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#30 meeting notes	<p><i>open 1-20-93 NJ 91-129</i></p> <p>Dec. 21, 1965 - meeting with foreign policy advisors 5 p. possible classified information</p> <p><i>SANITIZED WSC 3-24-82</i></p>	12/21/65	A

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CABINET ROOM
December 21, 1965
(President, Rusk, McNamara, Ball, A. Johnson, Bundy, Valenti)

Rusk Let the Christmas stand-down go.

President What should I say?

Ball There is perfectly good language.

A Johnson Not everyone in Saigon is signed on -- they are getting to Ky now. This evening the Vietnamese will be making a statement. It's a good statement. Having urged this on them, I wouldn't want to take the play away from them.

President I can't say anything tomorrow. If we have anything, we ought to say it and get credit for it.

A Johnson The question is, how it is said in Vietnam. Tonight our time. Everybody but the Prime Minister has signed on.

President (?) I don't think I should say anything except yes or no on the cease fire.

A Johnson My thought was we'd follow up with a similar statement.

President I would say: "We and our allies will take no military initiative except in self defense on Christmas Day."

 We'd say this as soon as it is cleared. What about New Years and TET?

Rusk Much more comprehensive operation on TET.

President Do we do anything else?

Bundy

We ought to examine the question of a continuous pause, the only kind useful with the Soviets. Benevolent, but not internationally significant unless we have a clear specific period. We could get a major political advantage from this.

One paragraph in Lodge's message says that bombing be stopped on Christmas, New Years, and TET -- bad weather, etc.

Rusk

Would that story work?

McNamara

Not really, but we can blur it with statistics and bad weather.

Rusk

I'd go ahead with Christmas -- and beyond that, talk to the Hungarians to see.

We won't link anything else to it -- and wait to hear.

Bundy

But you won't hear in that time frame. Unless you tell the Russians something they won't do anything.

Rusk

I'm not giving up the possibility for a pause. But we ought to talk to the Hungarians and Russians.

Bundy

I don't see where it leads us.

Rusk

Go for one day at Christmas. Defer further action until we talk to the Hungarians and Russians.

Bundy

Do you think they will tell us anything they haven't before?

Rusk

If Thompson had one of his personal chats with Dobrynin he might pick up something.

Does the President think a pause is possible while Congress is in session?

President

Yes, but don't look with favor on it--it's more a sign of weakness than anything else. All we'll get is distrust from our allies, despair from the troops, and disgruntled generals.

Hanoi and Peking tell us we're weak--won't do anything if we pause. If we suffer a severe reverse as a result of this, we'd never explain it. It's not difficult to explain why we fight when we are attacked every hour. But when commanders say it's suicide, and we do it anyway, there's no explanation.

I want more evidence from the Russians before I override Taylor and Wheeler et al.

Rusk

Congress returns on the 10th? We'll see if we can get more evidence from the Hungarians and Russians.

Bundy

I don't find the cables persuasive, but I understand your position. I think the cables miss the point--as a commitment to do nothing for a month. We can stop bombing, not say anything, and resume when we choose.

President

Would pressure mount to tell the press?

Bundy

Yes, it would be brutal. But Christmas and _____ seem a logical time to pause.

looks
like
"Congress"

Ball

We don't know if the Russians are really organizing a Communist Congress in the spring.

President

1. Once we take our step, we could have serious problems to resume bombing.

2. The danger is that it conveys the wrong signal -- and I think it does.

If men we rely on to fight for us feel as strongly as they do -- as Lodge does -- I'd hate to have them at odds with us.

McNamara

We've had a good discussion. But we need political initiative. But we have had the best discussion ever on this subject.

President

Yes, but this is not the political initiative we want now.

McNamara

Question: Should we take out POL in Haiphong? I say we need to--but not at this time.

We need to go into Hanoi circle--30 miles-- and take three bridges in this circle. Let the field commanders pick up 4 out of 7 possible targets. This would begin Thursday noon our time. The probability is that it will be after Christmas due to weather. Those targets are only a few miles inside the circle.

Bundy

There is a Cambodian problem as a result of giving commanders the right to defend their troops.

The leak came from Saigon. The first story came from Keys Beach--and Times confirmed it.

President

Mansfield was very laudatory about Keys Beach. I think our Congressmen go out and are very frank --and to show how smart they are.

I had the Governors out to my Ranch--and I told Reed of Maine he was the leak to Charles Nohr of the Times.

(about the Wilson letter)

President

Is this saleable to Congress?

Rusk

No, ANF is more saleable than MLF--but because details are not available, we can't sell it to Congress.

Ball

• Nothing more involved than the sale of Polaris--can't be detached during the life of the Alliance and fired elsewhere.

In exchange for this, we'll get money.

? Van Hassel says this will give them a place to invert their money on offset.

President

The soundings I made showed a lack of interest in helping the Germans.

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.