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<del>13 meeting notes</del>	<del>open 10-6-83 NLS 82-51 meeting with foreign policy advisors 4 p.</del>		
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MAY 25, 1968 - 1:45 p.m.

MEETING WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

The President  
Secretary Rusk  
Secretary Clifford  
Director Helms  
General Wheeler  
Walt Rostow

Justice Fortas  
General Taylor  
George Christian

SERVICE SET

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING  
WITH FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS

May 25, 1968  
In the Mansion  
1:54 p m.

Attending the luncheon were:

Secretary Rusk	Walt Rostow
Secretary Clifford	Justice Fortas
Director Helms	General Taylor
General Wheeler	George Christian

The President: We have received a wire from Ambassador Harriman.

Secretary Rusk: Vance told me on the phone he was a little reluctant about route reconnaissance. Cy prefers pinpoint.

The President: What about their air activity, Bus?

General Wheeler: They're carrying out an unprecedented number of training flights north of the 20th parallel, both with IL-28's and MIGs. They haven't been south of the 20th parallel since May 11.

Mr. Rostow: They're using Bonnie and Clyde pilots.

General Wheeler: They're hoping to take Danang and hold it for a day.

The President: What are the respective strengths there?

General Wheeler: We've got more horses than they have.

General Taylor: When General Westmoreland is here, make the maximum public relations use of him.

Secretary Rusk: Will there be a strategy change under Abrams?

General Wheeler: The pattern will be about the same. He may consolidate forces.

Mr. Rostow: Who will keep an eye on the ARVN?

General Wheeler: One of his staff.

The President: How will the new Vietnam Cabinet be received in the court of public opinion?

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SERVICE SET

Secretary Rusk: I believe it will be plus marks - be stronger in terms of political solidarity.

The President: I'm afraid they're going to divide off Ky.

Secretary Rusk: He's taking wait and see attitude.

Director Helms: It is dangerous - Ky keeping his generals close to see if Thieu goes too far.

The President: Should Ky come here with Thieu? Ask Bunker to think about it.

Secretary Rusk: I don't believe we should have a joint session for Thieu. It won't do us any good.

The President: Clark, anything new to report?

Secretary Clifford: I was before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. There was a good deal of discussion about Paris and the bombing. They have a good understanding of what the Communists are up to. They seem to be relaxed about things.

(General Wheeler discussed the offensive action planned to disrupt enemy threat to Ben Het. It would involve some bombing and artillery in uninhabited area of Cambodia used for North Vietnam retreat.)

Secretary Rusk: I need time to think about it -- especially B-52s.

General Wheeler: I don't need a decision for several days. I would like to have it Monday or Tuesday.

Secretary Clifford: I see a military need, but concerned because of negotiations. Before we do it, let's talk to our representatives in Paris. Maybe we should have Vance back after the Monday meeting. We also can discuss with Cy the bombing north of the 19th parallel, and clear up the North Vietnamese interpretations.

General Taylor: That is a reasonable proposition.

Mr. Rostow: General Westmoreland<sup>e</sup> invisions doing this after an attack across the Cambodian border. I don't think Hanoi would break up the talks.

Justice Fortas: Vance's return will be big publicity.

SERVICE SET

The President: We've got to lay some predicates for resuming if we have to. We've got to prepare for the day of reckoning. We're not informing people of what they're doing. You wait till we have some military disaster - that'll be it. They'd rather negotiate with Kennedy, McCarthy or Humphrey.

General Taylor: I'd go back to the 20th right now.

The President: Let's set predicate - we can't pop it all at once.

Secretary Clifford: The bombing sorties in North Vietnam are up from 3200 in February to 9100 in May.

The President: I want Rusk and Clifford to get together and figure out how to get back to the 20th parallel with little bombast.

The President: Let's have Vance come back.

To review:

1. Clark and Dean lay out program to get back to the 20th parallel.
2. Tell Cy to come back.
3. Meet again Tuesday - I've made up my mind on the 20th.

