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#38 meeting notes	1/24/66 meeting with foreign policy advisors on resumption of bombing <i>Savigny NSC 3-24-82</i> possible classified information 4 p.	1/24/66	A

FILE LOCATION

Meeting Notes File, Box 1

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Present: President, Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, Taylor, Valenti

Bundy: Westmoreland says (through Porter) that he can wait a few days after Tet before resuming, but not longer. Increasing risk. "Undue risk particularly in IV Corps zone."

Taylor: No danger in day or two, but no longer.

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Rusk: Important problem as to whether you see Fulbright. You would shore up some opposition if you saw Fulbright. Committee would have no serious problem if you see Fulbright.

In the House we'd get Ford, Arends, and Mahan. Don't know about Bow. Rivers and Bates are with us. We'll lose only Fulbright and Mansfield.

How long does it take to communicate an order through Westmoreland?
If we tell them we're ready, how long before target selected and ready to go?

McNamara: 24 hours, I'd say. It would be better if we gave them the kind of target.

President: Are they doing us any damage now?

McNamara: After Tet, I can't say. They have thrown mortars at us.

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President: What do you recommend, Dean?

Rusk: Make firm decision to resume on Friday or Saturday.

Full report submitted to Security Council beginning with Laotian Conference in 1962.

Wilson's appointment to Moscow was announced before the pause, so he has no critical reason to hold us back.

President: Bob, what do you recommend?

McNamara: I'd go sooner. Political delay can be damaging. Start Wednesday. Don't feel strongly Wednesday or Thursday.

Taylor: The sooner the better. Wouldn't want longer than 48 hours.

Rusk: Reaction to our Ambassador's cables is that most governments are expecting this.

President: I think we'll spend a good deal of political capital in resuming. I don't agree with Bob or General Taylor in that we'll gain politically from this.

I think we ought to -- quietly -- visit with Dirksen and see how he feels. Quietly talk to a couple of Republicans in the House. Then next morning, meet with leadership, when I'm ready to go -- so they can't leak anything.

Suggest we talk briefly now about type of target and weight.

(McNamara?): (1) Small attack on infiltration point directly relating to infiltration route. (unreadable) it alerts the enemy -- and ruins surprise. (2) Perishable targets. (3) POL. Advantage is surprise and antiaircraft will be less alert. Recommend against POL though, and recommend perishable targets. Recommend against targets north of Hanoi.

President: Why don't we tell the leaders that if we continue to get pictures of supplies coming down, we must stop them. It will make it difficult for Fulbright to argue against this. I won't say anything specific, but I will say I can't wait forever for these supplies to come down.

Bundy: I'm having a sanitized document prepared to show communist activity. It is a persuasive document (Bundy showed President the document).

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Only problem is the one which we haven't closed down. All else shows nothing.

We are left with Vientiane. My brother went over it with the British and Australians. Both said, "You'll have to hold off until you hear more."

Rusk: If you are going to see Dirksen, I urge you to see Fulbright and Hickenlooper before you make a decision.

Taylor: On the bombing program, I hope we'll get back to hitting the key rail and bridges. POL will help stop the trucks, too.

Rusk: Think we ought to knock out the power stations south of the 24th parallel.

McNamara: We have.

President: Be prepared to meet tomorrow afternoon. Bring Wheeler.

Rusk: Got to give thought to a statement with the communist world in mind.

Bundy: How many friends ought to get a pilot message that we have just about made up our minds?

Rusk: We probably already have done that with our previous cables.

(Decided -- with the lead of Bundy -- that a White House statement be issued -- and Rusk to hold a backgrounder citing chapter and verse.)

President: When you go to Sharp, Bob, tell him we are thinking along these possibilities -- and get their views.

Rusk: Tragedy about situation is that Fulbright statement urging extending the pause and recognizing the Viet Cong. Times will pick it up and applaud it.

Bundy: And denounce us for smothering debate.

McNamara: Ask Sharp to reply by 5 p.m. our time tomorrow. They can be ready after...

(Discussion on whether to send Vice President with Freeman to Saigon. Taylor, McNamara worried about security. Bundy and Rusk join in to advise against sending him.)

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About leadership.

Instead of having altogether, bring into Mansion the Senate group --
and later in the day, bring in House group.

Meeting ended at 7:30.

END OF NOTES

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