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<del>#61 notes of meeting</del>	<del>agen 10-6-83 NLS 82-51 Camp David meeting with Ruck, Clifford, etc. Top Secret 7 p.</del>	<del>4/9/68</del>	<del>A</del>
<del>#62 notes of meeting</del>	<del>handwritten notes from which #61 were transcribed Top Secret 15 p. agen 10-6-83 - NLS 82-51</del>	<del>4/9/68</del>	<del>A</del>

FILE LOCATION

Meeting Notes File, Box 2

DCH 10/81

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APRIL 9, 1968 - 8 a.m.

MEETINGS AT CAMP DAVID WITH:

Secretary Rusk	Walt Rostow
Secretary Clifford	George Christian
General Wheeler	Jim Jones
Ambassador Bunker	

*(done by Christian)*



61

~~TOP SECRET~~

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING  
AT CAMP DAVID

April 9, 1968

ATTENDING THE MEETING:

The President  
Secretary Rusk  
Secretary Clifford  
General Wheeler  
Ambassador Bunker  
Walt Rostow  
George Christian  
Jim Jones

Ambassador Bunker arrived at the Aspen House at 8 a.m. The President met him at the helicopter pad.

The President discussed the advisability of cancelling the Austrian dinner. The consensus was that it should go on if at all possible.

Ambassador Bunker: Thieu is acting like a leader. The Vietnamese forces did better than the press indicated. None of the things the enemy expected to happen happened.

President Thieu has moved ahead on a great many fronts -- mobilization, upped it from 65,000; civil side, 14 new province chiefs and will be putting in more, increased taxes by decree and put tax bill to the assembly, ten draft laws on various subjects, closed black market and bars and nightclubs.

He and Ky are working together better. On April 2 their joint press conference tried to put to rest the division - put Ky in charge of Civil Defense. Ky will preside over several councils, and Ky was very pleased. They're conferring together two or three times a day. I've always thought it was manageable.

Ky would like to replace Prime Minister Loc, who is not very effective. He is leaning toward Tran Van Huong, the best of the lot.

There's uneasiness about the negotiations. Thieu is calling in corps commanders today to soothe them.

Everything is in the right direction. Since November 1 this government has really made quite substantial advances.

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By \_\_\_\_\_

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The Tet offensive gave them confidence, spurred them on. They reacted well on recovery.

The Vietnamese forces are doing well.

General Wheeler: They have more actions going for them than before Tet.

Secretaries Clifford and Rusk: Did the attitude of the American people (Ambassador Diem's message) cause some of this?

Ambassador Bunker: He was very helpful. As far as I can see, the Tet offensive had more effect in the United States than in Vietnam.

It caused a physical and psychological damage, uncertainty, questions about security. But this phase has passed because of good reaction of the military.

Thang carrying on many more initiatives in tough IV Corps where the Viet Cong have been for twenty years. They are making steady progress and much faster progress. There were many elements of strength we didn't realize were there.

Thieu says Tet offensive based on weakness and not strength ... wanted to get to negotiations and willing to sacrifice men to get in better posture.

Thieu thinks they will make one more big effort this summer -- to keep the pressure on in I Corps and Highlands; harass cities - airfield - try to hold on to as much real estate as they can, so they can go to negotiations and say "we control a lot of territory."

The President: What are the big problems now?

Ambassador Bunker: In the Vietnam forces, some changes of command are needed, more equipment and sophisticated weapons. It is very important for their moral to get better guns.

They're trying to do almost too much. We need to help them on what they can do.

The negotiations are very sensitive to them. We have to move with deliberate speed; they are worried, apprehensive. I didn't get to him on the announcement we would talk until thirty minutes after he heard it on the radio.



The indications of sensitivity are: They think they need an Ambassador here who is not quite as close to the United States as Bien Diem.

It is important that I have time to talk to Thieu before the next step. The PF are vulnerable to propaganda. The Viet Cong tell them peace is coming.