The President: Dean, what's your prediction on Paris?

Secretary Rusk: Not going to change in Paris till they've carried out more attacks in South Vietnam. We've got to play these things out. I don't think they'll be anything until July at least - they may wait for the August convention. The Rumanian Foreign Minister expressed the same view.

Director Helms: We believe the objectives of fight and talk are to bring down the South Vietnam government. I don't see any give in the North Vietnam position for some time.

Secretary Clifford: You made a generous offer in San Antonio to stop all bombing, yet they took the tougher offer on March 31. What happened in between? The big event was disappointment with TET. I think they decided they couldn't succeed militarily. I think they're in Paris to seek a political settlement.

I believe something will come out of Paris. There's hope now on the part of the American people. If we do anything to wreck Paris - Bobby shoots up - public opinion goes against us. We need to keep the talks going through August 26. We may get bits and scraps by then. We must maintain the talks.

SERVICE SET

The President: Bus, are we in good shape now as we were when talks began?

General Wheeler: Better. We haven't lost much. It could worsen. They'll try to drag talks out to keep bombing off their backs. You couldn't get them out of Paris with a team of oxen and bulkwhips.

The President: What should we do?

General Wheeler: Fight - keep the pressure on. If we get an opportunity to hit them in Cambodia, do it.

General Taylor: They're combining political and military fronts.

Mr. Rostow: I'd go back to 20th after we talk to Cy - I'd begin to think about the way to settle the war by the end of the year. We ought to be thinking about the possibility of forcing this to a crisis. Get things rougher.

Secretary Rusk: I think bombing south of the 20th parallel more effective.

General Wheeler: I disagree.

Secretary Clifford: In concentrating attacks, we're doing a better job - In April 1967, 242 trucks; April 1968, 765 trucks knocked out. In Laos: April 1967, 138 - April 1968 - 1400.

General Wheeler: The 1967 figures do not reflect a better spotting and night vision this year.

Justice Fortas: The program you outlined seemed to be right. If it is important to move up to the 20th, move up. Should examine whether Paris platform is being used adequately for public education. For the moment, American people enraptured by the fact that talks are going on. I think both of us have to stay in Paris. But unless we react to the high casualty figures - in Paris, by Harriman - people will lose confidence.

# # #

luncheon group - May 25 - R, C, H, R, W, Fokes,  
Tupper  
C

Pres - wire from Harriman.

Rusk - Vance told me on phone he was little  
reluctant about route reconnaissance -

Cy prefers pinpoint.

Pres - what about their air activity, BUS?

Wheeler - they're carrying out unprecedented  
no. of training flights no. of 20th  
parallel, both with IL-28's and MIGs.  
Haven't been so. of 20th since May 11.

Rostov - [Bonnie + Clyde pilots]

Wheeler - They're hoping to take Danang  
+ hold it for a day.

P - Respective strengths there?

Wheeler - we've got more horses than they have

Taylor - when Westmoreland here, make  
maximum PR use of him.

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By us, NARS, Date 10-6-83

SERVICE SET

R - will there be strategy changes under Abrams?

W - Pattern will be about same. He ~~may~~ may consolidate forces.

Ros - who'll keep eye on ARVN?

W - one of his staff.

P - how will new VN cabinet be received in court of public opinion?

R - Believe it'll be plus marks - Be stronger in terms of pol solidarity.

P - d'm afraid they're going to divide off Ky.

R - he's taking wait & see attitude. Helms - Dangerous - Ky keeping his generals close to see if Thieu goes too far.

P - should Ky come here with Thieu? ask Bunker to think about it.

R - don't believe we should have joint session for Thieu. Won't do us any good.

(3)

P - Clark - anything new to report?

C - I was before Senate App Sub-Comm.  
Good deal of discussion about Paris +  
the bombing. They have good understanding  
of what Communists are up to. They seem  
to be relaxed about things.

