

INFORMATION

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Sunday, May 5, 1968 -- 5:40 p.m.

Mr. President:

Gen. Taylor -- who has given at least as much constructive thought to negotiations as any single American -- has written this thoughtful paper which I commend to you along with my own proposed scenario for the 1:00 p.m. meeting Monday, May 6.

Pres file

W. W. Rostow

WWRostow:rln

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White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By AG, NATA, Date 5-26-92

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Profile
May 5, 1968

For President's use with Louis Heren and William Rees-Mogg of London Times
Monday, May 6, 1968

With the opening of negotiations in Paris this week, there is little I ought to say -- or can say.

-- We are still not clear that Hanoi is prepared ^{for} to what we would regard as an honorable peace settlement.

-- Our ideas remain what they have always been:

- a. re-establish the DMZ at the 17th parallel as a respected truce line and leave the unification of Vietnam to peaceful processes in the future;
- b. honor the 1962 Laos Accords: all foreign forces out of Laos and no infiltration;
- c. a one-man one-vote solution to the politics of South Vietnam.

-- Militarily and politically the man in Hanoi have worked on analogy with 1954 and the French. But the situation is different:

- a. there is an independent constitutional government in Saigon and highly nationalistic South Vietnamese armed forces which survived in good style the Tet attacks which aimed to destroy them.
- b. there are thoroughly competent U. S. forces which demonstrated at Khe Sanh and elsewhere they were not subject to North Vietnamese tactical defeat.
- c. there is an American President who -- unlike Mendes-France in 1954 -- is not committed to peace at any price.
- d. in my judgment, there is behind this President and his successor a body of citizens which wants an honorable peace but will not run out on South Vietnam or Asia.

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Authority NLS-C 85 20
By iss, NARS, Date 6-15-84

Per file

Sunday, May 5, 1968 -- 4:40 p.m.

Mr. President:

Your meeting tomorrow, Monday, May 6, 1968, 1:00 p.m. on negotiations.

Attached memorandum covers the main issues we can expect to encounter in talks with Hanoi.

You may wish to ask Sec. Rusk to make the points in the first paragraph (Negotiations in Context). You may wish me to call him before the meeting and lay the groundwork for this opening approach.

Yes _____ No _____ Call me _____

I believe Sec. Rusk has designated Nick Katzenbach to present Hanoi's position at the meeting. If that is agreeable, you may wish to ask Nick to make the first presentation.

Then you could ask Governor Harriman to make his response.

You might then ask the others present to comment on both presentations, beginning with Sec. Rusk and Sec. Clifford.

You may wish to confine the discussion to the cessation of bombing, which will be our principal concern in the days and weeks ahead.

But you might ask: What is our position on a ceasefire?

Nick could present Hanoi's position. Harriman could present our stand.

You may then wish to ask: What if they propose a coalition government?

Again, Katzenbach could present Hanoi's stand; Harriman our answer.

The most important aspect of this meeting is for all hands to hear from the President that:

- We are seeking an honest settlement that will hold up in history.
- That you will not be rushed.
- That you will not be diverted by domestic pressures or world opinion.

You want the Negotiating Team to reflect our point of view, and let the enemy do his own negotiating.

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Authority NLS-C-85 20

By jcs, NARS, Date 6-25-84

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Sunday, May 5, 1968 -- 4:55 p.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Guidelines for Negotiations Meeting, Monday, May 6, 1968, 1:00 p.m.

Negotiations in Context

(You may wish to have Sec. Rusk make these points at the beginning.)

Talks in Paris will be only one arena where the outcome of the Vietnam conflict will be determined. Others are:

1. The battleground in Vietnam.
2. The political struggle in South Vietnam, and particularly the stability and strength of the GVN, Hanoi's main target.
3. World public opinion.
4. The political and psychological climate in the U.S.

Every move we make should be geared to these five dimensions. But the assessment of 4 should be left wholly with the President.

Basic Rules for Negotiators.

1. Pursue the goals of the U.S. by every means.
2. Protect the interests of the legitimate, constitutional government of South Vietnam.
3. Don't negotiate for Hanoi; they can argue their own position.

Major Issues Likely to Arise.

First Round

Hanoi's position

Stop unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the North.