Secretary Rusk: Can't we do it the other way around?

Ambassador Bunker: They're under cover, hard to find. But we can do something here.

General Wheeler: They've had good intelligence of attack in Plei Ku area. They're trying to spoil it.

(There was then a short break in the meeting.)

(Ambassador Harriman and Secretary Bundy were invited to fly up for lunch.)

Secretary Rusk: If we do better militarily, will news coverage from Vietnam improve?

Ambassador Bunker: Oh Lord, I don't know.

Mr. Rostow: How serious is the stagnation in the economy?

Ambassador Bunker: Beginning to pick up. Commodities are moving from the Delta. Viet Cong concentrating more on road interdiction. Moving convoys by water to Delta and back with rice.

The President directed Secretary Rusk at 9:35 a. m. to have Bundy dispatch a reply to DRV.

Mr. Rostow: Where is pacification?

Ambassador Bunker: Chieu Hoi low, but better than reports. We are getting out into countryside. Most of RD teams are back. Thieu very good on pacification; wants to simplify system and Komer agrees. Concentrate on hamlets where population is and along the routes of communication.

Pacification's weakness is that it comes from the top - needs to come from the bottom.

~~TOP SECRET~~

SERVICE SET

When attack came, they largely bypassed hamlets and attacked cities and towns. Before Tet we figured 5400 hamlets were secure -- this is down by 800, but only 200 were attacked and are either contested or under VC control.

In going into negotiations, let's keep in mind we are strong and not weak.

Thieu thinks May-October will be enemy's next big effort. But we'll never again be surprised. We can defeat them, or we may spoil it before it ever comes off.

I try to be objective. The Tet offensive was harmful, but mostly psychological.

Mr. Rostow: How prepared are they for negotiations?

Ambassador Bunker: Not at all. They think those who want to live under Marxism should go north.

Mr. Rostow: Have they given any thought to the Viet Cong coming in as a political party, but not in government?

Ambassador Bunker: Not as a party. They realize NLF is highly organized and disciplined, coalition would lead to a takeover like Czechoslovakia.

From the standpoint of the GVN this is not a good time for negotiations. In three or four months they'll be stronger.

Secretary Clifford: If they are getting stronger, etc., why do they feel such a concern for the NLF?

Ambassador Bunker: They are not afraid of them militarily, but politically. They are fearful if they take to their bosom, they'll end up running the show.

Walt Rostow: You can reject a coalition if you hold the line, but we are for a one-man, one-vote proposition. The Constitution bars Communism, but does not ban land reform party.

( At this point there was a picture break on the patio - 10:45 a.m.)

Ambassador Bunker: It would be a good idea to ask Thieu to meet you in Honolulu just before you see Park.

The President: Get Gorton settled down on his date to come here -- that leaves several others. Meet Thieu there, send him back out, announce date for State visit.

I will be in Honolulu early part of next week for a day with Thieu and a day with Park - Monday and Tuesday... Thieu on Monday and Park on Tuesday.

Dean, get out to Gorton and others that when the situation makes possible we will be seeing Thieu, not for policy change but to make ready for his visit later.

Ambassador Bunker: Put it up to Thieu to see if he wants to bring Ky.

The President: On the matter of reserves, how much do you recommend on the first call-up?

Secretary Clifford: 24,500, and do it tomorrow.

The President: Will Thieu make the 135,000?

Ambassador Bunker: It looks O.K. He wants to do 135,000 plus another 25,000.

The President: What about our equipment for them?

General Wheeler: I think we'll make it.

Secretary Clifford: Combat units of ARVN have M16s by June 68, RF and PF in July = 3/4 of M16s that come out will be going to ARVN .

General Wheeler: From a practical point of view, must arm U. S. troops with M16 first or the roof will blow off the Capital.

The President: Buzz, are we taking a gamble on not trying to stop infiltration except in Panhandle?

