

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#37 meeting notes	1/22/66 meeting with foreign policy advisors on resumption of bombing  possible classified information 10 p. <i>sanitized 2-18-88 NLJ 86-201</i> <i>"C" closing removed 12-9-92</i>	1/22/66	A <del>and C</del>

FILE LOCATION

Meeting Notes File, Box 1

DCH 10/81

RESTRICTION CODES

- (A) Closed by Executive Order 11652 governing access to national security information.  
(B) Closed by statute or by the agency which originated the document.  
(C) Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in the donor's deed of gift.



Meeting in the Cabinet Room  
Date: January 22, 1966  
Time: 12 noon to 2:12 p.m.

37

SANITIZED  
Authority NLS 86-201  
By sig, NARA. Date 6-9-92

Present: President, Rusk, Helms, McNamara, Harriman, Taylor, Ball, Raborn, Thompson, Goldberg, Mac Bundy, Valenti

(From notes by J. Valenti)

President: Want to survey what has happened -- and see what is ahead of us. Want to feel I have options to proceed on what is the best interests of the United States. Hope we can keep what we say totally secret. Want McNamara to give report on what happened in his testimony.

McNamara: Generally 15 to 20 members present. Committee split -- Gavin approach -- and -- the other: expand the bombing -- even to taking on China.

Believe it is possible to bring the poles together -- same thing can be done, I believe, with public.

President: Is there much criticism of what we have done?

McNamara: Not so much in the pause. Eight to twelve are critical of our bombing policy. My answer: not fundamental to what we do in the South. Difference between McNamara and Chiefs is very minor. POL and power plants are only difference.

Far too much time directed at these minor differences rather than direction of the war.

No change in pattern of activity in pre-pause period. (What has happened in last 30 days.)

PAVN building up response for future. Will have 220,000 by first of March. Commanders tell us they'll need 400,000 by end of year.

Westmoreland requests 75 battalions instead of 45 -- 99 by end of year.

President: Anticipate Chinese coming in?

McNamara: No. This based on China not coming in. This month we'll drop twice the level of bombs as in peak Korea period. Will expand this further.

By end of year, we'll be in roughly same balance with VC as we are now. All this assumes China will not come in.

Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

2

President: Rusk, what are we waiting to hear from? What suggestions do you have? (a)(5)

Rusk: Only live contact still open is Laos. [ This is delicate contact -- has become known. Souvanna dropped it at dinner party. ] (a)(5)

[ If you ask continuous pause and discontinues force buildup, North Vietnam will talk.

But doesn't say what North Vietnam will do in regard to military side.

General advice from Yugoslavs is: take more time to do anything.

General international approval on pause. But this is thin and resumption of bombing would produce general disappointment internationally.

Key point to be tested: whether or not there has been response from other side.

President: Admiral Raborn, any information you have? Movements in the last 30 days ?

Raborn: Indications are North Vietnam is rebuilding all repairs -- resumed normal daylight infiltrations to South -- food, etc. 4500 a month. Roads improved to take 250 tons a day, roughly double the number of troops required in North Vietnam.

Some indication that VC are getting a bloody nose. Morale may be deteriorating. Commencing to feel effects of military actions against them. VC unhappy that Hanoi (unreadable) worldwide -- frightens them.

Goldberg: I have confirmation of Rusk and McNamara. U Thant anxious to make a proposal. His public statement was not good but could have been much worse. He said he would like a coalition government reflecting his French conversations. Privately, he is willing to propose the five powers plus North and South Vietnam -- including the National Liberation Front. This very best we can get him to do. U Thant has feeling something may come of all this..

Have checked Ambassadors at UN. UK wants pause continued. Italy has crisis. Moro has been loyal friend. Needs pause to shore him (up) domestically.



Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

3

Canada for pause.

Thailand doesn't want U.S. to show weakness.

France push pause for three months.

Bloc countries need time, they say.

Latin Americans support pause longer if military situation permits.

Indians talk about initiative on their part.

Yugoslavs believe Soviets need more time.

U Thant places great importance on Laos move. Thinks it is definite forward step.

Friends want us to go along more -- nonaligned want more.

Bloc countries stress you need more time from communist countries than other countries.

President: General Taylor, what do you think?

Taylor: Events have developed about as we anticipated. Profitable move but now at resumption point. I think the longer we wait to tidy up loose ends, the harder it is to resume.

President: Therefore, you recommend...

Taylor: We ought to resume bombing.

President: If we can, we ought to say to all countries -- we have gone 30 days -- and that's longer than any of us agreed to do or thought. Thus, tell them we've had no response -- we are not obligated or well advised to keep one hand tied behind us. Without saying we are resuming bombing, we must get this across. We can talk to military people to find out how to exert maximum strength at minimum danger.

