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#2 memo - meeting notes	Tuesday Luncheon 9/5/67 Top Secret 9. p <i>sanitized 10-6-83 NLJ 82-51</i> <i>Downgraded to SECRET per NISC 8-23-83</i>	9/5/67	A

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Meeting Notes File, Box 2

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Mandatory Review
Case # NLJ 82-51
Document # 2

September 5, 1967

TO: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JIM JONES

SUBJECT: Weekly meeting with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Walt Rostow
George Christian, Dick Helms and General Harold K. Johnson.

MEETING CONVENED: 1:05 PM

MEETING ADJOURNED: 2:40 PM

The meeting opened with the discussion of the Vietnam elections observers. The President asked if Lodge could be contacted to see if he could stay an extra day or two to talk to the news media for backgrounders. He also hoped Senator Hickenlooper could talk to CBS. The President commented that he would be meeting with Labor leaders next week.

Rusk said he had talked to Tom Wicker concerning the factual errors in this morning's article in the New York Times on the Vietnam elections. Rusk said Wicker failed to recognize that about half the Vietnam population is under voting age. Rusk told Wicker there is no bar to voting as long as they were registered. It was agreed that Bill Bundy would write a corrective letter promptly to the New York Times.

McNamara pointed out that fourteen targets have been authorized but have been delayed because of bad weather. Also four are inside the 10 mile circle and are being held. These total 18. Of the 51 remaining, 9 have been removed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff after careful examination. Some of them have been removed because they have not been repaired such as bridges, etc., and others which were authorized or linked to targets which have been authorized.

McNamara and Rusk agreed that of the 42 remaining, they are ready to recommend 10. Of these, two are being held out for further technical examination. One requires further photography and the other requires fresh intelligence.

General Johnson said the weather will be bad for the next few days because of high winds and tropical storms, etc.

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McNamara pointed out these 8 - 10 targets which have been authorized would be an adequate bank for the week.

McNamara said that of the 32 remaining, 3 were ports, 4 were air fields.

The President interrupted to ask if Gia Lam was one of them. McNamara responded that Gia Lam was a commercial air field and was not one of the 4 air fields he referred to. He added that there are 5 or 6 small petroleum storage sites in Hanoi. That these were small ones of 430 metric tons out of 72,000.

Rusk asked on something like that (the small storage sites which are insignificant) whether we should ask a man to get killed. McNamara replied "that's why I don't recommend it."

General Johnson said he did not agree. "Men dying is a relative thing. The effect of the air campaign is a cumulative one and no one can predict which blow will be the crucial blow to them (North Vietnamese)."

The President interjected "if we're not damaging targets why..."

General Johnson replied that this was all relative. "Every blow makes him stretch his resources and at some point his resources will not be able to be stretched anymore."

Rusk changed the subject briefly to ask if we are really having our air power saturate every enemy position, especially fortified positions, with napalm before the Marines go in. He asked if we are giving the men in the South all the air power that they can absorb.

General Johnson said he could not answer that categorically. CINPAC informed him that the men got all the air cover they could use.

Rusk replied, "CINPAC has a different war than Westmoreland's."

McNamara said there is enough air power to call in on a particular case. He said only 25% of the air strikes in South Vietnam support the ground troops.

Rusk commented he was just worried about the battalion commander going against a fortified position without air power softening up the enemy.

The President asked McNamara to look into this and get an answer and do all that is necessary to minimize fortified ground positions against the U.S. ground forces.

McNamara returned to the remaining targets saying there were four air fields, three ports and five or six POL sites, and 19 others which include seven small targets such as small battery plants, concrete plants, and tire factories. There are three or four important bridges and railroad yards in Haiphong and Hanoi, and five or six small depot areas.

The President asked if these bridges are important.

McNamara said the bridges are important but they are "smack in the middle of Haiphong and Hanoi, and the railroad yards are too." McNamara said at some point we may have to work on them. This will be based on their defenses not being as heavy or the civilian casualties not being heavy if those targets were hit.

McNamara pointed out that of the three ports he mentioned, Cam Pha today has no foreign vessels in it. But a foreign vessel could go in there any time. The second port, Hong Gai, has a Russian ship in it today, but it is expected to leave tomorrow.

The President asked why we could not give a conditional order that as long as there are no ships left in either of those two harbors - they could get hit.

McNamara said he did not know if this was feasible.

The President said to put our best man in there to see if there are any ships, and if not, hit the ports.

General Johnson said "Theater commanders would welcome this kind of latitude."

The President said we could hit these ports if there were no ships in them.

Rusk interjected that the order should read "no ships." The order should not be conditioned upon whether they are "Russian ships" or on the registry of the ships.

McNamara told General Johnson to issue the orders and make it crystal clear "if there are no ships in the port then they can be hit" and leave it to the commander to figure out how to be certain that there are no ships.

General Johnson said he would draw up this order.

The President asked how many were in that category - two or three.

McNamara said two. The other port, Haiphong, always has has Russian ships in there.

The President said we should get a speech worked up for Thieu and let him make it as quickly as possible. The President also asked for a report on his desk today about what was said as far as negotiations are concerned.

Rusk said he thought Thieu made the peace negotiations conditional on reciprocity.

Walt Rostow said he is assembling the information on what was said on negotiations and will have that for the President today.

The President said Thieu should be grabbing the headlines from Dzu by proposing several programs.

Helms interrupted to say the 100-Day program "is set to go and could be implemented immediately.

Walt Rostow said he received a cable today with Bunker's recommendation of the main items that they will press on the government of Vietnam. Walt Rostow asked to discuss one important issue at this meeting, which is "shall the government of Vietnam make an offer to the Viet Cong that if the Viet Cong accept the constitution then they can join political life in South Vietnam as a political party." Rostow pointed out that the constitution forbids the advocacy of communism. However if Thieu could make a statement that so long as the Communists do not try to force an overthrow of the constitution, then they could come in to political life as a political party -- this would be a helpful statement.

