countries say Uncle Sam is a paper tiger -- wouldn't we lose credibility breaking the word of three presidents -- if we set it up as you proposed. It would seem to be an irreparable blow. But, I gather you don't think so.

BALL: The worse blow would be that the mightiest power in the world is unable to defeat guerrillas.

PRESIDENT: Then you are not basically troubled by what the world would say about pulling out?

BALL: If we were actively helping a country with a stable, viable government, it would be a vastly different story. Western Europeans look at us as if we got ourselves into an imprudent fashion.

PRESIDENT: But I believe that these people are trying to fight. They're like Republicans who try to stay in power, but don't stay there long.
(aside - amid laughter--"excuse me, Cabot")

BALL: Thieu spoke the other day and said the Communists would win the election.

PRESIDENT: I don't believe that. Does anyone believe that? (There was no agreement from anyone -- McNamara, Lodge, B. Bundy, Unger -- all said they didn't believe it)

McNamara: Ky will fall soon. He is weak. We can't have elections until there is physical security, and even then there will be no elections because as Cabot said, there is no democratic tradition. (Wheeler agreed about Ky -- but said Thieu impressed him)

PRESIDENT: Two basic troublings:
1. That Westerners can ever win in Asia.
2. Don't see how you can fight a war under direction of other people whose government changes every month.

Now go ahead, George, and make your other points.

BALL: The costs, as well as our western European allies, is not relevant to their situation. What they are concerned about is their own security -- troops in Berlin have real meaning, none in VN.

PRESIDENT: Are you saying pulling out of Korea would be akin to pulling out of Vietnam?

BUNNY: It is not analogous. We had a status quo in Korea. It would not be that way in Vietnam.

BALL: We will pay a higher cost in Vietnam.

This is a decision one makes against an alternative.

On one hand -- long protracted war, costly, NVN is digging in for long term. This is their life and driving force. Chinese are taking long term view-- ordering blood plasma from Japan.

On the other hand -- Short-term losses. On balance, come out ahead of McNamara plan. Distasteful on either hand.

BUNNY: Two important questions to be raised -- I agree with the main thrust of McNamara. It is the function of my staff to argue both sides.

To Ball's argument: The difficulty in adopting it now would be a radical switch without evidence that it should be done. It goes in the face of all we have said and done.

His whole analytical argument gives no weight to loss suffered by other side. A great many elements in his argument are correct.

We need to make clear this is a somber matter -- that it will not be quick--no single action will bring quick victory.

I think it is clear that we are not going to be thrown out.

BALL: My problem is not that we don't get thrown out, but that we get bogged down and don't win.

BUNNY: I would sum up: The world, the country, and the VN would have alarming reactions if we got out.

RUSK: If the Communist world finds out we will not pursue our commitment to the end, I don't know where they will stay their hand.

(Rusk con't.)

I am more optimistic than some of my colleagues. I don't believe the VC have made large advances among the VN people.

We can't worry about massive casualties when we say we can't find the enemy. I don't see great casualties unless the Chinese come in.

LODGE:

There is a greater threat to World War III if we don't go in. Similarity to our indolence at Munich.

I can't be as pessimistic as Ball. We have great seaports in Vietnam. We don't need to fight on roads. We have the sea. Visualize our meeting VC on our own terms. We don't have to spend all our time in the jungles.

If we can secure their bases, the VN can secure, in time, a political movement to do (1) apprehend the terrorist and (2) give intelligence to the government.

The procedures for this are known.

I agree that the Japanese agitators don't like what we are doing but Sato is totally in agreement with our actions.

The VN have been dealt more casualties than, per capita, we suffered in the Civil War. The VN soldier is an uncomplaining soldier. He has ideas he will die for.

UNGER:

I agree this is what we have to do. We have spotted some things we want to pay attention to.

PRESIDENT:

How can we get everybody to compete with McNamara in the press? We are trying to do so many other things with our economic and health projects. Constantly remind the people that we are doing other things besides bombing.

UNGER:

Took this question up with Zorthian and press people.

Cabinet Room, July 22, 1965

Meeting began at 12 noon

Present:	President	Secy. Resor	Secy. Nitze
	McNamara	Gen. McConnell	Secy. Zuchert
	Vance	Gen. Greene	Secy. Brown
	Gen. Wheeler	Adm. McDonald	Bundy
	Gen. Johnson	Clifford	

PRESIDENT: I asked McNamara to invite you here to counsel with you on these problems and the ways to meet them.

Hear from the chiefs the alternatives open to you and then recommendations on those alternatives from a military point.

Options open to us

1. Leave the country - with as little loss as possible - the "bugging out" approach
2. Maintain present force and lose slowly
3. Add 100,000 men - recognizing that may not be enough -- and adding more next year.

Disadvantages of #3 - risk of escalation, casualties will be high -- may be a long war without victory.

PRESIDENT: I would like you to start out by stating our present position and where we can go.

Adm. McDonald: Sending Marines has improved situation. I agree with McNamara that we are committed to extent that we can't move out. If we continue the way we are it will be a slow, sure victory for the other side. By putting more men in it will turn the tide and let us know what further we need to do. I wish we had done this long before.

PRESIDENT: But you don't know if 100,000 will be enough. What makes you conclude that if you don't know where we are going -- and what will happen -- we shouldn't pause and find this out?

McDONALD: Sooner or later we'll force them to the conference table. We can't win an all out war.

PRESIDENT: If we put in 100,000 won't they put in an equal number?

MCDONALD: No. If we step up our bombing --

PRESIDENT: Is this a chance we want to take?

MCDONALD: Yes, when I view the alternatives. Get out now or pour in more men.

PRESIDENT: Is that all?

MCDONALD: I think our allies will lose faith in us.

PRESIDENT: We have few allies really helping us.

MCDONALD: Thailand, for example. If we walk out of Vietnam, the whole world will question our word. We don't have much choice.

PRESIDENT: Paul, what is your view?

NITZE: In that area not occupied by US forces, it is worse, as I observed on my trip out there.

We have two alternatives--support VN all over the country - or fall out from secure position we do have. Make it clear to populace that we are on their side. Gradually turn the tide of losses by aiding VN at certain points.

If we just maintained what we have -- more the Pres. problem than ours -- to acknowledge that we couldn't beat the VC, the shape of the world will change.

PRESIDENT: What are our chances of success?

NITZE: If we want to turn the tide, by putting in more men, it would be about 60/40.

PRESIDENT: If we gave Westmoreland all he asked for what are our chances? I don't agree that NVN and China won't come in.

