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#5 meeting notes	open 10-6-83 NLJ 82-51 meeting with foreign policy advisors 5 p. possible classified information	5/6/68	A
#5 agenda	for meeting on 5/6/68 Secret 1 p.	n.d.	A
#6 meeting notes	open 10-6-83 NLJ 82-51 handwritten notes from which # 5 was transcribed possible classified information 12 p.	5/6/68	A

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MAY 6, 1968 - 1:20 p.m.

MEETING WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISORS

The President	Philip Habib
Secretary Rusk	William Bundy
Secretary Clifford	Under Secretary Katzen-
Ambassador Harriman	bach
Ambassador Vance	General Johnson
General Goodpaster	Walt Rostow
General Taylor	George Christian
	William Jordan

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING
WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

May 6, 1968
1:20 p.m.
Cabinet Room

ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

The President
Secretary Rusk
Secretary Clifford
Ambassador Harriman
Ambassador Vance
General Goodpaster
General Taylor
Philip Habib
William Bundy
Under Secretary Katzenbach
General Johnson
Walt Rostow
George Christian

W. Jordan

The President: I want a most careful screening of the personnel in Paris - I want to be positive. I want the negotiators to get my feelings. I don't want to influence you with my pessimism. I hope you're optimistic.

Truman and Eisenhower have given me their reservations. They say be cautious about trusting them.

I'm glad we're going to talk, but I'm not overly hopeful. Some of you think we want resolution of this in an election year. I want it resolved, but not because of the election. Don't yield anything on that impression.

Just think of the national interest -- now and ten years from now.

Secretary Katzenbach: Here are the issues:

1. They'll make a long statement denouncing U.S. aggression - "hear U.S. affirm conditions to stop bombing." They'll have a hard line on the bombing, and they'll stay with it. If pressed, they'll define "other acts of war" to include any and every violation of the border.

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2. They will label the San Antonio formula as conditions - label them unacceptable.

Director Helms: They'll be tough at first - may say no further meetings until bombing settled.

Secretary Rusk: They'll probably make their statement public; we should do likewise. They'll come in with a roar.

Secretary Clifford: We've been put on notice we're being divided in two phases: bombing and acts of war; then other things.

Mr. Rostow: But they noted our position that we will be determined by March 31 speech.

Ambassador Harriman: I think their answer indicated they're willing to hear our conditions for stopping the bombing.

The NVN signed an agreement in 1962 and never kept one word of it. So I'm under no illusions.

They're arriving in Paris with a force of 43. They have asked for a villa. This indicates they are ready for phase I and phase II. They seem to be dug in for a period of time.

Secretary Rusk: Move with deliberation. May want to do some other works - if and when we see we can stop all bombing, may want to talk to USSR, get concessions from them.

Ambassador Harriman: I suggest Cy Vance come back and forth - its only seven hours away.

Ambassador Vance: The government should speak with only one voice. Very harmful if otherwise.

Secretary Clifford: Suppose they say they want agreement on stopping bombing, do nothing else till that is done. Let's face that very real problem.

Secretary Rusk: We would quote heavily from the March 31 speech about reduction of violence. They would have to take the burden of breaking off the talks. Make them impose the ultimatum.

Ambassador Harriman: We would have to carefully define "other acts of war" - not reconnaissance.

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Secretary Clifford: They could make a sharp issue if they took the San Antonio formula and called upon us to adhere.

Ambassador Harriman: Because they've repudiated the San Antonio formula, they'll probably use other approach.

The President: Assume they do say what Clark says, what do we say? Assume if you take advantage, everything here comes to naught.

Secretary Rusk: Start with points which go beyond our minimum position: DMZ, Laos, Accords, control by ICC, etc.

General Johnson: Take no action that would impede military actions in the South.

Secretary Rusk: If they ask for a cease-fire, our response should be mutual withdrawal of forces, amnesty, application of Manila formula.

Secretary Katzenbach: It is unlikely they'll propose a cease-fire. More likely to say they are going to refrain as gesture, so they can control it.

The President: Should we propose mutual withdrawal, re-institute DMZ, supervised election?

Ambassador Vance: Might propose DMZ.

Mr. Rostow: The critical question will be at what stage we want discussions of political settlement in the South. Earlier we get to that, the better off we'll be. They may try to move us to more inhibited military position.

Natural way to end this war is not a cease-fire, but to get at a political settlement before there's a cease-fire.

Secretary Rusk: Advantage in our making strong case at opening. The moment we agree Hanoi has a right to talk about political reorganization in the South, that is a big concession.

Mr. Rostow: I wholly agree.

The President: Shouldn't Bunker be getting Thieu to go ahead on talking with the NLF?

Secretary Katzenbach: I don't think Hanoi wants to talk about a political settlement in the South. They'll say we should talk to NLF about that.

