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#47 meeting notes	1/24/66 meeting with Congressional leaders <i>San 1/20 N5C 3-24 - 12</i> possible classified information 5 p.	1/24/66	A

FILE LOCATION

Meeting Notes File, Box 1

DCH 10/81

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Meeting in Cabinet Room

Date: February 24, 1966

Time: 8:00 (presumably p.m. but should check)

H

Present: President, Vice President, Harriman, as well as
Congressional Leaders; McCormack, Albert, Smathers, Ford, Arends,
Kuchel, Boggs, Long, Dirksen.

President: The Vice President made report to me. Governor Harriman
and Vice President are in general agreement. Make brief report to you
and me now. Make (unreadable) available to all members of Congress.

Had letter from General Westmoreland. Very reassuring. Didn't have
shortages -- nothing to impair operations of health of troops.

In due time, Lodge and Westmoreland to come back and make report.
Will ask leadership to talk frankly with them -- and various committees
also.

Vice President: Objectives are clear. Stop aggression -- bring a better
life to all people. No one saw easy solution. No one predicted speedy end.
Aggression can be defeated, subversion could be stopped, social revolution
can be started.

Difficult to talk of victory in this country. Some people resent victory.
I went as researcher, not as advocate.

If we don't (unreadable) -- don't weaken -- help South Vietnam build a
better society, our objective can be accomplished.

First two years of the Marshal Plan, six changes of government in France.

While we didn't select the battlefield, it isn't the best place for R. C.
(presumably Red China) either. Westmoreland is great soldier. Backed
by high caliber civilian team.

Thieu and Ky are men of high leadership. Don't know how long they'll
survive. These men are trying to do what is right. Ky has reorganized
Cabinet to deal with problems that need solving. October will be plebiscite
on Constitution.

Went over skeptical about B-52s. They are doing superlative job in
blasting VC redoubts that haven't been reached for 10 years.

When ports are all working this summer, we will be doing much better.

Have plan of pacification -- as soon as an area is secured, their pacification
teams move in. Training of cadres to do this goes on.

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By DLH, DARS, Date 4-11-82

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Meeting in Cabinet Room
February 24, 1966

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Philippines will soon be sending engineer construction battalion.
Koreans will be sending 25,000 more men.

In Laos, Souvanna Phouma said he would fight to the death. Army of 80,000 -- but equipment for only 60,000. If Pathet Lao move to the Mekong, our plans for that river will go away. Talked to Indians and Pakistanis about implementing Tashkent Agreement.

Famine is real in India. They're trying hard.

President: More people will die this year from hunger in India and Pakistan than all of the people now living in North and South Vietnam.

Vice President: They are improving agriculture standards and techniques.

Australian Government is with us 100 per cent. Are studying ways to increase our aid to Vietnam.

Spent time in New Zealand with opposition. They pledge to keep in Vietnam the battalion already there.

In Manila, found Marcos a real leader. Put his entire political life on the line. Dastardly are the news stories coming from U.S. -- "Philippines are human mercenaries."

Marcos made strong statement -- courageous statement -- in which he came down firmly on side of U.S.

In Korea, Pak hopes to have more troops there by first week in March. Spent time with government party and opposition. Not one act of hostility on part of the Koreans.

Vietnam is immediate battleground -- part of larger struggle. Tide of battle has turned in Vietnam. We need to understand that this battle can be won. Realization that improving the lot of the people is the way to the future.

President: Will ask Gene Black to go back and make another visit to this area where he brought into existence the Asia Development Bank.

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Meeting in Cabinet Room
February 24, 1966

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Vice President: No doubt in Asia who the culprit is blocking peace talks -- Hanoi. Your peace offensive showed that.

Only concern about U.S. is our perseverance to stick it out and stay. I tried to persuade them that our commitment was deep.

If you want to see hopes of people come alive, you must go see those people and their hopes. I did that.

I don't think we have to hold back -- and not talk of beating the VC. We can beat them -- and are beating them.

