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#47 meeting notes	open 10-6-83 NLS 82-51 meeting on Vietnam Rusk, McNamara, Clifford, etc. Top Secret 4 p.	2/27/68	A

FILE LOCATION

Meeting Notes File, Box 2

DCH 10/81

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

GSA FORM 7122 (7-72)

~~Top Secret~~

Harry McPherson

47

Notes of meeting Feb 27

Rusk, McNamara, Clifford, Katzenbach, Brundage, Rostow,
Califano and McPherson

McN: Westmoreland wants

105,000 by 1 May

100,000 in two increments: part by 1 Sept, part by 31 Dec

Total 205,000 men, all but 25,000 (air) in Army and Marine.
(minimum 150,000)

This will require a sizable reserve call-up as well
as increased draft. In total, an increase in
uniformed strength of 400,000.

In expenditures, at least \$10 billion extra in FY 1969
with automatic \$5 billion in FY 1970, this will put
FY 1970 DOD budget at \$15 billion above
current FY 1969 figure.

Alternatives for President's speech and program:

- 1) go with full 205,000. Ask for present surtax
request plus additional taxes. Announce
economic program (possibly controls on interest,
production controls, etc.).
- 2) go with full 205,000, economic program, and
announce new peace offensive.

Rusk: basis for peace in Southeast Asia:
ending of Communist assaults in Laos,
Thailand; we will stop bombing North
of 20th parallel if NVN withdraws from
Quang Tri province; or stop altogether in
that event; or other specific proposal.

- McPherson: This is unbelievable and futile.
- 3) status quo on forces, with a change in strategy.

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Authority NLS 82-51

By rs, NARS, Date 10-6-83

and US commitment to defend every province and district capital. Protect essential areas. Fight enemy whenever he fights; and search and destroy.

4) (Clifford) Another possibility, that should be considered -- and I am not pushing it -- in

announcement that we intend to put in 500,000 to million men.

McN: That has virtue of clarity. Obviously we

would have decided to put in enough men to

accomplish the job. ~~That~~ That and other goals both

have the virtue of clarity. I do not understand

what the strategy is in putting in 305,000

men. It is neither enough to do the job, nor

an indication that our role must change.

5) (Bunker) We must also prepare for the worst.

SVN is very weak. Our position may be truly

untenable. Contingency planning should proceed

toward possibility that we will withdraw with

least possible loss and defend rest of Asia. We

can say truthfully that Asia is stronger because

of what we have done in past few years.

Katzenbach took call from Harkit in Hawaii. Report Harkit is "less optimistic" about political situation in Saigon than he was when he went out. Report that there is serious disagreement in American circles in Saigon over 305,000 request. Bunker

has doubts about this.

Rusk: if we have to call up reserves, we should take some of our troops out of Europe. Europeans will have to put some more in for their defense.

McN: agree, if we call 400,000.

State of military situation:

Rusk, Rostow think enemy took beating in TET offensive. Rostow says captured documents show enemy was disappointed, may be unable to mount heavy coordinated attack on cities.

Rusk reminds that enemy took 40,000 casualties.

No US units out of operation. Rostow says if we can re-inforce Westm. now, he should be able to handle situation until good weather comes to I Corps and NVN. McN: What then?

Let's not delude ourselves into thinking he cannot maintain pressure after good weather comes.

(Rostow apparently had air attacks in mind.

McN: we are dropping ordnance at a higher rate than in last year of WWII in Europe. It has not stopped him).

Bundy: SVN forces uncertain, but almost certainly not as strong as were before. Assessment due from MACV on Feb 29.

Clifford: Look at situation from point of view of

American public and Vietnamese. Despite optimistic reports, our people (and world opinion) believe we have suffered a major setback. Problem is, how do we gain support for major program, defense and economic, if we have told people things are going well? How do we avoid creating feeling that we are pouring troops down rat hole? What is our purpose? What is achievable? Before any decision is made, we must re-evaluate our entire posture in SVN. ^{Unfortunately,} Pres. has been at ranch with hawks.

McN: Agreed. Decision must not be hasty. Will take a week at least to work out defense and economic measures, if we go big.

Wheeler, Habit will meet with Secretaries Wednesday morning at breakfast with President. Decision should certainly not be announced that night.

General impression: prevailing uncertainty. Radically different proposals were offered and debated, none rejected out of hand. We are at a point of crisis. McNamara expressed grave doubts over military, economic, political, diplomatic and moral consequences of a larger force buildup in SVN.

Q is whether these profound doubts will be presented to President.