NITZE: Expand the area we could maintain. In the Philippines and Greece it was shown that guerrillas lost.

PRESIDENT: Would you send in more forces than Westmoreland requests?

NITZE: Yes. Depends on how quickly they -

PRESIDENT: How many? 200 instead of 100?

NITZE: Need another 100 in January.

PRESIDENT: Can you do that.

NITZE: Yes.

MCNAMARA: The current plan is to introduce 100,000 -- with possibility of a second 100,000 by first of the year.

PRESIDENT: What reaction is this going to produce?

WHEELER: Since we are not proposing an invasion of NVN, Soviets will step up material and propaganda -- same with Chicoms. Might have NVN introduce more regular troops.

PRESIDENT: Why wouldn't NVN pour in more men? Also, call on volunteers from China and Russia.

WHEELER: First, they may decide they can't win by putting in forces they can't afford. At most would put in two more divisions. Beyond that they strip their country and invite a counter move on our part.

Secondly, on volunteers - the one thing all NVN fear is Chinese. For them to invite Chinese volunteers is to invite China's taking over NVN.

Weight of judgment is that NVN may re-inforce their forces, they can't match us on a build-up.

From military view, we can handle, if we are determined to do so, China and NVN.

PRESIDENT: Anticipate retaliation by Soviets in Berlin area?

WHEELER: You may have some flare-up but lines are so tightly drawn in Berlin that it raises risks of escalation too quickly. Lemnitzer thinks no flare-up in Berlin. In Korea, if Soviets undertook operations, it would be dangerous.

PRESIDENT: Admiral, would you summarize what you think we ought to do?

MCDONALD: 1. Supply forces Westmoreland has asked for.

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(MC DONALD con't)

2. Prepare to furnish more (100,000) in 1966.
3. Commensurate building in air and naval forces, step up of air attacks on NVN.
4. Bring in needed reserves and draft calls.

PRESIDENT: Any ideas on cost of what this would be?

MCNAMARA: Yes - \$12 billion-1966

PRESIDENT: Any idea what effect this will have on our economy?

MCNAMARA: It would not require wage and price controls in my judgment. Price index ought not go up more than one point or two.

McCONNELL: If you put in these requested forces and increase air and sea effort - we can at least turn the tide where we are not losing anymore. We need to be sure we get the best we can out of SVN -- need to bomb all military targets available to us in NVN. As to whether we can come to satisfactory solution with these forces, I don't know. With these forces properly employed, and cutting off their supplies, we can do better than we're doing.

PRESIDENT: Have results of bombing actions been as fruitful and productive as we anticipated?

McCONNELL: No sir, they haven't been. Productive in SVN, but not as productive in NVN because we are not striking the targets that hurt them.

PRESIDENT: Are you seriously concerned when we change targets we escalate the war?

They might send more fighters down. Can't be certain if it will escalate their efforts on the ground.

Would it hurt our chances at a conference if we started killing civilians?

McCONNELL: We need to minimize civilian killings.

PRESIDENT: Would you go beyond Westmoreland's recommendations?

McCONNELL: No sir.

PRESIDENT: How many planes lost?

McCONNELL: 106 all types -- small percentage of total

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PRESIDENT: How many out there?

MCCONNELL: 146 combat. We have lost 54 combat.

PRESIDENT: How many Navy planes?

MCDONALD: in the 30's -- about 125 combat.

BUCKERT: It's worth taking a major step to avoid long run consequences of walking away from it.

PRESIDENT: Doesn't it really mean if we follow Westmoreland's requests we are in a new war -- this is going off the diving board.

MCNAMARA: This is a major change in US policy. We have relied on SVN to carry the brunt. Now we would be responsible for satisfactory military outcome.

PRESIDENT: Are we in agreement we would rather be out of there and make our stand somewhere else?

JOHNSON: Least desirable alternative is getting out. Second least is doing what we are doing. Best is to get in and get the job done.

PRESIDENT: But I don't know how we are going to get that job done. There are millions of Chinese. I think they are going to put their stake in. Is this the best place to do this? We don't have the allies we had in Korea. Can we get our allies to cut off supplying the NVN?

MCNAMARA: No, we can't prevent Japan, Britain, etc to charter ships to Haifong.

PRESIDENT: Have we done anything to get them to stop?

MCNAMARA: We haven't put the pressure on them as we did in Cuba, but even if we did, it wouldn't stop the shipping.

BROWN: It seems that all of our alternatives are dark. I find myself in agreement with the others.

PRESIDENT: Is there anything to the argument this government is likely to fail, and we will be asked to leave. If we try to match the enemy, we will be bogged down in protracted war and have the government ask us to leave?

BROWN: Our lines of communication are long.

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PRESIDENT: How long?

BROWN: 7000 miles from the West Coast, but not too much greater than China's. Biggest weakness of political base is lack of security they can offer their people.

PRESIDENT: Are we starting something that in 2-3 years we can't finish?

BROWN: It is costly to us to strangle slowly, but chances of losing are less if we move in.

PRESIDENT: Suppose we told Ky of requirements we need - he turns them down -- and we have to get out and make our stand in Thailand.

BROWN: The Thais will go with the winner.

PRESIDENT: If we didn't stop in Thailand where would we stop?

MCHAMARA: Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, surely affect Malaysia. In 2-3 years Communist domination would stop there, but ripple effect would be great - Japan, India. We would have to give up some bases. Ayub would move closer to China. Greece, Turkey would move to neutralist position. Communist agitation would increase in Africa.

GREENE: Situation is as tough as when it started. But not as bad as it could be. Marines in 1st Corp area is example of benefits.

Stakes:

1. National security Stake. Matter of time before we go in some place else.
2. Pledge we made.
3. Prestige before the rest of the world.

If you accept these stakes, there are two courses of action:

1. Get out
2. Stay in and win.

How to win:

1. South -
2. North

The enclave concept will work. Would like to introduce enough Marines to do this. two Marine divisions and one air wing. Extend.

28,000 there now -- additional 72,000

MCNAMARA: Greene suggests these men over and above the Westmoreland request.

PRESIDENT: Then you will need 80,000 more Marines to carry this out.

GREENE: Yes. I am convinced we are making progress with the SVN -- in food and construction. We are getting evidence of intelligence from SVN.

In the North--we haven't been hitting the right targets. We should hit POL storage -- essential to their transportation. Also airfields destroyed, MIGS and IL28's. As soon as SAM installations are operable.

PRESIDENT: What would they do?

GREENE: Nothing. We can test it by attacking POL storage.

Then we should attack industrial complex in NVN. Also, they can be told by pamphlet drop why we are doing this. Then we ought to blockade Cambodia -- and stop supplies from coming down.

