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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH
THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

June 22, 1966

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Mandatory Review
Case # NLJ 83-45
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Bill Bundy: It is very clear there was no response from Hanoi. (5)

[] Martin went before the House today.
Our area of worry is their general underlying lack of sympathy with us. (5)

Secretary Rusk: We cannot accept the merit of Martin's argument.

Secretary McNamara: (Discussing proposed air attacks on POL)
What are the benefits and costs? Why now?

1. Why now? The situation has changed dramatically. This is now an important target. Tonnage to the South is increasing; truck traffic is up 100%, personnel infiltration 120%.

2. Costs? Criticism from abroad; dissension in the United States. There will be some civilian casualties, and the estimate is 50 to 300. (Secretary McNamara read the orders, directing that the strikes be made only under ideal conditions).

General Wheeler: A POL strike will not stop infiltration, but it will establish another ceiling on what they can support. There are three divisions there with another ready to move.

The President: How much chance is there of hitting a Russian ship?

General Wheeler: Negligible. There is a tanker in port now. It draws too much water to get close. We have never seen a tanker tied up at any other pier. They use a 250 foot floating pipeline. The strike area is 1500 to 1600 yards from the main tank centers. The tanker will be at least 1100 yards away.

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The President: MIG's?

General Wheeler: Tactical surprise may prevent that. When there are later strikes, they may use MIGs to defend.

The President: How many planes will we lose?

General Wheeler: In all 7 strikes, we will lose about 10.

The President: Suppose your dreams are fulfilled. What are the results?

General Wheeler: Over the next 60 to 90 days, this will start to affect the total infiltration effort. It will cost them more. In a very real sense, this is a war of attrition.

The President: You have no qualification, no doubt that this is in the national interest?

General Wheeler: None whatsoever.

The President: People tell me what not to do, what I do wrong. I don't get any alternatives. What might I be asked next? Destroy industry, disregard human life? Suppose I say no, what else would you recommend?

General Wheeler: Mining Haiphong.

The President: Do you think this will involve the Chinese Communists and the Soviets?

General Wheeler: No, Sir.

The President: Are you more sure than MacArthur was?

General Wheeler: This is different. We had ground forces moving to the Yalu.

Secretary Rusk: How many days until we are ready?

General Wheeler: A week or ten days.

The President: Can that tanker shoot back?

General Wheeler: Is is unarmed.

The President: Will there be retaliatory pressure from the USSR?

General Wheeler: [

Secretary McNamara: No senior military leader recommends anything other than proceeding with this program.

The President: Would General Taylor give me his views.

General Taylor: I am optimistic. I think we have to press hard on all four fronts -- economic, political, military and diplomatic. I see a movement upward all the way. We should be escalating. Personally I would mine Haiphong at the same time and get the political flak over with.

The President: I think that public approval is deteriorating, and that it will continue to go down. Some in Congress are disgusted about the Buddhist uprising and are talking about pulling out.

Secretary Rusk: The overplay on the Buddhist matter hurt more than anything else.

The President: What is the difference between POL and the power plant?

Secretary McNamara: The plant is more dangerous in that they may react more forcefully.

General Wheeler: POL is recognized as a legitimate military target, related to the movement of military supplies. We have already hit 4 POL facilities.

Secretary Rusk: Llewellyn Thompson does not believe there is a danger from the USSR.

The President: Who should we talk to?

Secretary Rusk: The chiefs of governments with troops in Vietnam,

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Mr. Wilson and Mr. Pearson.

Secretary Rusk: On this matter of retaliation, might the North Vietnamese try to hit our carrier?

Admiral McDonald: No problem.

The President (going around the table): How do you stand:

General Johnson: For, without qualification.

Admiral McDonald: I am too.

General McConnell: Agreed.

General Greene: I concur fully.

The President: Do we have enough men to prevent trouble?

General Johnson: Yes.

The President: If you were Ho, what would you do?

General Wheeler: Attack in Pleiku. Westmoreland expects that and has concentrated his forces. He has his eye on eventualities of this kind.

Admiral McDonald: If I were Ho, I would send IL 28's against the air base at Danang.

General McConnell: I would too.

Admiral McDonald: We would have a hard time stopping them at Danang.

The President: That is a little alarming. Bob, will you comment?

Secretary McNamara: He would lose his Air Force. It would be a fool-hardy military operation. Also, if we can't beat 6 obsolete bombers, we ought to abolish the carriers.

The Vice President: I reaffirm my position in favor.

Cy Vance: Fully agree.

Walt Rostow: Fully agree.

Ambassador Goldberg: I am still opposed. I do not think it will bring them to the conference table. I am the least expert of any in this room, but I can see these risks:

- More involvement of North Vietnam in the South.

- No real shortage of supplies (Red China has plenty for them);

- More involvement by the Chinese;

- More involvement by the Soviets. (It is inconceivable that they can allow this significant action to pass without reaction of some kind.)

- Attrition of friends abroad and people at home.

This would be regarded in the world as a major step and there are bound to be reactions.

What are the alternatives? Don't withdraw. I think we are doing well. Beef up our forces, go after more successes and pressure of that type. Don't convert this to an extension of the war even to Hanoi. It is tougher and painful to absorb, but it will hopefully lead to an agreed solution to let the people in the South alone.

Secretary Fowler: I support it as an operational movement, and think it will increase the prospects for peace. The time is urgent.

Leonard Marks: I am for the target.

Mr. Raborn: I support. We need even more pressure, such as mining.

Dick Helms: The most effective thing we can do is mining. It would do extra damage of course. I agree there would be reaction from them.

The President: Any warnings you want to give me before I go to commune with myself and my God?

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Mr. Ball: All things equal, this is a good thing to do, but it does not outweigh disadvantages. The world thinks Hanoi and Haiphong shibboleth that war not expanded. It will affect Europe. It won't affect North Vietnamese manpower. It would be hard for the Russians to take. They will have to supply POL across China. I am concerned about increasing the level of violence. I believe we have considerable trouble ahead on the political front. But if we are going to do it, do it now.

Mr. Bundy: I favor the strikes.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Christian". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

George Christian

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