The President said he wants to give a generous interpretation of this and be as liberal as possible.

Rostow said that the Greek constitution forbade Communism.

The President asked about the Dominican Republic.

Rostow replied the left wing drew their support.

Rusk interjected that we should be very liberal in what we agreed to, so long as Vietnam is ready to buy this. However, Rusk emphasized that he was reluctant to impose this on the Vietnamese if they didn't buy it.

The President said to tell Bunker that we favor a liberal interpretation if he can get them (the government of Vietnam) to go along.

Rusk said a variation is to declare a complete cease fire and amnesty in the IV Corps area.

The President said he hopes they (Thieu and Ky) show action even though all the election returns are not in yet and even though they have not been inaugurated. The President said "instead of Dzu taking the headlines, Thieu and Ky should fill the news with 'Operation Takeoff'."

"One day they should give out a statement on proposed land reforms, another to reform the army, another on anti-corruption" the President said.

Rusk and McNamara agreed to this.

McNamara advised that acceptance of the NLF is fundamental to any settlement and also fundamental to turning off Dzu.

Rostow added that by allowing the Communist to come in as a political party -- this would do more to encourage the non-Communist factions to unite against the Communist party.

The President said to get a cable out to Bunker along these lines. "Get out the programs they can try to get proposed. Have Westmoreland talk to them about reforming the Army. Have them (Thieu and Ky) give backgrounders. First tell them how to broaden the government and make it as much civilian as possible. Clean up the government. Give out their programs on reconciliation in the Chieu Hoi program; land reform; peace initiatives. I'd have the New York Times believe that they will get what they want from this government." the President said.

The President said to let Ky talk about the things he wants done, especially those things that would appeal to the opposition in the U. S. He pointed out that we've got to minimize our opposition. The major threat we have is from the doves.

Rusk said Time-Life is having a debate on editorial policy on Vietnam and he plans to meet with them shortly.

Helms said

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Helms and General Johnson left the meeting at this stage.

General Johnson reported that he had lunch with General Wheeler yesterday. Wheeler's doctors want to keep him in the hospital two weeks from the time he entered it and another two weeks for convalescing. Johnson confirmed that Wheeler did have a coronary attack and there was some damage to Wheeler's heart but all the tests indicate he is strong now.

After Helms and General Johnson left, George Christian asked if there weren't some of these 51 targets which have been hit.

McNamara replied yes.

Rusk reported on the Non proliferation Treaty. He said Russia has come back with an Article III redraft. The NATO Council would discuss this tomorrow.

McNamara left the room to take a call from Walter Reuther. He returned and reported to the President that he told Reuther that Ford definitely does have defense items. Reuther said he developed plans for continuing production but that the company was not interested in these. McNamara also reported that he told Reuther that the President was very displeased with Reuther's statement of yesterday about not following the advice of the President whatever it was. Reuther claimed he was misquoted. McNamara said of course this is not true but at least Reuther is on notice that the President heard it and is displeased.

The President talked about the poll in yesterday's Washington Post front page story which showed the President defeating Romney and Nixon whether George Wallace was in or out of the race. He pointed out that last week the story showed him defeating Reagan. But none of these facts were played up.

The President then read off the Department of Defense legislative program which is still pending before the Congress and pointed out that we've got to get our best people to get out our story and get these bills passed.

McNamara said the '68 appropriations and the MAP legislation are the only really important legislation from Defense pending before the Congress.

Rusk asked if Mansfield was really upset about the State Department lobbying for the AID Bill.

The President said no. He said he talked to Mike Mansfield. Apparently, the problem was that State Department had put some people in an office near the Senate floor and neither Mansfield nor Mike Manatos knew about their presence. Also, some of the State Department people did not understand the legislation and did not respond to some of the questions, particularly a mean question from Senator Ribicoff.

The President asked McNamara where he was making his speech on the ABM.

McNamara replied to the UPI editors in San Francisco.

Rusk said he has a serious worry about the material on China in that report.

McNamara said he had to include that material because this has already been published in technical journals.

The President asked about the Kiesinger material.

Rusk replied "it smells like negative."

The President agreed and said "yes, why are you waiting."

McNamara said at some point it would be well if the President could sit down for two hours of a relaxed conversation especially concerning the bombing program over the next year and year and a half.

It was decided to add Ambassador Eugene Locke to the schedule Wednesday, and George Christian asked if Locke could meet the press afterwards on a background basis.

The President again asked if Ambassador Lodge can stay around two or three days. The President also asked Rostow to talk to each 22 Vietnam Election Observers and to congratulate them on a good trip and a good job and to ask each of them to give their impressions to the news media.

Rostow asked if the President approved his idea to have Lodge form teams to go into various regions of the country.

The President said "I'm for it, but State Department or Defense should execute it."

Rusk recommended that the President tell the publishers (with whom he is having lunch Wednesday) that State and Defense will furnish the top military and political men from the departments to brief their editorial boards.

The meeting adjourned with the President asking Defense Department policies for sending Marines back to Vietnam for a second tour. McNamara replied that this was rarely done and McNamara personally goes over each second term enlistment in Vietnam.

The President asked if there would be any reason why he should not be away for the weekend perhaps Thursday through Sunday in Texas.

McNamara and Rusk said definitely no reason why he should not.

McNamara reported on two matters the President asked him about earlier in the day - the forest fire situation in Oregon and Idaho and the report on the Detroit riots which appeared in the New York Times today.

The President asked that Cyrus Vance and General Throckmorton be here when Romney comes in to testify before the riot committee in order to set the record straight.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p. m.