Do we have pledge to tell anyone what we do?

Rusk: Notify British, Canadians, one or two others if we resume.

Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

4

President: Tell them today we feel free to move whenever we judge it to be required since others have not responded.

Rusk: Effect of my statement yesterday was that string has run out.

McNamara: Think it wise to send out message as President suggests to go on record.

Harriman: We must build up case of what has moved forward since cessation of bombing -- need to show men and materiel moving down -- or use some provocative act as reason. We have built much good will, we must try to preserve as much as possible. Try to get public opinion to isolate Hanoi.

President: Important before we take action we carefully consider every step we could take to hold what approval we can. Think we'll keep little because the countries don't want the war to go on. They really want unilateral disarmament. If other people respond at all, we could carry the pause further. I'm of the mind to continue it anyway -- but we've had no indication of any success at all. We can't impose hardships on our soldiers much longer. How to do this is what I want State to work on.

Now I gather we gave no indication that we haven't done what we promised. I think we have gone much longer than we said.

Bundy: We said 12 to 20 days.

Goldberg: I want to add Pope and U Thant to those we consult.

President: Are we keeping in touch with the Pope?

Bundy: Yes, within 48 hours.

Goldberg: I am told that there have been no North Vietnamese soldiers involved this month -- or since November.

Bundy: That's a TIMES story.

President: What do you hear from Westmoreland and Lodge? Their fears from military standpoint?



Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

5

McNamara: Unanimous view of military commanders we must resume bombing. If not, can expect higher level of infiltration.

My impression is Lodge feels this way. All officers from second level feel this way. Even getting emotional. They see North Vietnamese - actions to reconstruct bridges, moving substantial units through Laos.

All indications are of substantial buildup during pause -- and preparing for intensified action in South Vietnam. My own appraisal -- they overestimate the effect of North bombing in stopping infiltration.

Helms: May I interrupt? We have report of economist. Increased bombing in the North would not stop movement of supplies to the South.

McNamara: We need to really search this out. I think it essential to resume the bombing. We've had good fortune with the pause. Consider more peace moves, but unless we resume bombing, we will give wrong signal to Hanoi, Peking and our own people.

Strongly recommend bombing resumption.

Raborn: Our reports support McNamara. View about wrong signal.

Thompson: We have given impression we would not continue pause unless something happened. Soviets told me pause wouldn't be considered sign of weakness.

How could we be weak when we are bringing in additional troops and money?

Raborn: Hanoi might believe domestic pressures and international opinion causes us to hold back.

Ball: Let me utter minority view. Only one systematic way to resolve this -- list pros and cons.

President: I would think you are wrong. I read your excellent brief. Is the pause continuation a sign to Saigon that we are pulling out?

Taylor: Yes. I think they are beginning to suspect things and it is causing them difficulty.

McNamara: Also my opinion. Seen signs of it in the cables. We haven't told Saigon anything at all about our buildup. They also see controversy in this country. They don't understand why we don't punish those who foster the war.

Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

6

Ball: If that is the case, why don't we sit down with Ky and tell him.

McNamara: Because it would leak. We haven't told the U.S. people.

Rusk: I think we'll see a drop in morale if we don't resume. Ky told me we talk about their country without telling them. It embarrasses them.

President: I have a feeling Ky, Lodge, Westmoreland were against the pause. We did it. Overdone. They were good soldiers and enduring it as long as they can.

I'm distressed when I see frantic attitude on part of some of our Senators and Congressmen. I've always known we're on thin ice. I'm aware of this. Go ahead, George.

Ball: Question: On evidence I've seen, bombing is not effectively going to interdict supply requirements. Needs are too small.

What effect bombing on will of Hanoi? Experience in the past shows it doesn't erode will of a people.

Comes down to this: most reasonable argument is that it gives a bad signal to Hanoi. That is a possibility.

1. Effect on morale in Saigon, hard to evaluate.

Wrong signal to Hanoi. This is persuasive.

We don't know what the flash point is if we escalate.

McNamara: About flash point, we can carry on level of bombing of last November without hitting flash point. If we go beyond that point, we may draw them in.

President: If we go back in, the pressure will be on us to go further. Your Senators proved that.

McNamara: That's true. But I think I persuaded them that differences in bombing targets will not affect the course of the war. Our bombing has evolved slowly -- so slowly we were successful in interdicting rail lines between China and Hanoi.

President: What do we signal to the enemy if we resume?



Thompson: Peace moves may be more important than stopping bombing. What Russians do hinges on China. If we take out Hanoi airfields, pressure on China to use their fields. If China decides to let their fields be used, it will no doubt try to get Russians to come in.