How long will it take? 5 years -- plus 500,000 troops. I think the US people will back you.

PRESIDENT: How would you tell the American people what the stakes are?

GREENE: The place where they will stick by you is the national security stake.

JOHNSON: We are in a face-down. The solution, unfortunately, is long-term. Once the military solution is solved, the problem of political solution will be more difficult.

PRESIDENT: If we come in with hundreds of thousands of men and billions of dollars, won't this cause them to come in (China and Russia)?

JOHNSON: No. I don't think they will.

PRESIDENT: MacArthur didn't think they would come in either.

JOHNSON: Yes, but this is not comparable to Korea. Same situation. -- China bares and communications--

PRESIDENT: But China has plenty of divisions to move in, don't they?

JOHNSON: Yes, they do.

PRESIDENT: Then what would we do?

JOHNSON: (long silence) If so, we have another ball game.

PRESIDENT: But I have to take into account they will.

JOHNSON: I would increase the build-up near NVN - and increase action in Korea.

PRESIDENT: If they move in 31 divisions, what does it take on our part?

MCNAMARA: Under favorable conditions they could sustain 31 divisions and assuming Thais contributed forces, it would take 300,000 plus what we need to combat VC.

RESOR: I'm a newcomer --- (interrupted by President)

PRESIDENT: But remember they're going to write stories about this like they did the Bay of Pigs -- and about my advisors. That's why I want you to think very carefully about alternatives and plans.

Looking back on the Dominican Republic would you have done anything any differently, General?

JOHNSON: I would have cleaned out part of the city and gone in - and with same numbers.

PRESIDENT: Are you concerned about Chinese forces moving into NVN?

JOHNSON: There is no evidence of forces -- only terms involved in logistics. Could be investigating areas which they could control later.

PRESIDENT: What is your reaction to Ho's statement he is ready to fight for 20 years?

JOHNSON: I believe it.

PRESIDENT: What are Ho's problems?

JOHNSON: His biggest problem is doubt about what our next move will be. He's walking a tightrope between the Reds & Chicoms. Also, he's worrying about the loss of caches of arms in SVN.

PRESIDENT: Are we killing civilians along with VC?

WHEELER: Certain civilians accompanying the VC are being killed. It can't be helped.

PRESIDENT: The VC dead is running at a rate of 25,000 a year. At least 15,000 have been killed by air -- half of these are not a part of what we call VC. Since 1961 a total of 89,000 have been killed. SVN are being killed at a rate of 12,000 per year.

RESOR: Of the three courses the one we should follow is the McNamara plan. We can't go back on our commitment. Our allies are watching carefully.

PRESIDENT: Do all of you think the Congress and the people will go along with 600,000 people and billions of dollars 10,000 miles away?

RESOR: Gallup poll shows people are basically behind our commitment.

PRESIDENT: But if you make a commitment to jump off a building, and you find out how high it is, you may withdraw the commitment.

PRESIDENT: I judge though that the big problem is one of national security. Is that right?

(murmured assent)

PRESIDENT: What about our intelligence. How do they know what we are doing before we do it? What about the B-52 raid -- weren't they gone before we got there?

MCNAMARA: They get it from infiltration in SVN forces.

PRESIDENT: Are we getting good intelligence out of NVN?

MCNAMARA: Only reconnaissance and technical soundings. None from combat intelligence.

PRESIDENT: Some Congressmen and Senators think we are going to be the most discredited people in the world. What Bundy will now tell you is not his opinion nor mine (I haven't taken a position yet) but what we hear.

BUNDY: Argument we will face:
For 10 years every step we have taken has been based on a previous failure. All we have done has failed and caused us to take another step which failed. As we get further into the bag, we get deeply bruised. Also, we have made excessive claims we haven't been able to realize.

(con't Bundy)

Also, after 20 years of warning^y about war in Asia, we are now doing what MacArthur and others have warned (against).

We are about to fight a war we can't fight and win, as the country we are trying to help is quitting.

The failure on our own to fully realize what guerrilla war is like. We are sending conventional troops to do an unconventional job.

How long -- how much. Can we take casualties over five years -- aren't we talking about a military solution when the solution is political. Why can't we interdict better -- why are our bombings so fruitless -- why can't we blockade the coast -- why can't we improve our intelligence -- why can't we find the VC?

PRESIDENT: Gerald Ford has demanded the President testify before the Congress and tell why we are compelled to up the reserves. Indications are that he will oppose calling up the reserves.

MCNAMARA: I think we can answer most of the questions posed.

CLIFFORD: If the military plan is carried out, what is the ultimate result if it is successful?

WHEELER: Political objective is to maintain SVN as free and independent. If we follow the course of action, we can carry out this objective.

WHEELER: Probably after success, we would withdraw most of our forces; international or otherwise, would have to stay on.

If we can secure the military situation, it seems likely that we can get some kind of stable government.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15pm

SERVICE SET

Cabinet Room, Thursday, July 22, 1965

Meeting began at 3:00 pm

Present: President Clifford Bundy
McNamara Gen. Wheeler Cater
Rusk Cy Vance John McCloy ✓
Hall Moyers Arthur Deam ✓
Busby Valenti

PRESIDENT: I don't think that calling up the reserves in itself is a change of policy. There is a question though that we are going into a new kind of activity in VN. Basic objective is to preserve the independence and freedom of VN. This is not necessarily tied in with calling up reserves.

RUSK: The essence of policy is why we are there and what our war aims are. Moving from 75,000 to 185,000 men is a change of policy. Much is to be said for playing this low key.

PRESIDENT: That one point needs to be stressed with Congressional leadership -- also to explain with candor what we are doing to the American people. But when we do, we help the NVN get their requests fulfilled by China and Russia.

MCNAMARA: We can stay away from "change of policy" but it is a change in risk and commitment. We need to explain why it is in our interest to do it.

Services have submitted budget request by \$12 billion. We can cut this down by half or more.

MOYERS: I don't think the press thinks we are going to change basic policy, but in the requirements to meet that policy.

PRESIDENT: That's right and we ought to say it.

BALL: I hope we can avoid a debate on whether it is a change. We always lose on this. We are becoming co-defendants with SVN.

MCCLOY: The country is looking to getting on with the war.

PRESIDENT: There are three alternatives:
1. Sit and lose slowly
2. Get out
3. Put what needs to go in.

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By ing Date 9-13-85

SERVICE SET

RUSK: If we bring out our message of decision while the Bucharest meeting is going on--it might bring them closer together. What we do in SVN is not of great concern to China. But a progressive step-up in bombing increases risk of China intrusion.

