



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

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Friday, February 12.

At Key Biscayne. The weather turned out to be pretty bad and got worse as the day went on, ending up with rain from about 2:00 on. The President took it pretty well. We had the 11:00 am photo session with Rogers and Kissinger. Then I spent about three hours with the President on general PR and scheduling. Then he went for a swim with PN and Tricia as the rain started. They then all packed up about mid-afternoon, that is the President and Bebe and Bill Rogers, and headed over to Walker's, and have not been heard from since. They're spending the night there and probably will come back tomorrow, since Adele Rogers comes down tomorrow night.

The photo session went fine, and we had a discussion afterwards with Rogers and Kissinger of the whole Laotian situation. Primarily, on tactics as to the need for putting all the necessary effort in there. The President wants to be sure that we do everything that we need to do, and that we pull no punches at all. He discussed the fact that it's important for some civilian input into military planning and cited some of the earlier instances where he pushed the military to go further than they themselves had intended to go, and that it was beneficial and desirable that he had done so. He's doing that again on this one, feeling that, for instance, we should bomb the passes and perhaps some other things in order to make sure the Laotian operation works out.

We also got into a fairly lengthy discussion of the press problem as a result of an ABC film report last night purporting to show that there were American ground troops operating in Laos. They apparently had gotten some film of an American body being removed, which was wearing an ARVN uniform, and they found that very sinister. Rogers made the point that the key here is what appears on television, and that we've got to keep riding herd or we're going to get clobbered. He is, of course, absolutely right. Henry, on the other hand, was more concerned with a Reston column that complained that we weren't permitting the press adequate access to cover the war. Rogers' point was, that kind of complaint hurts us not at all, but the picture on television and the commentary that goes with it hurts us enormously, and that that's what we've got to watch out for.



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After Rogers and Kissinger left, we got into a general PR discussion on how to handle the WSAG PR. He wants to be sure that Rogers' PR judgment is brought in on that. He also discussed the need for Henkin and Ziegler to work up a simple line on why we won't allow any American press in Laos, and then he wants us to move to keep the American press out, under ARVN orders, of course. And told me to ride herd on it for him.

He then got into a long discussion of the long-range schedule planning. I reviewed our philosophy of scheduling recommendations and went through the whole rundown on how we saw schedule planning for the next 20 months. He generally bought our recommendations and seemed to think we were on the right track in looking for more variety in scheduling, and in trying to do more to build the President's standing on a gradual basis for the next 20 months. He agreed that the trips to the country, the stepped-up press conferences, and that kind of thing were all necessary. In fact, he agreed to do one TV press conference per month, plus one non-televised press conference a month, plus one major other event on television. If we can keep up with this schedule, it would be very worthwhile.

He called Connally and had a good chat with him just on general matters. He agreed with him that they ought to do something with LBJ in the near future, which we're supposed to set up.

He was very anxious also to move fast on a salute to agriculture, recognizing we have a problem with the farmers at this point.

That was about it for the meeting, which ended by Mrs. Nixon having him go out to go for a swim, and I've heard nothing from him since he went to Walker's.

End of February 12.