General Wheeler: We lost a little by pulling back. But not on the Hanoi-Haiphong cutback. We are losing something from Than Hoa south to the 19th parallel. We wish we could give a good hard knock in the next day or two.

Secretary Clifford: We feel comfortable with the 19th to avoid mistakes.

General Wheeler: Between Laos Panhandle and strikes above DMZ, we're using as many sorties as we ever did.



~~TOP SECRET~~

- 6 -

( Averill Harriman and William Bundy arrived at 12:40 p.m.)

Mr. Harriman: Geneva has many advantages from our point. New Delhi, if in Asia, for the larger talks.

(At this point, the meeting was recessed for lunch.)

The President: Could this be a Tet ploy?

Secretary Rusk: I think they want to get rid of all the bombing of NVN. They seem to want to go through with their part of war full-scale. The first talks will be tough. Hang in there. Either get them to make concessions or get them to take the responsibility for breaking off the talks.

Walt Rostow: Their military position is not strong, but they think their political position in the United States is strong.

Ambassador Bunker: I agree. I think they're doing it to exploit our position here.

The President: Would they have come along with feelers if we hadn't made our speech?

Mr. Bundy: They may have been wanting to tease us. And quickness with which they responded indicated they might have had something in mind, but probably not what resulted.

Secretary Clifford: If they play us for fools, Buzz and I have some choice targets we want to recognize.

Mr. Harriman: They broke the '62 agreements before the ink was dry. We should see positive results.

The President: The stronger we are offensively, the better our position on negotiations will be.

The group agreed with the President.

The President: Thieu is doing better on TV - reaching a lot of people?

Ambassador Bunker: Yes -- and also radio. He is making shorter speeches. He does very well.

~~TOP SECRET~~



2:30 p.m. :

The President: Are we all agreed on draft instructions to Ambassador Harriman? Mr. Clifford?

Secretary Clifford: Yes, sir.

The President: <sup>Mr.</sup>~~Mr.~~ Wheeler?

General Wheeler: Yes, sir.

Ambassador Bunker: I have a couple of questions. Can they continue to infiltrate 10,000 and let them continue to use Laos as a corridor? There they've built up all-weather roads.

Secretary Rusk: Our assumption has been there would be no more than the general level at the time the San Antonio formula was presented. Perhaps we should talk about reduced infiltration.

General Wheeler: 6,500 last September.

The President: So they've about doubled.

Secretary Clifford: The condition at the time of San Antonio was my position with the Congress.

Ambassador Bunker: The present increases may be able to make up the terrific losses which have occurred.

Ambassador Harriman: What is the most important military de-escalation they can take?

Ambassador Bunker debated whether Laos should be included in efforts to reduce infiltration.

Secretary Rusk and General Wheeler: We ought to at least insist that all parties subscribe to the 1962 Geneva accords. We should re-establish the DMZ.

Ambassador Bunker: The most important thing is to keep Thieu going - don't let him think we're selling him out.

62

Campo David - April 9, 1968 -  
Pres, Rusk, Clifford, Wheeler, Bunker, Rostow  
Christian, Jones.

Arrived Aspen House at 8:00 AM  
(President met <sup>them</sup> at chopper pad)

President discussed advisability of  
cancelling Austrian dinner. Consensus was  
it should go on if at all possible.

Bunker - Thieu is acting like a leader.

Vietnamese forces did better than  
press indicated. None of things  
enemy expected to happen happened.

Thieu has moved ahead on a  
great many fronts -- mobilization,  
upped it from 65,000; Civil side, 14 new  
province chiefs and will be putting in  
more, increased taxes by decree and put  
tax bill to Assembly, 10 draft laws  
on various subjects, closed black market

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and bars, night clubs.

(2)

He and Ky working together better. On April 2 their joint press conf. tried to put to rest the division - put Ky in charge of Civil Defense, Ky will preside over several councils. Ky was very pleased. They're conferring together 2 or 3 times a day. I've always thought it was manageable.

