



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

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Thursday, February 25.

State of the World message day. The President holed up in the EOB first part of the morning, and then came over to the private office and delivered the address on nationwide radio at 11:00. It came out very well. Ran about 25 minutes, which was a little longer than he wanted, but he had cut it quite a bit to get it down to that. He then did a five minute TV clip of an excerpt for the news tonight, and then had Henry's crew, who had worked on the report, in for the signing. He then went back over to the EOB, and had about an hour and a half briefing from Admiral Moorer following up on Henry's concern expressed yesterday regarding the Laos military situation. It apparently went pretty well, because he seemed in good spirits afterwards and seemed well satisfied that they had the thing planned properly and under control.

He called Colson, Ziegler, Rumsfeld, and me over at 1:00 for a meeting, saying that he wanted to talk to us about the follow-up on the construction decision yesterday or Tuesday. He thought that we had made a real mistake in our failure to follow-up on it; that it was a very tough action, and the President had made the decision alone despite the urging of many of his advisors. Both Shultz and Hodgson came to him individually afterwards and said they admired his making the decision, how tough it was and all that. But they never told anyone else, which gets back to our basic problem. He then made the point that he felt we need a PR guy who sits in the White House who looks for these opportunities, who is attuned to what is the PR reaction to every tough decision. We need some way to get a few of the people in the media to know about these and to write it.

He feels Colson can't do the briefing on the construction thing; for example, that it should be Shultz or Hodgson, or one of the people who was actually in on the deal. And it must be done right at the time, and a PR game plan should have been put into effect immediately. He feels that somebody's got to be sitting there thinking of the PR effect on everything. What do we want to have come out of this, and how will we get it across? Interestingly enough, all this was an interruption of a meeting I'd been having with Rumsfeld on exactly the same subject, trying to



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persuade him to take the initiative in this area, which he has in essence now agreed to do, without any fanfare or announcement. If he actually takes hold of it, we'll be a giant step forward, especially since I worked out the final steps yesterday on getting Colson into running the operational side of this, as he wants to do. I had a long talk with Klein, and spelled it out to him reasonably clearly, and hopefully he understood what I was saying and will act accordingly. But I don't have too much confidence that that's the case. In any event, Colson's going to move in on it. I covered Magruder, Malek, Chapin, Ziegler, Ehrlichman, and others to try to make sure it all works out.

The President had sort of a rinky-dink schedule of odds and ends through the afternoon. Called me in the late afternoon just to chat for a while, didn't seem to have anything on his mind. We covered some schedule items, and reviewed the morning discussion. I told him how I felt the Rumsfeld thing could work out, and he's willing to try it.

End of February 25.