(Wheeler discussed offensive action planned  
to disrupt enemy threat to Ben Het.  
It would involve some bombing + artillery in  
uninhabited area of Cambodia used for  
NVA retreat -)

Rusk - <sup>need</sup> ~~stated~~ time to think about it - especially  
B-52's -

Wheeler - don't need decision for several days.

Like to have Monday or Tuesday -

Clifford - ~~see~~ I see military need, but  
concerned because of negotiations. Before we  
do it, let's talk to our reps in Paris. Maybe  
should have Vance back after Monday meeting.

(4)

Also, can discuss with by the bombing no. of the 19th. Clear up NVN's interpretations. Taylor - that is reasonable proposition.

Rostow - Westmoreland invasions, doing this after an attack across Cambodian border.

Don't think Hanoi would break up talks.

Fortas - Vance's return will be big publicity -

Pres - we've got to lay some predicates for resuming if we have to. Got to prepare for day of reckoning. We're not

informing people of what ~~we~~ <sup>they're</sup> doing.

You wait till we have some military disaster - that'll be it. They'd rather negotiate with

K, McC or Humphrey -

Taylor - I'd go back to 20th right now.

P - Let's get predicate - we can't pop it all at once -

C - Bombing sorties in NVN up from 3200 in Feb to 9100 in May.

P - I want R & C to get together + figure out how to get back to 20th with little bombast.

⑤  
P - sk'd Vance come back -

Review:

1. Clark + Dean lay out program to get back to 20th.
2. Tell Cy to come back.
3. Meet again Tues - I've made up my mind on 20th.

P - ~~Ask~~ Dean, what's your prediction on Paris?

R - not going to be change in Paris till they've carried out more attacks in SVN.

Got to play these things out.

Nothing till July at least - they may wait for Aug. convention.

Rumanian F.M. expressed same view.

Polish Ambassador

Helms - we believe objective of fight & talk is to bring down SVN govt. Don't see any give in NVN position for some time.

(6)

Clifford - you made generous offer in S. A. to stop all bombing, yet they ~~not~~ took tougher offer on March 31.

What happened in between?

Big event was disappointment with T&T.

Think they decided they couldn't succeed militarily. Think they're in Paris to seek political settlement.

I believe something will come out of Paris - There's hope now on part of American people. If we do anything to wreck Paris - Bobby shoots up - public opinion goes against us. Need to keep talks going through Aug. 26. We may get bits + scraps by then. Must maintain talks.

Pres -

Pres - But, are we in good shape now as were 2 weeks ago when talks began?

Wheeler - Better. We haven't lost much.

Could worsen.

(7)

They'll try to drag talks out to keep bombing off their backs.

You couldn't get them out of Paris with a team of oxen and bullwhips.

P - what should we do?

W - fight - keep pressure on. If we get opportunity to hit them in Cambodia, do it.

Taylor - they're combining pol & military fronts.

Rostow - I'd go back to 20th after we talk to

Cey - I'd begin to think about way to settle war by end of year. Ought to be thinking about possibility of forcing this to a crisis. ~~Get things rough~~ rougher.

Rusk - I think bombing so. of 20th more effective.

Whelan - disagree.

Clifford - in concentrating attacks, we're doing better job = April 67 - 242

trucks; April 68 - 765 trucks knocked out.

(8)

Laos: April 1967 - 138 - April 1968 -  $\frac{1}{2}$  1400,  
Whelan - 1967 figures do not reflect better  
spotting + night vision this year.  
~~Combination of better techniques~~

Fortna - program you outlined seemed  
to be right. If important to move  
up to 20th, move up. Should examine  
whether Paris platform is being used  
adequately for public education.

For moment, Am people enraptured by  
fact talks are going on. I think both  
of us have to stay in Paris. But unless  
we react to high casualty figures - in  
Paris, by Hanoi - people will lose confidence.