Peace moves have eased pressure on Russians.

President: If we didn't resume it, would they assume we are weak at home and would have to pull out?

Thompson: No. The Soviets have indicated that what we do in the South doesn't affect them.

Bundy: How would Asian countries view it?

Thompson: Don't know.

Rusk: Sat around the table during Korean War. Was with MacArthur when he made mistake about China coming in. But because we have moved slowly, we have been able to do a great deal. If we don't resume, China will think a sanctuary has been approved and they can do more than ever. This could be important.

Goldberg: This move might involve more conversation between Soviets and China, dampening their ideological conflict.

If we draw Soviets and China closer together, it puts a wedge at helping nonproliferation. I get much evidence of this in my talks. "Don't push us into cooperation," they say.

Ball: Must do what we can to make an independent peace with Hanoi. This is more difficult if North Vietnam becomes more dependent upon on China. Hanoi under pressure from China to do more. To extent we direct an attack on Hanoi, we build up pressure to continue war and achieve Chinese objectives.

Realistically, we are not going to let Ky make a separate deal with Hanoi.

Eventually, if we bomb, we'll see Chinese -- not fighting men but coolie workers -- all over Hanoi. There is a difference between bombing in the North and fighting in the South.



Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

8

President: I feel that we have given away a trading point without getting anything in return.

Next, the cry will be not to bomb in the South.

Ball: There is a fundamental difference. We are in South Vietnam — we are helping them. But we bomb in the North to punish them. We are big, powerful; they have no air force and are small. It's like Italy bombing Ethiopia.

If we make clear this is not done from weakness, and that we are going ahead -- it is supportable.

Taylor: If we give up bombing, we will seriously hurt the war effort. We should punish Hanoi, else we will (be) there 20 years.

Goldberg: But evidence shows that rate of infiltration continues with bombing.

Rusk: In the Korean War, we destroyed everything east of Yalu. Every time they attacked they had to wait and restock. Prisoners told us it took them five days to go 45 miles.

Taylor: I confirm the Secretary's comments about Korea. Bombing has an effect on the number of troops the enemy can commit on the front lines.

W. Bundy: I believe we should resume. Believe we need a few days to tidy up though I'm in sympathy with Taylor's remarks.

We need to run through the Vientiane thing. On January 17 the North Vietnam Charge d'Affaires went to Souvanna -- and raised questions about 14 points. Went into detail about the points.

Souvanna asked him if he should pass this on. Said no.

Souvanna mentioned this at dinner on January 18 and it leaked. Sent message that Souvanna could act as mediator and answered questions about 14 points.

Souvanna called in North Vietnam Charge today and reported to our Ambassador today. North Vietnam asked further questions such as why we are reinforcing our troops.

Until we probe further on this, we ought not start.

Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

9

Ball: Problem of communication. Few plans going to and from Hanoi and Vientiane.

Bundy: Also have circuit to close in Paris.

Kohler has instructions to seek appointment with Chargé in Moscow. - Have no response. He has instructions when he sees him to make full statement of our position.

Rusk: The Vice President and I probed Kosygin hard on this and got no reaction. The Soviets have denied they mentioned Moscow as site of meeting place.

Bundy: I asked Dobrynin about Kosygin and Shastri. He had no information.

W. Bundy: General suggestion by number two Soviet man here was to be in direct communication with Hanoi.

President: Have Soviets retreated from what they told us?

Bundy: Not formally. But they don't assert they have tried to get Hanoi to the table.

Goldberg: Dobrynin says "I can't commit my government. You have made a good move."

President: Aren't you going back to Kohler and Souvanna and see if we can close that circuit?

W. Bundy: Yes, we intend to do that today.

Rusk: U Thant is a man of no principles.

Goldberg: Yes, but we may get a man of less principle.

If we get Sawicki (the African), U Thant will look like a shining star.

President: We ought to get out to all the countries we need to notify.

We haven't bombed in thirty days. But they have done nothing. They are reinforcing -- rebuilding -- reinfiltrating --



Meeting in Cabinet Room  
January 22, 1966

10

Even bombed us (unreadable) Saigon. We went into this in good faith, We wanted to examine every and any chance for peace. We have gone longer than anyone thought necessary. Now, this is what they have done.

Not telling them we will begin bombing again -- but here is the picture.

Now, George, go on.

Ball: You have made it clear we are searching for peace. I think there would be value for you to write the six governments and tell them Rusk is willing to meet with them. This would be a formal act by you -- not just a speech.

President: Let the State Department get together and see if there's anything we can do along this line. And have this back at our next meeting.

END OF MEETING.