PRESIDENT: But the chiefs say what we are doing in the North is not enough, only pin pricking them, just goosing them.

RUSK: But it is contradictory to do this when we can't find anybody in the South.

Both China and the Soviets have pressure on them. A commitment in SVN is one thing, but a commitment to preserve another socialist state is quite another. This is a distinction we must bear in mind.

We have a 1 in 5 chance of Russia's staying out if we make our commitment and if we bomb Hanoi. A commitment of large forces by us will lead to pressures on us to destroy Hanoi. This is the key point.

MCCLOY: Do you think they will let go if they still have sanctuary?

RUSK: Their only sanctuary is 1/5 of the country.

A. Dean: What do you do if the war drags on--with mounting casualties -- where do we go. The people say if we are not doing what is necessary to end it, why don't we do what is necessary?

MCNAMARA: We are begging the questions. If we bomb Haifong, would this end the war? and the answer is "NO." We have only destroyed so far about 20% of the ammunitions capacity and a lesser percentage of barracks capacity.

DEAN: If this carries on for some years, we'll get in the same fix we were in Korea and the Yalu.

RUSK: We were under no pressures to make it a larger war until the war was practically over.

MCCLOY: If we could define our objectives specifically, what are our objectives in a discussion? What do we have to negotiate?

RUSK:

1. Infiltration from the North must stop.
2. We have no interests in a permanent military base there.
3. 1954-1960 agreements ought to be solved by peaceful means and not...

MCCLOY: When do the troops get withdrawn?

RUSK: When proof of infiltration - stopping.

BUNDEY: If we really were the ones for free elections, it would be good. It is difficult for Saigon to sign on.

MCCLLOY: Would we be willing to take a Tito government or a VC victory?

BUNDEY: That's where our plan begins to unravel.

Now -- how to keep a reasonable peace offensive going-

PRESIDENT: We have got to keep peace proposals going. It's like a prizefight. Our right is our military power, but our left must be our peace proposals. Every time you move troops forward, you move diplomats forward. I want this done. The generals want more and more-- and go farther and farther. But State has to supply me with some, too.

We need Ernie Pyles out there interviewing soldiers who can tell how proud they are to do their duty.

RUSK: Thinking of Bucharest meeting, I suggest you meet with the leadership on Tuesday and make a statement on Wednesday.

BALD: We have big problem of disarmament meeting on Tuesday in Geneva.

MCNAMARA: We can't delay this from the public.

PRESIDENT: Congress ought to be briefed on Saturday or Sunday and go up Monday to Congress. We ought to decide what our decision is, write it, brief Ambassadors and then tell the people.

Is the message a personal talk to the Congress or a normal message. Possibly a normal message.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm

Camp David - Aspen Lodge - July 25, 1965

Meeting began at 5:00 pm

Present: President Clifford
Goldberg Bushy
McNamara Valenti

CLIFFORD: 1. Do not think it advisable to go to UN with resolution now. Don't need this to re-inforce peaceful intentions. Inconsistent with going in with additional troops.

2. Stop talking about Vietnam -- on part of President, Rusk, Harriman, etc. No talking about where and why we are there. Don't think they are going to be forced to table by any UN proposal. Underplay Vietnam until January.

3. Both above based on this one:
Don't believe we can win in SVN. If we send in 100,000 more, the NVN will meet us. If the NVN run out of men, the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win the war. If we don't win, it is a catastrophe. If we lose 50,000 + it will ruin us. Five years, billions of dollars, 50,000 men, it is not for us.

At end of monsoon, quietly probe and search out with other countries -- by moderating our position -- to allow us to get out. Can't see anything but catastrophe for my country. A resolution in the UN with dramatic debate is bad for us.

PRESIDENT: (reading from letter) VN is not of INTRINSIC value - If

There is no high principle involved.

Basic issue is not to get thrown out under fire.

Political questions are what we make them.

1. Instruct officials to stop saying all human kind is at stake.
2. Stop saying we are going to pacify the country.
3. patience-pressure-quietly marking areas we can hold. Hold these for years if need be. Make a safe haven.

4. Vietcong cannot attack these places frontally.
5. Gradually stop bombings north and south.
Maximum attention to it which is wrong.
6. Keep offer of negotiations open.

Cabinet Room, Monday, July 26, 1965

Meeting began at 12:30 pm

Subject: Vietnam

Present: President
Vice President
McNamara
Rusk
Goldberg
Randy
Lodge
Gen. Wheeler
Hall
Valenti
Busby
Moyers

119d
Clifford, Helms, Raborn joined the
group 30 minutes later

PRESIDENT: Please, Bob, give us your findings and recommendations
on SAM sites.

WHEELER: Sam site that shot down the F4C is probably a
mobile site, #6.

(President and McNamara look at map showing where
plane was shot down)

PRESIDENT: Any indication that there are more than five sites?

WHEELER: Yes, on Friday night we determined there are two
more, #6 and #7. Site #4 is possibility, but 6 and 7
are better possibilities - more probably a mobile
site.

(President asked technical questions about sites
and their shoot down capabilities)

WHEELER: Chiefs recommendation:
We don't know if any of these sites have equipment.
We should attack all sites. At the minimum, we should
take out 4, 6, 7

SANITIZED

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Subject: Vietnam

NSC PRIMARY INTEREST

Present: President

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Vice President

McNamara

Rusk

Goldberg

Bundy

Lodge

Gen. Wheeler

Ball

Valenti

Bunby

Moyers

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By isp per, NARS, Date 10-28-85
DCH per AW

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

NLI/RAC 00-61-FRUS, Vol. III

-76- By cb, NARA Date 2-16-01

MCNAMARA: Good, but I would take out only 6 and 7.

PRESIDENT: Where does your intelligence tell you Russians are operating?

WHEELER: In 6 and 7.

PRESIDENT: Are you sure they are Russians?

WHEELER: [REDACTED] - that is the weight of our evidence.

RUSK: I would not hit one of the sites close in to Hanoi. Only reason to hit 6 and 7 is to give warning to NVN. Very important if we strike that nothing be said about Russians being there. Political effect of hitting 6 and 7 is a warning to not move sites farther out from Hanoi.

Not at all sure we'll hit anything -- they may have moved them out from there.

Intensify reconnaissance to see if we can pick up anything.

PRESIDENT: Are we photoing regularly?

MCNAMARA: Yes, but we are careful over Hanoi. We are using drones more.

PRESIDENT: What are you getting out of this?

MCNAMARA: No reports of radar activity at these sites.

