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#43 meeting notes	1/29/66 meeting with foreign policy advisors on resumption of bombing <i>Sanitized NSC 3-24-82</i> possible classified information 5 p.	1/29/66	A

FILE LOCATION

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Meeting in President's Office
January 29, 1966
Time: 11:35 a.m. - 12:40 p.m.

Present: President, Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, Wheeler, Moyers, and Valenti

(From Notes of Meeting by J. Valenti)

Rusk: I talked to Thompson about the Soviets. Not worried about pushing them into a corner right now. Thinks we ought to break the suspense -- it will give Hanoi wrong signal, combined with Fulbright and his Senators.

Ball would like more time. Think hard about bombing policy. Massive support of our troops -- stay away from those things which cause risk. Very careful about immediate Hanoi and Haiphong area. Make it clear it is the other side who will escalate -- not us.

President: Are we trying to hold down statements from other nations?

[X] Rusk: We are sending out (unreadable) to Ambassadors.

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McNamara: Believe we should resume -- whether Monday their time or Tuesday their time. Would recommend Monday their time.

Recommend targets south of Hanoi.

President: When is the first we could do it without announcing on Sunday?

McNamara: On Tuesday morning their time, bombing wouldn't occur until 5 p.m. Monday our time. On the air probably 7 or 8 Monday night.

Rusk: If we had working day -- Monday -- to notify governments, it would be better. Need to get embassies set. Wouldn't tell more than four or five exact time.

Wheeler: When will we tell the South Vietnamese?

Rusk: Tell Ky the evening before.

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Wheeler: Would hate to see it go any below that. Leaks would occur.

Manuscript notes indicate
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Meeting in President's Office
January 29, 1966

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Rusk: The 11 p.m. news would have it Monday night.

President: What trouble if announced on Sunday?

Rusk: Not consider it a problem.

President: If announced on Sunday, it would close up debate -- but Ministers might get noisy.

Moyers: Don't think the Ministers will cause trouble. Problem of waiting til Tuesday will open up more sores here with questions.

Bundy: Would rather go Monday.

Moyers: Lodge could make the announcement -- "began Monday Saigon time." Being Sunday makes it easier for us.

Bundy: We don't announce until planes are back, do we? Announce midnight Monday.

President: As soon as you can... desirable for Lodge to announce to press there. Prepared statement by me before cameras. Followed by a prepared statement by Rusk-- emphasizing pause -- answer questions-- getting us far away from bombing -- and going back to where we were before. Might keep us away from nuclear war -- people like Gore.

Picked out about five men around the country -- one man said "have you and Rusk gone crazy -- you've been sitting around doing nothing."

Had talk with Fortas. Net of what he said was that whole communist world was working to prolong the pause.

Rusk: If that's their object, the communists have been stupid.

President: Don't think we ought to discuss military plans with Senators. Problems with Senate and 76 in the house. But the thing that worries me are the others who want to go after it.

McNamara: That worries me, too. We must not add fuel to this fire -- not to discuss how much they have done so we can knock hell out of them.

Taylor: I would suggest a joint announcement by the Vietnamese Government and U.S.

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Bundy: As soon as first bomb is down, we can announce.

Drafted message to CINCPAC to get going any time after 0001 on any day President determines. We can't sit here and predict when first bomb goes down. Time will vary from early morning til mid-day. It could be a small operation if weather is bad.

Rusk: Important to hit those infiltration routes -- where we lose the fewest planes.

(Wheeler showed armed reconnaissance routes.)

Wheeler: We should mount 500-strike effort -- a later 300-strike effort. Weather has been bad.

President: Is it desirable to go in with that heavy an effort?

Wheeler: We've been seeing larger convoys of trucks on these routes. 500-strike sorties is not too heavy to put on this.

Rusk: I would hope if they use a 50-truck convoy and stay with this target until finish it off.

Wheeler: They will.

McNamara: I would recommend a lesser quantity, such as 200. I doubt the effect of the advantage of 500 over 200.

To be quite frank, I would hard pressed to show trucks on the road. Also it may be difficult for the jets to hit them. Vietnamese are on alert. Probability is exactly what you have outlined -- we must control ourselves without violating the military requirement.

Wheeler: We can go in with any number you want, Mr. President. We need more than targets -- pontoons and other targets. These are hard to see. Pontoon bridges are in place now.

There are a number of truck rest stops.

President: But if it created a clamor around the world --

Moyers: There is a general belief that if you go in with four times the number it will look like escalation.

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President: How many can you mount without moving in another carrier?

Wheeler: 300

President: Let's do that and bring up that carrier later.

Wheeler: Do you authorize us to continue at a rate of 300 a day?

Bundy: What day, Mr. President?

President: I think Monday.

Bundy: Lodge would announce about midnight.

McNamara: Lodge announce after return of first aircraft.

President: Let's get a summary of all we've done and be ready to go with this -- so Lodge can background the press.

Taylor: Will you leave to Lodge to work in the Saigon Government?

Rusk: U Thant may scream if we report this to the Security Council under the SEATO Treaty. (unreadable) our obligation to report to SC (Security Council). If we offer a resolution and it is vetoed, Morse will say the UN has rejected us -- and we ought to get out of South Vietnam.

Two difficult points:

1. Pressure to take cease-fire without recognition of other side.
2. Recognition of VC.

President: Morse will go to repeal the resolution.

Rusk: If on Monday morning we announce we're reporting to the Security Council, that would mute Morse.

Moyers: Send message to Pope and say plan seems possible and will work at it. Include this in your statement.

President: You want to ask for a vote in the Security Council? Don't we want to take initiative in peace efforts? Maximum initiative on our part.

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Rusk: I have statement I want to go over with Goldberg.

President: Was Clifford right about talking about peace as a deterrent to peace?

McNamara and Bundy: Disagree with Clifford.

Wheeler: I agree with Clifford.

President: We have to demonstrate to people we are not Goldwater.

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But we must make it clear that our military program will go forward vigorously.

But we can't talk about peace on Saturday morning. We must do it all the time.

(President talked about Morse electing Hatfield because Hatfield is against Vietnam.)

We have to keep shoving on peace. I want Wheeler to have running room. Rusk has got to keep moving on peace -- let's keep Goldberg busy on peace resolutions.

If you can do more than report to the Security Council, I think we ought to do so. Do we have the best resolution possible?

We would make statement about 9 a.m. Monday. Rusk would have news conference at 10 a.m.

What should we do in Security Council meeting?

Bundy: Intelligence reports -- don't tip hand. Don't discuss level of bombing. Report on military and political situation.

END OF MEETING