Ky would like to replace PM Loc, whose not very effective. Leaning toward Tran Van ~~Ho~~ Huong, best of lot.

There's uneasiness about negotiations. Thieu is calling in corps commanders today to soothe them.

Everything is in right direction. Since Nov. 1 this govt has really made quite substantial advances.

TET offensive gave them confidence, spurred them on. Reacted well on recovery. Vietnamese forces doing well.



Wheeler - They have more actions going for them than before TET.

Clifford-Rusk - did attitude of American people (Amb. Diem's message) cause some of this?

Bunker - He was very helpful.

As far as I can see, TET offensive had more effect in U.S. than in VN.

It caused physical + psychological damage, uncertainty, questions about security. But this phase has passed because of good reaction of military.

Thang carrying on many more initiatives in tough IV Corps where VC been 20 years.

Making steady progress and much faster progress. There were many elements of strength we didn't realize were there.

Thieu says TET offensive based on weakness and not strength. Wanted to get to negotiations + willing to sacrifice men to get in better posture.



①

Thieu thinks they will make one more big effort this summer - keep pressure on in I Corps & Highlands; harass cities - airfields - try to hold on to as much real estate as can, so they can go to negotiations + say "we control a lot of territory."

Pres - what are big problems now?

Brunker - In VN forces, some changes of command needed, more equipment + sophisticated weapons. Very important for morale to get better guns.

They're trying to do almost too much. We need to help them on what they can do.

Negotiations very sensitive to them. We have to move with deliberate speed; they are worried, apprehensive. I didn't get to him on announcement we would talk until 30 minutes after he heard on radio.



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not quite as close to US as Bien Dien.

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to Thien before next step.

PF are vulnerable to propaganda -  
VC tell them peace coming.

Rush - can't we do other way around?

Bunker - They're undercover, hard to find.  
But we can do something here.

Whelan - They've had good intelligence of  
attack in Pleiku area - They're trying  
to spoil it.

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Short break

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Harriman and Bundy invited to  
fly up for lunch.



(6)

Rusk - if we do better militarily,  
will news coverage from VN improve?  
Bunker - Oh, hell, I don't know.

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Rostow - How serious is stagnation in economy?

Bunker - Beginning to pick up. Commodities  
moving from Delta. VC concentrating more  
on road interdiction. Moving convoys by  
water to Delta + back with rice.

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President directed Secy Rusk at 9:35A  
to have Bundy dispatch reply to DRV.

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Rostow - where is pacification?

Bunker - Chien Hsi low, but better than  
reports. We are getting out into countryside.  
Most of RD teams are back. Thieu very good  
on pacification; wants to simplify system  
+ Komer agrees. Concentrate on hamlets where  
population is + along routes of communication.



(7)

Inter-...

Pacification's weakness is that it comes from top - needs to come from bottom.

When attack came, they largely bypassed hamlets + attacked cities + towns. Before TET we figured 5400 hamlets were secure = this is down by 800, but only 200 were attacked and are either contested or under VC control.

On going into negotiations, let's keep in mind we are strong and not weak.

Thieu thinks May - October will be enemy's next big effort. But we'll never again be surprised. We can defeat them or we may spoil it before it ever comes off.

I try to be objective.

TET offensive harmful, but mostly psychological.

Rostow - How prepared are they for negotiations?

Bunker - Not at all.

SERVICE 5-1



(8)

They think those who want to live under Marxism should go north.

Lozow - have they given any thought to VC coming in as political party, but not in govt?

Bunker - not as a party. They realize NLF is highly organized + disciplined; coalition would lead to takeover like Czechoslovakia.

From standpoint of GVN this is not a good time for negotiations. In 3-4 months they'll be stronger.

Clifford - If they getting stronger, etc., why do they feel such concern for NLF?

Bunker - not afraid of them militarily, but politically. Fearful if they take to power they'll end up running the show.