WHEELER: This is the first time we have heard their radar.

PRESIDENT: How much personnel?

WHEELER: About 1/2.

PRESIDENT: How provocative will this be?

WHEELER: When they sent up the missiles, they expected something.

PRESIDENT: What would be our reaction to the Russians bombing our sites.

RUSK: Various INFORMATION that if Russians and US collide, it would be dangerous. Killing the first Russians--

SERVICE 5-1

(Here President admonished the group NOT to speak to anyone about this) "This is a war- and the stakes are high")

PRESIDENT: You think, Dean, we should take out the sites even though the Russians are there?

RUSK: I think it would be a warning.

PRESIDENT: (I want the Secretary of State to draw up a document saying that if anyone wants to write article for LIFE he cannot participate) ||

BALL: This is a very hard decision. But our intelligence is not very hard at this time.

There is no way to keep from identifying the casualties as Russians.

Before we make this decision I'd like to know if we take out 6 and 7 there is something there to take out.

Can we make some efforts to find out what is there. We don't have to take them the next day. If they are building an outer perimeter, then we have to take them out.

WHEELER: We have already identified this site. Discussed low level rekky--staff advised against it because they will get out after rekky.

PRESIDENT: The assumption is in your favor, but we don't know exactly where the missiles came from.

MCNAMARA: I don't see the logic to Ball's argument -- If we strike and they are not there.

PRESIDENT: Get bad story if we roam around and find nothing

BUNDY: We haven't addressed the question of turning See advantage of not crossing this bridge until after making Presidential Statement.

PRESIDENT: Let's not assume I am to make a speech. No one has decided that.

BUNDY: Rapidity of action in Pluku gave Russians a talking point. Is our position affecting these sites better later than now - then take them out on our way to munitions plant. Can see advantage if we punish SAM sites quickly. Also reports are saying we shouldn't have let them go this long.

(con't Bundy)

Don't see the merit of waiting. The target is on authorized list--current Rolling Thunder list.

MCNAMARA: Record shows there is military purpose for going over these targets now.

BALL: If we move promptly it will be a decision to step up war. In present heated tension of this decision making, this step will be viewed as a decision break-through -- this will be a world impression.

Am sympathetic with view of Bundy -- of taking out SAM site with purpose of taking out military target--SAM only incidental.

Also, if we wait we allow Goldberg to present his credentials. We ought to disassociate the SAMs from the present heat.

RUSK: Harold Wilson Pleads we let him know in advance if we take 6 and 7. He needs to keep his people in line. (Bundy shares this view).

PRESIDENT: What do you think about this, Cabot?

LODGE: 6 and 7 are 40 mi. away -- the rest are 10 mi away.

Would go ahead on the two that are 40 mi. away. But don't think it is of pressing urgency.

WHEELER: If they announce that there are Russians in the site, it would make your decision more anxious.

PRESIDENT: If we leave 6 and 7 for a while, what would it do to Rolling Thunder.

WHEELER: Would cut targets in half. Will cut down on armed rekky

BALL: It's going to make it difficult for us domestically if we don't take out these SAMs right now.

We ought not let domestic politics guide us in making a small war larger.

MCNAMARA: It hasn't been necessary to take out SAM in order to get to a military target.

PRESIDENT: Helms, do you have any intelligence on this. Are we sure they came from 6 and 7? Wasn't there a possibility it could have come from 4?

WHEELER: Our pilots intelligence--and depending on navigation--there is possibility it came from 4 or mobile site.

PRESIDENT: How liberally is it mobile?

WHEELER: According to Russian terminology this is semi-mobile site.

RUSK: We have knocked a key bridge connecting China with NVN. We could expect the Russians to set up sites there.

PRESIDENT: One of the great dangers is conveying wrong message by letting enemy miscalculate our motives. What will be reaction of enemy if he can knock down US planes and do nothing about it. The sites are put there to destroy us. Are we going to sit and sit and let them knock down our planes? Are we going to let them move first?

BUNDY: Let's see if the sites impede Rolling Thunder.

(Wheeler went over map to point out targets)

GOLDBERG: It is difficult for the public to distinguish between 6 and 7 and the rest. What will be Russians reaction to this? This is what they have given to NVN. Where will they go for future? May be a specific reaction to pinpointing the target. Do we know enough out of this episode -- is it worthwhile to know how these sites are to be utilized? Is this their policy -- or is it a gesture? Is it definitely their policy or is it a trigger happy officer? Public reaction would be -- this is Hanoi area.

BUNDY: I don't think we are facing a confrontation with the Russians that Amb. Goldberg suggests. I am attracted by the notion of waiting until we have to go. Real risk if we seem to be diverted by this episode-- too much of our plans are operationally known by our military.

PRESIDENT: Why do we ferret out ammo dumps, etc. and lose men-- and fail to take out something that is more dangerous like SAM site. How do you justify this. You bring bombing to a standstill. If you are to continue bombing these targets, how can we not take out SAMs.

RUSK: You cannot order pilots to bomb without helping them get back. We don't know enough about sites.

PRESIDENT: Then we ought to cancel targets -- we can't send pilots over the missile sites.

V. PRES: We ought to face up to Russian involvement. What impact this will have on Russian relations, I don't know. All the press knows the Russians are in the site business.

Wheeler says if we delay it will aggravate situation. They have to be taken out. If I were forced to decide, then if targets are to be kept, take out sites. If targets can be altered, 2 or 3 days later is not a matter of significance.

We can't leave ourselves without response. But I think we can allow ourselves a little time.

MCNAMARA: We simply have to change targets -- we can't keep target schedules with sites in. We are not going to learn anything more in the next 2 or 3 days.

RABORN: Information on these sites was obtained on July 20. First read-out did not read out sites. Finally disclosed on Saturday morning, July 24. We'll take coordinated intelligence effort to sort out where these sites are. This effort is underway--using all kinds of intelligence information to come up with answer.

Until the effort is completed, I would recommend not going in. We know 6 and 7 are manned.

MCNAMARA: If striking 6 and 7 properly, at low altitude, we will be protected from 8,9,10.

There are two problems: Should we take out 6 and 7 now -- or wait.

My decision on taking out 6 and 7 depends on taking our Rolling Thunder targets -- as well as telling the Russians we won't allow them to conclude-- we won't do anything.

We don't want to send planes to Rolling Thunder targets if they must be shot down.

RAIBORN: Study will be completed this afternoon.
Suggest Thompson and CIA Russian expert tell us
of Russian intentions.

PRESIDENT: Next question is US position at United Nations.

