



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

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Monday, January 18.

The President had a full morning of meetings, the principal one of which was a session with Rogers, Laird, Kissinger, Helms, and Moorer to discuss Laird's trip and the results therefrom. This principally concerned the level of troop withdrawals and the timing for same, and the plan for some new attacks in Laos and Cambodia. The President interrupted that meeting for a session with construction industry people, and then went back in to the Defense group meeting. After a session with Henry and me, he then went over and spent the rest of the day at the EOB, working on the State of the Union. He agreed to do the State of the Union at 9:00 on the basis of my argument that, if he didn't show that level of importance attached to it by himself, it would be hard for those that are promoting the whole thing to develop the feeling of that kind of importance.

During the discussion with Henry and me, he talked about his troop withdrawal plan and the point that Thieu had strongly urged that we not reduce the level below 200,000 prior to his election in October or November. We'll be down to 280,000 in April, so that permits us to withdraw only about 75,000, or 12,000 a month for the next six months after that. We could then, of course, announce the massive withdrawal right after the Vietnamese elections, and this is the President's present plan. All this also relates to the question of a trip to Vietnam, which I think he's still planning on doing in April, and he'll probably make the new announcement at that time, and also use that as a means of bolstering the Thieu government and our confidence in them.

The other big flap today was the problem of an article in the *New York Times* regarding the decline of the State Department which, understandably, had Rogers quite upset, and he succeeded in getting the President into the same frame of mind. The President's reaction was to put out a statement from him blasting the article, but a careful reading of it convinced me that it's got enough basis in fact and accuracy that that wouldn't be good thing to do. He did have me call Rogers a couple of times to tell him that we were moving on it, trying to find out who had done it, planning a statement by Ziegler to shoot it down, etcetera.



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In discussing this, I talked to Safire, who makes the very valid point that this whole situation really is the result of a backfire of the State Department's PR effort at the middle level, where they've been strongly selling the line that Kissinger has taken over the development of foreign policy. They've been doing this as a way to try and stab Kissinger, but as Safire had predicted apparently earlier, instead it's, it's backfired, and this one writer, at least, with the *Times*, has picked up their line on a straight basis and is throwing it back at them. Safire's convinced they've been on a real campaign to chop Kissinger in the NSC, and that's what really led to this. It'll be hard to convince the President and Rogers of this point, but I'm sure Safire is right.

End of January 18.