



H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection, January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973

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Wednesday, February 24th. Henry was in this morning with great concern about the military situation in Laos. He will not admit publicly that anything's wrong, but he wanted the President to know that he was very much concerned that the military reports were not giving us the straight poop.

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For example, they've been showing route 9 as cut off for that last 10 days, and yet Henry's reading today of the sensor reports would indicate that route 9 is not cut off and there is heavy truck traffic on it. The problem is Henry can't tell whether the truck traffic might not be above the cutoff point.

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In any event, he proposed to the President that he send General Haig out to check up on the whole thing on the scene. He kept making the case over and over that military history shows that the real problem in wars is that military commanders tend to become locked into, and infatuated with, their basic original plans and refuse to change them even when the situation so dictates, and that that's one of the major reasons for military defeats. He's afraid that it's possible at least, that this might be the case with Abrams at this point, and he at least wants to check it out. The President's reaction was noncommittal and pensive while Henry was in there. After Henry left, he talked about it some, and obviously was concerned and felt there might be merit to it, although he deplored Henry's constant repetition and citing of the military history to try and prove his point. He did decide to have Vogt in to give him a personal briefing, so he'd get a reading on the thing. But, he got back to Henry's sensitivities, because the President didn't want



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Henry to sit in the briefing. As it happened, it didn't work out to set it up, so it all worked, turned out okay anyway.

Another Kissinger question was a report of his meeting last night with Paul Warnke, at which Warnke suggested that he, Henry, meet with Muskie. Henry obviously wanted to do so, but the President ruled it out hard and fast, so I don't think there'll be any further thought of that.

The Kissinger-Rogers problem continues, and the President spent quite a little time talking about it. We didn't have any schedule for him today, and so he had a lot of time, although he used most of it in the afternoon to work on the finalizing of the State of the Union speech, or State of the World speech. But the morning was basically clear and covered with, filled with this general kind of talk. He keeps asking me what plans I have for dealing with it, and of course, I don't have any. I think that we've got to push to some kind of confrontation to try to make both men realize they're performing childishly and to the detriment of their country, as well as themselves. But I'm not sure we can make any progress by doing that. He, the President wanted me to have a meeting with some of our key political and right-wing types to try to develop a line and a plan of strategy for how to handle the Democratic attacks on the war, which are now becoming strong and very partisan. We've got an opportunity, because the various Democrats have taken different positions: Muskie calling for a pull out this year; the Democratic Policy Committee calling for a pull out by 1973; Jackson taking a hard line; Harriman not going quite as far out as Muskie. The President's point is that we ought to be able to posture ourselves for maximum gain on this, and exploit the differences within the Democratic Party. The question is whether we accept or jump on the Democratic Committee's position, or maybe divide and hit it both ways. There's one huge flaw in it, on the basis that they want to get everything out, including the POW's, but they overlooked the problem of how we get the POW's out; and there's obviously no way we can.



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End of, well let's see, we got into a semi-flap today as the President was scheduled at midday to do a quick drop-by for the regional office guys that are in for a briefing session, and, he had, he agreed to do that. Then they scheduled a meeting with the top black leadership in the Roosevelt Room for a briefing and put the heat on for the President to attend that on the basis that they would offend them if he didn't, which of course was true; so he did it. Then late today, MacGregor hit me with a similar kind of thing where he was having a group of Congressional leaders in tomorrow and wanted to trap the President into doing them too. Somehow, we've got to get control of this whole deal, and I don't see a way to do it yet.

End of February 24th.