Do we want to make a proposal at UN at this time.
Goldberg has shown me and Rusk a memo with his views.
What instructions do we want to give him?
My thinking would be if we agree on Westmorland
requests on men, equipment, etc.--playing all our
decisions low key, and not telling the Russians we
intend to break our policy on economy and nuclear
production cutback.

Generally, want Goldberg to talk to every delegate
including Secy. Gen. to tell them we are ready to
talk unconditionally.

GOLDBERG: My view is that when you do anything forceful, must
say our objective is peace. How best can assurance
of peace be done.

1) Laying before Security Council a resolution
echoing Baltimore and confined to single topic--
to endorse talks on VN with help of UN.
People don't understand sophisticated complexities
of UN politics. They do understand their
President asking for unconditional talks. Some-
times the public exhibition of an attitude can
start us on the way. I would hope we would do the
necessary exploration to get the votes--by con-
sulting with our friends. Some dangers may turn
out to be virtues -- such as Viet Cong.
I think there is great advantage in President's
saying simply we want to talk.

PRESIDENT: I said that in San Francisco.

GOLDBERG: Even though I don't expect Russians to say in
advance "Yes", but it doesn't mean they won't come
around to this view.
I think we need a new initiative--the effects of
President's Baltimore speech has worn off.
What would be the worst that could happen to us in
the Security Council? Are we so lacking in friends
that we won't be applauded? There must be equity in
the final agreement.
If I thought the war could go on quietly--then I would
acquiesce--but I don't think the war can go on quietly.
As we send in more troops--knock out Sams--something
must happen in UN and I want us to be the plaintiff,
not the defendant.

SERVICE SET

RUSK: UN is an organization to which we have a treaty commitment. We have an obligation to use the UN as effectively as we know. But Hanoi and Peking are not parties to this organization.

Advantages: Help placate our critics.

Disadvantages: Can't see how they would help. Maximum benefit is to reconvene conference.

Very negative if we asked for meeting and didn't get it. International recognition of VC would undermine the Saigon government. We have to assume that a resolution that would meet our approval would draw Soviet veto. Might make it difficult for Soviets to push quietly for talks. Might draw amendments that would be inimical to us. If we didn't get at least 7 votes, it would appear that the UN had repudiated us.

Recommend Goldberg talk with U Thant to sound out Soviets as to character and form of resolution and for us not to insist on resolution at this time.

LODGE: Am in disagreement with Goldberg on resolution but there are things he can do. --Can do it by a speech-- UN couldn't possibly undertake our mission in Vietnam - it hasn't the money nor the muscle.

We musn't overlook the effect on SVN, Russia and China. Everytime we talk about negotiations, you lower the value of the ARVN. You don't impress China except when you've got blood in your eye.

PRESIDENT: I'm tired of words. I've been giving words for 20 months. I told the UN in San Francisco that I would back any effort by the UN to bring this to the conference table. ||

LODGE: We had to show the UN that what we are doing is entirely consistent with the UN charter.

CLIFFORD: Goldberg makes a persuasive case. But I am unalterably opposed to a resolution in the UN. But we are in a paradox. On one hand, we are ready to meet commitments, but we are really ready to get out. We can almost guarantee that a resolution would fail. The Soviets must stand by the NVN. I see them using the resolution as a propaganda asset-- using bombing and white-vs.-Asians. Talking at this time publicly will not accomplish anything. If it is underplayed, we have a chance to justify our views.

LODGE: How do you send young men there in great numbers without

CLIFFORD: We have already explained why we are there. We cannot win the war in SVN. China and Russia don't intend for us to win the war. They will match us in manpower. No matter how many men we send, they will match us.

The great danger is that additional troops are not a notice to the world that we intend to make it a land war.

We should get through the monsoon season and quietly see if we can work out an adjustment. I don't believe we will suffer prestige if we can't sustain.

(Moyers wanted to know if he can release names of those present -- President against it because of press hounding the people for information)

PRESIDENT: (TO RUSK) Try to determine what would go into Goldberg's statement to the UN--desirability of writing letter signed by me to Secy. General--generally along lines of San Francisco speech--after talking to allies Goldberg can buttress his arguments for resolution.

Any objections to that?

(No one expressed dissent)

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 pm

Meeting in Cabinet Room, Monday, July 26, 1965

Meeting began at 6:10 pm..

Present: President	Wheeler	Lodge	Marks	Valenti
McNamara	Ball	Goldberg	Rowan	
Vice President	Clifford	Raborn	Busby	
Rusk	Thompson	Helms	Bundy	

MCNAMARA: Nothing has developed in our intelligence to show us any new data on missile sites.

THOMPSON: As long as it looks as if the sites are all not Hanoi, we are going after, I think their reaction will be mild. We should not say they are manned by Soviets--need to fuzz that up. It would be good if we can tie it in with something else.

PRESIDENT: Would you take out ammunition dumps and sites simultaneously?

MCNAMARA: Take them out separately.

WHEELER: Chiefs would take out all 7 sites at one time. If not, take out 4, 6, 7. There is the possibility that #4 was mixed up in this shoot-down,

PRESIDENT: Why against #4, Bob?

MCNAMARA: #4 is a part of the Hanoi-Haiphong package. It would vex the Soviets. It is not directly associated with ~~Lanschee~~ *Lao Chi* and ammunition dump. There is no operational need to take it out. It is too close to the ~~Migs~~ *Migs* and would increase the number of aircraft in the air. We have never hit a SAM site and there is no need to make a difficult target more difficult. The chances of success are not perfect. They are about 50-50.

PRESIDENT: If you find them, can you destroy them?

MCNAMARA: Yes, if we find them. However, we have narrow field of vision at 500 mph.

PRESIDENT: If you go in, lose planes and fail to get them, how will we look in the eyes of the world?

MCNAMARA: I foresee no problem there.

PRESIDENT: Is SAM like Hawk?

WHEELER: It is a big van, high mass of radar -- missiles like Nike-Hercules.

RUSK: Would the ~~Cap~~ come in only if migs react?

WHEELER: Yes.

MCNAMARA: Possibly, because of lack of friend-or-foe identification, they may shoot our planes if they are present.

PRESIDENT: How far away are the Migs?

MCNAMARA: The Migs are 25-40 miles away.

PRESIDENT: What protection do we have against Migs?

WHEELER: Our cap - F4C - 8 F104. Two levels of defense .

~~PRESIDENT:~~
MCNAMARA: Please summarize the pros and cons of going in to take out SAMs.

(Brought situation up to date chronologically)

We think we should take out 6 and 7 because they lie athwart targets on our authorized list.