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Secretary Clifford: Combine March 31 speech and their response of April 3. You were willing to take first step to de-escalate. We can't say publicly, but San Antonio has been disposed of. They didn't respond to San Antonio.

General Taylor: On the cease fire question, at some point I think they'll try. Against our interest, because it takes weeks and months to put into effect. We should say get experts to work on it while we continue to talk in Paris.

Secretary Rusk: It has merit.

Secretary Clifford: They may say "we're prepared to offer a cease-fire." Have to face up to it. Makes it difficult for us to explain why we can't accept it.

The President: Don't you trump their cease-fire by Manila formula?

Secretary Clifford: They then say they're willing to work toward it, but while doing that, have a cease-fire.

Ambassador Vance: U.S. can't speak for the GVN on this.

Mr. Rostow: (1) We agree to talk about cease-fire. (2) But try to push talks in another direction.

The President: What would you do about stopping the bombing?

Mr. Rostow: Start with March 31 -- assumptions about their behavior - then stop.

Secretary Katzenbach: I think they'll reject conditions.

Secretary Rusk: Ave could say we're willing to stop unconditionally, but also talk about what you're going to do unconditionally.

Director Helms: The leaders think they're in a position to win - want you to give something more.

Ambassador Harriman: When they accepted March 31, they were riding high. A lot has changed in the past month. They thought they were winning. How they judge last month may be something else.

General Goodpaster: We'll come quickly to force withdrawals. We might take this up in trial areas so their performance can be judged. We and they don't have some measure of relative positions. They may be more optimistic.

The President: In your opinion, have we increased or decreased our military strength because of bombing curbs?

General Goodpaster: What they've been able to do not much different from what they could have done. Their advantage though is more ease in supply and pulling people off repairs in North.

Mr. Rostow: We were pinning down establishment by instrument bombing.

General Johnson: I don't think it's hurt much at this stage. I disagree with General Goodpaster on some thing - the level of terror in October, culminating in TET, was necessary for him to try to regain losses. Now he didn't score well in second wave. I think he hurts.

Ambassador Vance: I think we should define our objectives in the South. Fight and talk, or reduce violence?

Secretary Rusk: Basically it's status quo ante- pulling North and South apart militarily - shooting for time for Asians to look after selves.

Mr. Rostow: The crucial problem is how to deal with a coalition government.

Mr. Bundy: The principle of the South Vietnamese settling it themselves should be our position.

Ambassador Harriman: I hope Bunker will get Thieu to carry out his campaign promise to bring some into government who have a following - like Huong.

Secretary Rusk: Should have a later meeting, before the group leaves Thursday.

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SECRET

White House Meeting, May 6, 1968

Policy Guidance Needed for US/DRV Talks

1. US Military Objectives in South during First and Later Phases of Talks
2. San Antonio Formula: US Presentation, DRV Response, Probable Resolution
3. Participation and "Your Side/Our Side" Formulation
4. Introduction of Other Subjects in First Phase

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E.O. 12958, Dec. 31, 1993
White House Classification, Feb. 11, 1993
By DCM NARS, Date 6-21-94

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5/6/68

Pres - Rusk - Clifford - Harriman - Vance - ⁶

Goodpastor - Taylor - Habib - Bundy - Katzenbach

Johnson - Rostow - Christian -

Pres - want most careful screening of
personnel in Paris - want to be positive.

I want negotiators to get my feelings.
Don't want to influence you with my pessimism.
Hope you're optimistic.

Truman and Eisenhower have given me
their reservations. They say be cautious about
trusting them.

I'm glad we're going to talk, but I'm
not overly hopeful.

Some of you think we want resolution of
this in an election year. I want it
resolved, but not because of election.
Don't yield anything on that impression.

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now and 10 years from now.

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(2)

Katzenbach - issues:

1. They'll make long statement denouncing U.S. aggression - "hear U.S. affirm conditions to stop bombing." Hard line on bombing, and they'll stay with it. If pressed, they'll define "other acts of war" to include any + every violation of border.
2. Will label S.A. formula as conditions - label them unacceptable.

Holmes - they'll be tough at first - may say no further meetings till bombing settled.

Rusk - they'll probably make their statement public; we should do likewise. They'll come in with a roar.

Clifford - we've been put on notice we're being divided in 2 phases: bombing + acts of war; then other things.

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(3)

Rostow - but they noted our position that we will be determined by March 31 speech.

Harriman - I think their answer indicated they willing to hear our conditions for stopping bombing.

The NVN signed an agreement in 1962 + never kept one word of it. So I'm under no illusions.

They're arriving in Paris with a force of 43. Have asked for a villa. Indicates they are ready for phase I and phase II.

They seem to be dug in for a period of time.

