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#51 meeting notes	4/4/66 meeting with foreign policy advisors on Vietnam 3 p sanitized NSC 3-24-81 possible classified information open 5-27-92 NLJ 91-383	4/4/66	A

FILE LOCATION

Meeting Notes File, Box 1

DCH 10/81

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Meeting in the Cabinet Room
Date: April 4, 1966
Time: 7:10 p.m.

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Present: President, Vice President, Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, General Taylor, Bill Bundy, Justice Fortas, J. Valenti

(from notes by J. Valenti)

President said Westmoreland thinks "prospect of success in Danang." Said he didn't think so. McNamara and Rusk agreed with President.

President thinks it important to keep our troops and equipment out of riot area. We don't want to become involved.

President approved telegram (first one) on what posture Vietnam people should take -- hands off.

President wonders about (second telegram) on political situation. Says appeasement never wins. Worried about a constitutional assembly -- rather have someone we can control rather than a communist takeover at the Assembly.

Rostow: Government has not been credible.

President: Why and how?

Rostow: Ky was going to call a group to draft a constitution -- and hasn't done so.

President: What are problems in calling it?

Rostow: Not getting agreement on total list.

Bundy: Working on a list since January.

When I was in Saigon four weeks after Honolulu (?), difficulty in getting groups organized to take part. Now we urge something to get the government off dead center.

Vice President: Who is in touch with Thi?

Bundy: No one, really.

What about Cochran, Consul General at Danang?

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President gave approval for second telegram to go out. (Now he looked at this telegram on alternative governments).

General Taylor: Worried about Thi. Tri Quang is back of him and we cannot take a Tri Quang government. He will tear down everything.

(President said to insert this caveat in the telegram.)

Rusk: Alternatives are less desirable than what we have now, so we are trying to save what we have.

President: Need to do more planning on how to pick a man before he takes over so we won't have to get out when the wrong man gets in.

Time has come when the alternative is to get out -- or do what we need to do to get the government shored up -- move in with power and stay there.

Vice President wanted to know more about Thi. Taylor says he is flamboyant, rash, and an associate of Tri Quang -- but a brave commander--troops like him.

Vice President: Thi is pleasant, buddhist and clever. Ky is jealous of Thi. Some of our Mission people think Thi is able. Sam Wilson thinks he is competent.

President: Isn't he out of our hands now?

Vice President: I don't know. But we ought not let him get out of our hands. We need to know more about the buddhists.

President: We need a Garcia-Godoy type -- with an adviser by his side.

McNamara: We need a Bunker in Vietnam.

President: Don't rely on polls on D.R. (Dominican Republic). They're not very accurate 60 days from now. Keep Camaño in London. Don't let him out. Camaño could win. Keep that poll going. Know every week what is happening. Don't lose an hour's contact.

The way I see it, Ky is gone, the last gasp. Doubt he can pull it off. When he goes, there'll be hell in this country. Let's get a government we can appoint and support. We need a tough adviser.

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President: What do we tell the world?

General Taylor: We can minimize our losses if Ky goes and the Directory stays. We have to take sides this time.

President: Thought Ky made bad judgment in saying the Mayor of Danang ought to be shot. Any other bad judgment we know about?

Taylor: The Hitler statement -- but I thought he had matured.

MEETING ENDED 8:35 P.M.

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