If we don't, we will give an incorrect reading to Soviets that we are willing to omit targets because of SAMs

It is hard to explain to Congress and the people that we will take out ammo depots but not SAM sites.

RUSK: While these sites are under attack, will radar be on them?

MCNAMARA: Yes. We have changed authorized routes.

PRESIDENT: What about terrain or low level?

MCNAMARA: It is relatively flat in that area.

RUSK: I see some advantage to striking other targets. However, it is unlikely we'll find anything to hit. They will have moved. I wouldn't rely on clearing out a path for the future. In terms of signals to the other side, would strike them and other targets quickly.

MCNAMARA: I would not complicate matters by hitting targets simultaneously. That's a very difficult mission.

LODGE: (In response to question from President)
I would be in favor of hitting 6 and 7 and hitting ammo targets as soon as practical.

PRESIDENT: Any objections to McNamara's recommendation to hit?

BALL: No objection to recommendation, but let's have no illusions that it will not cause tremors of tension around the world. Raise question of whether to take out all sites then troop deployment, etc.

MCNAMARA: If Migs came out to attack us, we must destroy them.

PRESIDENT: Would you pursue in case of fight?

MCNAMARA: No. Right now the orders are to fight only in the air.

GOLDBERG: In light of danger of Soviet involvement; intelligence is not sure #4 is not involved; not sure SAM is not mobile; I think we ought to know they are there and #6 and #7 are the responsible ones before making this attack.

I would send another memo to attack the target to make sure if they are knocked down that the SAM site is active.

PRESIDENT: You don't mean sending boys over that SAM site?

GOLDBERG: Yes.

RABORN: We support Amb. Thompson 100%. Our Soviet experts tell us they are expecting us to come in.

PRESIDENT: If we don't take them out, I want targets off list. If we do take them out, we can go on to better targets. I don't want to send boys over those sites where we know they will be shot down. We may be mis-leading Russians again. Kennedy called up reserves and put nation on war footing after Vienna and Soviets understood that. In missile crisis they understood that. For 20 months we have been restrained -- and I don't want them to misunderstand us. Only pressure we have is our bombing. We have nothing else to bargain.

Can we find the targets -- sites?

RUSK: What happens if we incur additional losses from Migs? We should not make any decisions now to go into Hanoi-Haiphong area. If we do, we will be moving into something by mistake. I would think hard about going into Hanoi to kill Migs.

PRESIDENT: This is not the subject of this meeting. Before we do that, you'll be heard.

CLIFFORD: We are *not* going to be pushed out of SVN. We show enemy our determination by taking out #6 and #7.
Bargaining: Most valuable asset NVN has is the industrial complex they have laboriously built. If they think SAMs can protect their industry, they have won an important element. We have no bargaining point if their industry is safe.
If Soviets put their men and material into a situation that knocks down American planes, they must expect retaliation.

THOMPSON: On balance, I support the recommendation.

BUNDY: We ought to examine the way we'll discuss this decision.

ROWAN: We ought to understand that this will increase the "crisis atmosphere". Every European newspaper takes it for granted that Russians shot down our plane.
I say that even though I support the recommendation to knock them out.
The press reaction in Europe is bound to make the Soviets feel they have lost prestige if we knock out the sites.

V. PRES: I'm much impressed with what Clifford said about long term prospects. If these targets are valuable, we have to do something about what blocks us. I am concerned that we have changed emphasis -- that we do indeed have mobile units to face.

MCNAMARA: We are over-emphasizing the mobility of these units. They are semi-mobile. They haven't been mobile in the 99% cases we have examined.

PRESIDENT: How long would it take to go?

WHEELER: If we gave "go" in the next few minutes, we could "go" at about 1 or 2 in the morning our time.

V. PRES: SAM sites #6 and #7 ought to be taken out. Caution: China is not Russia.

BUNDY: The conference in Geneva is primarily nuclear-proliferation oriented.

VALENTI: This could be a piece of definitive action that would signal our determination.

PRESIDENT. TAKE THEM OUT (Given at 6:55 pm)

SERVICE

By W, NARA, Date 3/2/98

National Security Council Meeting
July 27, 1965

Meeting began at 5:45

Present: President	McNaughton	Helms	Bundy
Rusk	Rowan	Goodwin	Busby
McNamara	Marks	Thompson	Valenti
Wheeler	Lodge	Ball	

PRESIDENT: Before we formalize and finalize what our steps should be I want to review this with the leadership and to consider any views we haven't considered until now.
Rusk will summarize now.

RUSK: Role of Communist China -- she is most adamant.
Criticizes Soviet Russia for trying to bring this into UN to wipe out NVN. This is interesting because the two party chiefs -- Russia and China -- were at Bucharest. It appears that our fears about a coordinated front are not realized.

The Yugoslav Ambassador says that Tito feels the Soviets are concerned about bombing. We can't consider this because we have no response to our pleas.

MCNAMARA: Summarize military situation. Viet Cong increased forces/ NVN increased forces. VC have increased their control over countryside. They are disrupting lines of communications. They have isolated about 12 out of 45 provincial capitals. About 44 out of 200 district capitals also are isolated. Increase in desertion of SVN forces - thus unable to increase SVN army.

--65,000 regular = VC
100,000 irreg.

1-1 ration in combat forces even though SVN has 500,000.

Over 1/2 of all Army choppers are there

500 aircraft/ Navy-Air Force/ are there

If we are going to stop VC control, we need to increase US forces. On June 16 we announced 15 Battalions and 75,000 men.

An additional 13 battalions and 50,000 men must be announced

(con't. McNamara)

Commanders have asked for more and we will probably have to grant.

We'll have 125,000 men there.

Either call up reserves or increase draft.

(Recounting on map situation concerning surface-to-air missiles)

46 planes took on target. --3 shot down.

2nd mission of 8 planes--one shot down.

LODGE: Senate kept asking about ratio of men. Will it cost us many men and much money?

MCNAMARA: We can't assign any specific measurement to aircraft and choppers.

WHEELER: Air power throws doubt on usual ratio of 10 - 1. In the Delta where ratio is 1 - 1 we are holding our own due to mobility of choppers.
The Westmoreland plan will stem the tide, in my judgment.

LODGE: It should be made clear to the Senators that 10-1 ratio is obsolete.
26% of the population is controlled by the VC.