Rusk - move with deliberation. May want to do some other work - if & when we see we can stop all bombing, may want to talk to USSR, get concessions from them.

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(4)

Harriman - suggest C. Vance come back and forth - only 7 hours away.

Vance - govt. should speak with only one voice. Very harmful if otherwise.

Clifford - suppose they say they want agreement on stopping bombing, do nothing else till that done. Let's face that very real problem.

Harriman - ~~We would then define~~

Rusk - we would quote heavily from March 31 speech about reduction of violence. They would have to take burden of breaking off the talks. Make them impose the ultimatum.

Harriman - we would have to carefully define "other acts of war" not assassinations.

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(5)

Clifford - they could make a sharp issue if they took S.A. formula and called upon us to adhere.

Harriman - Because they've repudiated SA formula, they'll probably use other approach.

Pres - assume they do say what Clark says, what do we say? assume if you take advantage, everything here comes to naught.

Rusk - start with points which go beyond our minimum position: DMZ, Laos accord, control by ICC, etc.

Johnson - ~~take~~ take no action that would impede military actions in South. ~~(H) DMZ~~

Rusk - if they ask for cease-fire, our response should be mutual withdrawal of forces, amnesty, application of Panola formula.

(6)

Kat - unlikely they'll ^{propose} ~~oppose~~ cease-fire.
More likely to say they are going to
refrain as gestures, so they can control
it.

Pres - should we propose mutual withdrawal,
all-institute DMZ, supervised election.

Nance - might propose DMZ.

~~Rusk~~ Rostow - critical question will be
at what stage we want discussion of
political settlement in So. Earlier we
get to that, better off we'll be.

They may try to move us to more
inhibited military positions.

Natural way to end this war is not
a cease-fire, but to get at political
settlement before there's a cease-fire -

(7)

Rusk - Advantage in our making strong case at opening.

Moment we agree Hanoi has right to talk about political ~~responsible~~ organization in South, that is a big concession.

Rostow - I wholly agree.

Pres - shouldn't Bunker be getting Thieu to go ahead on talking with NLF.

Katzenbach - I don't think Hanoi wants to talk about political settlement in South. They'll say we should talk to NLF about that.

Wifford - combine March 31 + their response of April 3. You were willing to take first step to de-escalate. ~~For it's~~ If we can't say publicly, but S.A. has been disposed of. They didn't respond to S.A.

(8)

Taylor - access fire question, at some point I think they'll try. Against our interest, because it takes weeks + months to put into effect. We should say get experts to work on it while we continue to talk in Paris.

~~Rush~~ Rush - has merit.

Clifford - they may say "we're prepared to offer cease-fire." Have to face up to it. Makes difficult for us to explain why can't accept it.

Price - don't you trump their cease-fire by Manila formula?

Clifford - they then say they're willing to work toward it, but while doing that, have cease-fire.

Vance - US can't speak for GVN on this.

(9)

Rostow - ① we agree to talk about cease-fire

② But try to push talks ~~in~~ ^{in/another} direction.

Pres - what would you do about stopping bombing?

Rostow - start with March 31 - assumptions about their behavior - then stop.

Kat - I think they'll reject conditions.

Rusk - Ave could say we're willing to stop unconditionally, but also talk about what you're going to do unconditionally.

Holmes - the leaders think they're in a position to win - want you to give something more.

Harrison - when they accepted March 31, they were riding high. Lot has changed ~~in~~ in past month.

They thought they were winning. How they judge last month may be something else.

Goodpastor - We'll come quickly to force withdrawals. We might take this up in trial areas so their performance can be judged. We and they don't have some measure of relative positions. They may be more optimistic.

Pres - In your opinion, have we increased or decreased our military strength because of bombing Cuba?

Goodpastor - what they've been able to do is not much different from what they would have done. Their advantage though, is more ease in supply and getting people off airplanes in Cuba.

Rector - we ~~are~~ are winning down establishment by instrument bombing.

(11)

Johnson - don't think it's hurt much at this stage.

Disagree with Goodpastor on some things - the level of terror in Oct., culminating in TET, was necessary for him to try to regain losses. Now he didn't score well in second round. I ^{think} ~~think~~ he hurts.

Vance - think we should define our objectives in South. Fight & talk, or reduce violence?

Rusk - basically it's status quo ante - pulling No. & So. apart militarily - shooting for time for Asians to look after selves.

Rostow - crucial problem is how to deal with coalition govt.

Bundy - ~~principle~~ principle of S Vietnamese settling it ~~themselves~~ themselves should be ~~this~~ our position.

(12)

Harriman - hope Brecker will get Thien
to carry out campaign promise to bring
some into govt. who have following -
like Huong.

Rush - should have later meeting -
[plan to leave early Tuesday]