President: Believe non-communist people are willing to resist aggression.

Also believe the communists are ready to take it over.

Dulles signed SEATO Treaty in Manila -- which spoke our resolve to resist aggression -- 82 to 1 (Langer) in the Senate.

Before we went in, ground forces -- and began to bomb -- I remember Senator Taft saying Truman should have gotten resolution from Congress. So I went to the Congress after Tonkin. Wanted Congress to join me -- in "preventing aggression." SEATO ought to be enforced. Resolution was debated after hearings. I believe that the Congress knew what they were voting on. I've done everything I know how to bring them to the conference table. They don't want to talk.

We ought to be ready to meet Westmoreland's request. I intend to carry out the resolution. If you choose, you can repeal the resolution. I think I have the authority without the resolution.

We aim to do all that's prudent to bring this from the battleground to the bargaining table.

McCormack: Resolution repeal wouldn't get to first base.

Dirksen: Repeal wouldn't get four votes.

Ford: Agree with Speaker. What was impact of those who want to withdraw?

Vice President: I explain when this question is asked that dissent is part of this society. I told them that when the chips are down the people are firmly resolved to see it through. People in the world need to know of our unity.

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Meeting in Cabinet Room
February 24, 1966

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We need to let communists know of our resolve.

It doesn't help.

President (?): Ambassador Lodge report last night. (Incidentally this is Secret and should not be taken out of this room.)

Visited First Cavalry. They just had been through a bloody campaign. VC in the (unreadable) priority area are virtually cut off. Our boys showed them how to fight hand-to-hand.

Can't understand why Americans who dissent can't do their dissenting in private. Once we are committed to a program of action, there never has been public dissent. You have to go back to the Civil War to find this public dissent. Men can't understand why prominent men in the United States continue to criticize our policy. Our men understand why we are in Vietnam even if our Senators can't.

Government in Vietnam could not survive if VC were brought into Government. What Hanoi wants is for us to meet their conditions. They have made no concessions whatsoever. We want peace. They want conflict.

They regard us as weak. Therefore, they think they will win. To treat VC, who are murderous and assassins, as legitimate government would disintegrate all that we have in Vietnam.

Honolulu Conference has focused attention on the "other war". Now the eyes of a major campaign has been opened to ending poverty. Newspapers in Saigon are full of comments on the social revolution going on in Vietnam.

Harriman: Most fortunate you sent the Vice President out this time. Leaders in all countries were worried about our commitment. I share everything the Vice President has said. Our allies want to be sure we're going to stick. Lippmann and The New York Times have contributed to this feeling.

Kuchel: Laos. Another example of how the communist word doesn't amount to much?

Rusk: Much in Vietnam is based on fact we can have a Laos agreement in Vietnam. Look at Laos agreement -- if you want to test what can be done in dealing with communists, look at Laos. (Obvious garble in proceeding.)

Presume Rusk said we can not have a Laos agreement in Vietnam.

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Boggs, Albert (presumably speaking together): Vice President did great job.

Long: Hope Vice President can come before the Foreign Relations Committee and tell this story.

President: Statements about Vice President making commitments:

Congress gave me authority to commit money. We held up India and Pakistan money until Tashkent.

Following Tashkent, I told both I would send someone out to talk to them. After Tashkent it was time to reopen talks. It was decided that it was wise to grant India \$100 million and Pakistan \$50 million.

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I said, "Okay, we'll make no announcements now."

Vice President: I have been accused in editorials of making conditions.

I merely said:

1. Implement Tashkent.
2. Quit throwing dead cats at the U.S. If you disagree, tell us in private.

President: I hope I can talk to you in private -- and keep this secret -- you are part of this policy.

Smathers: What about the average citizen in Vietnam?

President: No Vice President has ever testified before a Committee -- but will talk to any groups you want him to meet with informally.

Vice President: There is no evidence of defection to VC of average Vietnamese people.

END OF MEETING

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