

Richard Nixon Presidential Library  
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1	11	09/21/1968	Memo	From John McCone to RN RE: bombing North Vietnam. Handwritten notes added by unknown. 1 pg.
1	11	09/24/1968	Memo	Copy of a memo from Bryce Harlow to RN RE: "Dirksen -- LBJ." 2 pgs.
1	11	09/27/1968	Memo	Copy of a memo from Bob Haldeman to RN and Bryce Harlow RE: Paris talks. 2 pgs.
1	11	09/27/1968	Memo	From an Ellsworth to a DC RE: a conversation between Governor Agnew and someone referred to as Rusk. 6 pgs.

H -  
Call  
McCone

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM

TO: MR. NIXON  
FROM: MR. JOHN MCCONE  
SEPTEMBER 21, 1968  
12:30 p.m.

*File*  
*McCone - RN got the app very much pls keep posted.*  
*R.N.*

Dear Dick:

Sorry we didn't get together by phone last evening. I know how complicated your life is.

I am concerned over the possible move or question of bombing of the North. You recall the Democratic Platform call for "Stop all bombing of NVN, when this action would not endanger the lives of our troops in the field; this action should take into account the response from Hanoi."

There is an authoratative estimate in Washington which says that the bombing of the North does not seriously impede infiltration of men and equipment from the North into the South. If this is accepted, the first part of the above statement has been covered and it seems to me that the second part could be rationalized in some way or other.

I have reason to believe that the estimate is being given some currency and, therefore, is a possibility -- and I say merely a possibility of a change of policy based on these findings.

I feel you should be alert to this and while I have no information as to the acceptability of the estimate at the military level in Washington or Saigon, nevertheless, it comes from such sources that it can't be totally overlooked and I am quite sure its existance is known to some of the Doves on the Hill.

Again I emphasize a change of policy is a remote possibility, but something you should be prepared for.

Regards,

Mr. McCone left for Hawaii at 2:30 p.m. today and will be staying at the Mauna Kea Hotel on the Island of Hawaii for two or three days.

As dictated over phone to  
Kay K.

September 24, 1968

MEMORANDUM

TO: RN  
FROM: Bryce Harlow  
SUBJECT: Dirksen - LBJ

Ev Dirksen reports the following as direct  
from LBJ:

(1) He (LBJ) has no knowledge that McCone and/or General Taylor ever made any kind of proposition regarding the Paris talks to indicate there might be a sell-out of a political nature.

(2) The talks are exactly where they were before.

(3) He will not change from the stance he has evidenced in his talks with you.

(4) He wants to maintain the same good relationship with you that he always maintained with DDE.

Dirksen adds the following points gained from this discussion:

(1) North Vietnam has not given any evidence that they will stop shelling the DMZ.

(2) They have given no assurance that they will stop bombing the cities.

(3) They have given no assurance that they will accept a constitutional government of South Viet Nam and deal with it straight across the table.

(4) Because there have been no responses to these points there will be nothing done to decelerate our effort or reduce the bombing presently underway.

LBJ let Ev read a cable from General Abrams which arrived this morning. Abrams is certain that he has them "on the hip." The death toll of the enemy is terrible and the number of weapons and munitions being captured is enormous. The President does not propose to soften his position.

LBJ said if at any time you need any information let Dirksen know and the two of them will discuss it in total candor. He said he would telephone Dirksen before taking any move at any time that might politically backfire on you.

As Ev said, who could ask for more?

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CONFIDENTIAL -- EYES ONLY

September 27, 1968

MEMORANDUM

TO: RN  
Bryce Harlow  
FROM: Bob Haldeman

The following is the report from the top diplomatic source who is secretly with us and has access to the Paris talks and other information:

Our source feels that there is a better than even chance that Johnson will order a bombing halt at approximately mid-October. This will be tied in with a big flurry of diplomatic activity in Paris which will have no meaning but will be made to look important.

He feels also there is a one-third likelihood of movement by LBJ before the election on the program that was discussed with RN at the ranch. In the European area, the Russians are pushing hard to get Johnson into some program that will help the Russian world image and our source thinks Johnson will fall for this. It would relate to the Mid-East situation and to the disarmament program.

Scranton should have some further reports on this as a result of his European talks.

European leaders are afraid Johnson is going to make efforts to improve his image and that these efforts will be detrimental to Europe.

Our source feels Johnson has a compulsion to do some such thing and that he will do it. He thinks this may have some relation to the Ball resignation which might have been done to give Johnson a chance to appear personally to be directing our efforts at the UN.

Our source does not believe that it is practical to oppose a bombing halt but does feel thought should be given to the fact that it may happen - that we may want to anticipate it - and that we certainly will want to be ready at the time it does happen.

He seriously questions whether Nixon and Agnew are actually getting anywhere near the briefing that they should have. (He also feels Humphrey is not being thoroughly briefed either although Ball may have considerable information for him).

He says the Russians are now much more flexible on the Mid-East and are eager to get out the word that they are willing to move on disarmament.

Our source is extremely concerned about the moves Johnson may take and expects that he will take some before the election.

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September 27, 1968

Declassified/Released on 8-15-94  
under provisions of E.O. 12356  
By J. Saunders, National Security Council

MEMORANDUM

TO: DC

FROM: Ellsworth

Following is a report of Governor Agnew's conversation with Rusk Friday afternoon, September 27:

A good 55-minute conversation -- covered a lot of territory.