PRESIDENT: Groups of thinking

1. We can bring the enemy to his knees by using our SAC and other AF. I don't think our citizens would want us to do it - though some do.
2. Another group thinks we ought to pack up and go home. Don't think too many of our people want us to do this. Ike, Kennedy and I have given commitment.
3. Could stay there as we are -- suffer consequences and continue to lose territory and casualties. You wouldn't want your boy to be out there and crying for help and not get it.
4. Go to Congress and ask for great sums of money, call up reserves and increase draft. To on war footing - declare a state of emergency. There's a good deal of feeling that that ought to be done. We have considered this. If we make land war, then NVN would go to its friends-China and Russia- and ask them to give help. They would be forced into increasing aid. For that reason I don't want to be dramatic and cause tension. I think we can get our people to support us without having to be dramatic.

(con't. President)

5. Give to commanders the men they say they need -- out of forces in this country. Get such money as we need and must have. Use transfer authority to get money we need until January.

Say to Thieu: You and your military help us there and make what gains we can. Meanwhile, we will explore ways to find peace.

We will deplete much of our forces here - can't do it for long if we are challenged on another front.

Decision narrows down in my mind to #4 and #5.

RUSK: You used depletion - is that right?

MCNAMARA: No, it is a reduction, not full depletion.

PRESIDENT: We draw on forces we would choose not to draw on. If Russia, England, etc. wouldn't get all excited about calling up reserves, I would do it right now.
But this is something we will decide with the leadership.

Congressional Leadership Meeting, Tuesday, July 27, 1965

Meeting began at: 6:35 pm

Present: President ✓ Hickenlooper ✕ Ford Wheeler Cater
 ✓ Mansfield ✕ Speaker ✕ Arends Rusk Busby
 ✓ Smathers ✕ Boggs Bundy Raborn Valenti
 ✓ Long ✕ Albert O'Brien Goodwin Moyers
 ✓ Dirksen ✓ Kuchel McNamara Califano
 Lodge

PRESIDENT: (Quoted Elisha Cook about the responsibilities of the leader)
(Reviewed the five courses open to us)

So the fifth alternative is the one that makes the most sense. We don't know if this will be 2 years or 4 years or what. We didn't know World War I was going to be one year or five years.

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1194

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NLT 79-108
By <u>W. H. Miller</u> 6-20-85

SERVICE

RUSK: The attitude of the Communist world is the key question.

SMATHERS: We are denying the VC the victory aren't we? Is not our purpose not to be driven out -- and avoid WW III by not bringing in China and Russia. Is this a change of policy?

PRESIDENT: As aid to the VC increases, our need to increase our forces goes up. There is no change in policy.

BOGGS: Any substantial ~~SURRENDER~~ of government forces to VC-- or officers? How about government?

MCNAMARA: No. Indicates willingness to fight - even though suffering heavy casualties.

PRESIDENT: I couldn't call you down until I had all the information.

WHEELER: (Described guerrilla operation)

LONG: If we back out, they'd move somewhere else. Ready to concede all Asia to Communists? Not ready to turn tail. If a nation with 14 million can make Uncle Sam run, what will China think?

SPEAKER: I don't think we have any alternatives. Our military men tell us we need more and we should give it to them. The lesson of Hitler and Mussolini is clear. I can see five years from now a chain of events far more dangerous to our country.

FORD: I fully understand why we can't do 1, 2 or 3 but I need an explanation of 4 and 5. In either case, Westmoreland would be supplied with what he wants. The question is how? Under 4, money would follow a request by you for additional funds from the Congress. Under 5, you use what you have and come back in January for more money.

PRESIDENT: We will ask Congress for money on either side. We would ask for reasonable request now and see what happens. If you call up reserves now, their year starts ticking immediately. If we wait until January, we can bring in reserves and put them to work immediately. We'll have firm plans then.

Under #5, we ask for no legislation, call up no reserves, don't scare the Russians, and send troops in as we need them.

SERVICE SET

FORD: You will increase draft calls and extend enlistments?

PRESIDENT: Yes. I want to use this period to show them they can't run us out.

FORD: Double draft calls -- how much a strain on training command?

MCNAMARA: About the same as #4. If we call up reserves, it will be for a limited period (one year). Congress is not likely to increase this. It means that we have a perishable asset and seek to replace it by doubling the draft call.

FORD: What does it do to the ceiling on armed forces?

MCNAMARA: We lift the ceiling. We have authority to do that now.

FORD: It is not entirely clear. Appropriations bill is in Senate. Under 4 you would ...

PRESIDENT: Would call up reserves now and make out estimates in new bill.

MCNAMARA: The rate of activity is difficult to forecast. Considering increasing chopper and plane activity. Don't know what the total is. Under #4 we ask Congress for blank check. Under #5 we can be more specific -- come back to Congress in January with clear understanding.

Under #5 we would ask for \$1.5 billion.

FORD: How much is the difference?

ALBERT: In both cases Westmoreland gets what he wants - with less fanfare.

ARENDS: How many men?

MCNAMARA: We don't know -- we will meet requirements. Right now 50,000 additional. We will ship NOW -- as soon as the decision is made.

RUSK: During monsoon season, there has not been a sharp increase in conventional fighting. Increase is in terror tactics.

PRESIDENT: I've asked you to come here not as Democrats or Republicans but as Americans. I don't want any of you to talk about what is going on. The press is going to be all over you. Let me appeal to you as Americans to show your patriotism by not talking to the press. I'm going to do everything I can, with honor, to keep Russia and China out.

DIRKSEN: I quite agree with your premise. The first business is to peel off dramatics. Tell the country we are engaged in very serious business. People are apathetic. Afraid we are stripping Europe components.

MCNAMARA: Baloney on stripping. We are not stripping. It is not necessary.

DIRKSEN: We don't need to withhold information.

PRESIDENT: We won't withhold. We want to announce as soon as troops arrive.

In the morning I will consult Ike and tell him what we hope to do and get his views.

I will see the Chairman² of Foreign Relations, Appropriations and Armed Forces.

Then announce decision on press conference.

DIRKSEN: Five months is a long time. I don't think you can wait. If you need the money, you ought to ask for it.

PRESIDENT: We have the money, 50 Billion plus 800 million. When you come back in January you'll have a bill of several billion dollars.

MANSFIELD: I agree with Dirksen in apathy in the country. I would not be true to myself if I didn't speak. This position has certain inevitability. Whatever pledge we had was to assist SVN in its own defense. Since then there has been no government of legitimacy. We ought to make that decision every day. We owe this government nothing -- no pledge of any kind. We are going deeper into war. Even total victory would be vastly costly. Best hope for salvation is quick stalemate and negotiations. We cannot expect our people to support a war for 3-5 years. What we are about is an anti-Communist crusade, on --- Escalation begets escalation.