



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

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Saturday, April 19.

President came in late - canceled meeting with Kissinger and NSC group because decision already made - not to go ahead with Korean plan - primarily because all his advisers are opposed. Kissinger called me at home early in morning to discuss this and his general concern that President had been let down, and thus had failed to make a strong decision at opportune time. But Kissinger had also come to the conclusion President could not go ahead.

Had me in for quite a while in the morning, just to talk. Reviewed decision and reasons. Real problem was risk of second war - which public wouldn't buy. Also felt reaction to incident was so mild that people didn't want or expect hard retaliation.

After some appointments, ending with Romney, President called me into little office (Romney and Ehrlichman still in Oval Office) just to talk some more. Then set up a meeting with Harlow and Klein to discuss their readings of Congressional and editorial reaction. Both reported strong approval of President's action to date - restraint with firmness. Obviously impression is that he's acted more positively than he really has.

Decision now to go ahead on Cambodia on Tuesday - to provide necessary show to Soviets to back up Kissinger's talk with them.

President well recognizes Kissinger's thesis that a really strong overt act on part of President is essential to galvanize people into overcoming slothfulness and detachment arising from general moral decay. Kissinger feels this was ideal time and place - President concerned that it's not. That an act related to ending Vietnam War will be better accepted than one that risks another land war - which this does. Ehrlichman took this view and President said "so you've sold out to the doves too." John's point is that Kissinger's ultimate alternative of nuclear use is unacceptable. Kissinger says why have them if you absolutely ban their use.

It's been a tough period, and President has moved with total command and self-assurance - while thoroughly canvassing and probing alternatives. I think he's now fortified to move very strongly



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on next incident - and has learned a lot from this one regarding our weaknesses. Especially in area of lack of military contingency planning and readiness, i.e. we couldn't strike back for five days because we didn't have enough force available, and no plan.

Kissinger also really fed up because military had no plan and spent all the decision time arguing what planes to use, in inter-service rivalry, and Rogers spent Friday morning lining up a golf date for Friday afternoon. Kissinger also plans to force whole range of contingency plans. So some good has come out of it.

President rather surprised by first wave of telegrams after press conference - they were strongly disapproving of his lack of positive steps to retaliate.