~~There was a great deal of press talk last fall about coalition.~~



~~Rec - to - ...~~

Rostov - you can reject coalition if you hold line, but we are for one-man, one-vote proposition. Constitution bars Communism, but does not bar land reform party.

on patio, after picture break, 10:45 AM

Bunker - good idea to ask Thieu to meet you in Honolulu just before you see Park.

Pres - get Gordon settled down on his date to come here - that leaves several other - Meet Thieu there, send him back out, announce date for state visit.

I be in Honolulu early part of next week for day with Thieu + day with Park  
Monday + Tuesday  
Thieu Mon + Park Tues.



Dean, Get out to Gorton and others that when  
situation makes possible we will be seeing  
Thieu, not for policy change but to make  
ready for his visit later.

Bunker - put it up to Thieu to see if he  
wants to bring Ky.

Pres - On reserves, how much you need  
on first call-up -

Clif - 24,500, and do it tomorrow.

~~Time schedule~~

(11)

Pres - will Thieu make the 135,000?

Bunker - looks OK - wants to do 135,000  
plus another 25,000 -

Pres - what about our equipment for them?

Wheeler - think we'll make it.

Clifford - combat units of ARVN have MIG's  
by June 68, RF and PF in July = (3/4 of  
MIG's that come out will be going to ARVN) -

Wheeler - from practical pt of view, must arm  
US troops with MIG first or risk blow off capital -

Pres - Buz, are we taking gamble on  
not trying to stop infiltration except in  
Panhandle?

Wheeler - we lost a little by pulling back -

But not on Hanoi - Haiphong outback.

Losing something from Thanh Hoa south to 19th.

Wish we could give good hand knock  
in next day or two.



Clif - feel comfortable with 19th to  
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Whelan - between Laos Panhandle + Shikhs  
above DMZ, we're using as many sorties  
as we ever did -

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Harriman, Bundy arrived 12:40 P -

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H - Geneva many advantages from our point -  
New Delhi, if in Asia, for larger talks -  
— lunch —

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Pres - could this be a TET ploy?

Rusk - think they want to get rid of all  
the bombing of NVN. They seem to want  
to go through with their part of war full-scale.  
First talks will be tough. Hang in there.  
Either get them to make concessions or  
get them to take responsibility for breaking  
off talks.

Rostow - Their military position not strong,  
but they think their pol position in US strong.



Bunker - I agree. Think they're doing it to exploit our position here.

Pres - would they have come along with feeling if we hadn't made our speech.

Bundy - they may have been wanting to tease us. And quickness with which they responded indicated they might have had something in mind, but probably not what resulted.

Clif - If they play us for fools, Bus and I have some choice targets we want to see.

Harriman - they broke '62 agreements before ink was dry. We should see positive results.

Pres - stronger we are offensively, better our position on negotiations be. (agreed)

Pres - Then doing better on TV-reaching lot of people?

Bunker - Yes - and radio. Shorter speeches. Pres very well.



2:30 PM

(14)

Pres - are we all agreed on draft instructions to Amb Hariman? Mr. Clifford?

Clif - yes, sir.

Pres - Mr. Wheeler?

Wheeler - yes, sir.

Bunker - have couple of questions. Can they continue to infiltrate 12,000 mos., + let them continue to use Laos as a corridor?

There they've built up all-weather roads.

Rusk - our assumption has been there would be no more than the general level at time

SA. formula was presented. Perhaps we should

Wheeler - 6,500 last Sept.

talk about  
reduced  
infiltration

Pres - so they've about doubled.

Clif - condition at time of SA. was my position with the Congress.

Bunker - present increases may be to make up terrific losses which have occurred.

Harriman - what most important military  
de-escalation they can take?

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be included in efforts to reduce infiltration.

Rusk - Wheeler - ought to at least insist  
all parties subscribe to 1962 Geneva accords.

~~Rusk~~ Reestablish DMZ.

Harriman SET

Bunker - most important thing is  
to keep Thieu going - don't let him  
think we're selling him out -