VIETNAM

There are no new developments. With regard to the possibility of troop reductions, there are no indications of the possibility of any troops coming back this year. In early 1969 some support troops might be coming back, but it would not amount to 10 percent of our total troop strength over there. In any case, they will not cut our legs off with an announcement in October. If there is any change LBJ will call RN right away. With regard to a bombing cessation, nothing is presently anticipated although it is a fast-changing situation. If the other side should devise any movement, make any move to lessen tension, such as, for example, withdrawing some troops out of the DMZ, we might take that as a matter that would justify reconsideration of bombing. The reason for this is that such a move on their part would constitute great loss of face in the eyes of world public opinion. Of course, we are under intense

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scrutiny particularly in Southeast Asia and throughout Asia with regard to our move or moves and we of course must avoid any loss of face. It is a war of nerves. If there should be any change we will be notified.

With regard to the rumors that Maxwell Taylor is saying in private conversations that the North Vietnamese are ready to enter into substantive negotiations if only we will stop the bombing, Rusk says there is no movement at all on that view and he does not know what Taylor is referring to. We have no indication at all from the other side that is any different from what they have been saying and doing all along.

(NB: Agnew did not report Rusk saying anything at all about what he told RN on September 8 about possible movement in Paris. Moreover, Rusk's mention to Agnew of "any move to lessen tension" as being enough to justify reassessment of the bombing seems to be a rather clear signal.)

CENTRAL EUROPE

The Czechoslovakia situation still constitutes a great danger. It is impossible to guess what the Russians might do. The Yugoslavia situation is particularly volatile -- nothing immediate is indicated, but dangerous. Rumania, however, is not considered critical despite the noises that are being made. They are more conventional Communists and differ with the Soviet Union only in certain areas of international relations.

Questions have been asked in the last day or two about why Kosygin has not been seen or mentioned in public, particularly in connection with matters pertaining to the Czechoslovakia situation. The answer is that Kosygin has not been seen for the same reason the Gromyko has not been seen in connection with it -- it is considered and being handled as a purely political, not a state matter.

The question has been raised whether or not the Soviets might have moved to establish somewhat less hostile relations with Mao, in view of the fact that their relations with us have cooled substantially over the Czech matter. No such moves have been detected.

Rusk showed Agnew some fantastic photographs taken by our spy satellites showing dispositions of Soviet tanks around Czechoslovakia in satellite countries (Bulgaria, etc.)

NB: There is no plan for a NATO summit, although they are moving the foreign ministers conference up from December to November.

THE MIDDLE EAST

The U.S.S.R. has accelerated its assistance to the Arab states and has deployed new sophisticated naval vessels in the Mediterranean.

Some hostilities can be expected in the area, although not on a grand scale. The Israelis want to bargain on a direct basis with the different Arab states, without an

intermediary, but of course this is strongly resisted by the Arabs since direct negotiations would imply some recognition of the State of Israel.

The indications are that the Israelis would be willing to withdraw from Sinai if the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan could be settled in their favor. The most difficult phase of all this will be resolution of the problems between Israel and Jordan. Jordan apparently is going to be much tougher than any of the other Arab states.

There is nothing to the rumors about the Soviets taking steps to force the opening of the Suez Canal.

The Johnson administration is worried about sending the Phantom jets to Israel, for fear ~~it~~ it will cause an escalation in the arms race in the Middle East. Johnson is particularly worried that, without a Non-Proliferation Treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and the addition of jet aircraft, you begin to have a highly dangerous combination of nuclear weapons spreading around and in the hands of people with highly efficient and dangerous delivery systems, (i.e. the jets). Since Israel has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Johnson is holding back the Phantom jets in order to get her to sign the Treaty.

(NB: Could this be a hint of an effective "scare" political line reminiscent of the nuclear weapons lines used against Goldwater in 1964?)

The Arabs have caught two of our spy planes, flying around in recent days or weeks but have not said anything about them and have not done anything except to fly some

interceptors up to take a look.)

SPAIN

We are renegotiating our military base lease agreements with Spain. We now pay a total of about \$250 million a year, and Spain is asking for more than \$700 million so they are really holding us up. Rusk has adopted the deliberate tactic of sitting it out and he will not consummate any agreement on those terms. The leases will probably expire before an agreement is reached, but there is a more or less automatic extension of 6 months and another year beyond that in case of necessity, so even if the press begins to play up how the leases have expired there will still be an 18 months grace period.

The point is, Rusk specifically requests that RN not make an issue out of the failure to renew these leases if and when the press begins to play it up.

LATIN AMERICA

Rusk also asked Agnew to say to RN that he, Rusk, is worried about the Congressional cuts in the Alliance for Progress and asks RN to do what he can to help restore some of the cuts. (Ellsworth will check with Frank Bow and <sup>in</sup>Milton <sub>m</sub> Young on the status of this and report back with a recommendation.) They are still having problems with the Castro-oriented people in many parts of Latin America.

GREECE

They are planning on reestablishing some aid if the plebiscite goes through on Sunday and if things generally continue to go as they are, moving (albeit slowly) to the restoration of democracy. Deficient as it is, the current military government is the best that is available. The others, Andreas Pompandeau and his associates are bandits, unreliable and Rusk would like to see their Swiss bank accounts.

THE PUEBLO

There is absolutely nothing new on the Pueblo. It was in international waters by any standrads -- theirs and ours.

Incidentally, Rusk emphasized that we are taking steps to protect our similar operational vessels here and there, covering them with adequate operational surface and air cover.