U. S. Position

State reasons for bombing.
Demand reciprocity.
-- Reestablish DMZ with strengthened supervision.
-- Enforcement of 1962 Agree

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If agreement impossible on this basis, then fall back to San Antonio formula: Make clear what we would regard as "taking advantage":

- Shelling or attacks across the DMZ or other border of South Vietnam.
- Unit movements across the DMZ or any border of South Vietnam.
- Infiltration of men and supplies above prevailing at time of San Antonio (i. e., about 6,000 a month).
- Other forms of "taking advantage," including attacks on cities.

Make clear violations will force prompt resumption of bombing.

Will probably try to force end of all reconnaissance as "act of war"

Reject any termination of reconnaissance.

(The Delegation should bear in mind this fact: Our capabilities permit us to knock out about 35% of infiltrating trucks -- in good weather in Laos, 25%; in bad weather, 10% in Panhandle of North Vietnam. The weather is now shifting from bad in Laos to good between 17th and 20th parallels. Military, civilian and scientific officials agree that we ought to be able to achieve as good a level in North Vietnam in good weather as in Laos in recent months; that is, a truck kill of at least 25%. That is the minimum cost of stopping bombing in the North Vietnamese Panhandle. We must get an equivalent for stopping of all bombing in North Vietnam.)

Assuming agreement on an end to bombing in the North -- with Hanoi's full understanding of our position as above -- we enter possible haggling over an agenda -- whether to have one, of so what kind.

Round Two

Hanoi's Position

Hanoi's Four Points provide the only basis for real settlement; -- right of the Vietnamese to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity; U. S. forces must withdraw; stop acts of war against North Vietnam;

U. S. Position

Each side must be free to raise any matters it chooses. We will discuss Four points; Hanoi must discuss our points.

Priority items:

- Reestablishment of DMZ.
- Enforcement of 1962 Agreement on Laos.

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- military provisions of Geneva 1954 must be respected;
- internal affairs must be settled in accordance with the program of the NLF;
- peaceful unification of the country to be settled without foreign interference.

Cease-fire in place (assuming VC/NVN forces are in or around urban centers and their military fortunes look promising).

If U. S. wants to discuss matters concerning the South, it must deal directly with the NLF.

(We may, at this point, get into the whole participation question. We might at this stage raise the "Our Side, Your Side" approach, with NLF taking part of a member of Hanoi's side. We will have heavy bargaining in Saigon to bring the GVN around.)

Round Three: Southern Settlement.

Hanoi's position

Hanoi will try to enhance position of NLF at every turn:

- get us to deal directly with Front;
- insist Front be full member of talks;
- reject participation of GVN.

NLF program is only basis for a reasonable settlement in the South.

- Withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from the South.
- Enforcement machinery (ICC strengthened by Asian neutrals, e.g. Burma, Indonesia, Japan).
- One-man one-vote political solution in South Vietnam.

We are ready to discuss cease-fire, but legal government in the South must be free to run its own country and send its civil administrators and police anywhere, and enforce order with its armed forces.

Any discussion of an internal settlement in the South must involve the GVN.

U. S. Position

We should enhance position of GVN at every turn, denigrate NLF:

- GVN must take part in any talks regarding internal situation in the South;
- NLF has no legitimate standing;
- We support Constitution and legally elected government;
- GVN is prepared to discuss internal problems with members of NLF.

(Close coordination with GVN on this sequence is a must. We may wish to encourage direct GVN talks with "Members of" the Front outside the conference setting in South Vietnam or elsewhere.)

Existing Constitution (or version modified by constitutional legal processes) is only sound basis for settlement.

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South Vietnam must have a coalition government based on the NLF, the new Alliance, and other "patriotic elements." Thieu-Ky "clique" can have no role in political structure.

Political life must be based on "One-man One-vote." GVN and other legitimate political forces in the South must work out their own formula. We will not agree to impose any coalition.

Political normalcy will not be possible while fighting and terror continue. Political settlement must be based on the freely expressed will of the people of South Vietnam. To achieve proper atmosphere for democratic political development, there must be peace and an end to terrorism and harassment. Therefore, we believe final settlement must be based on the essentials of the 1954 Agreement, and enforcement of the 1962 Agreement. Infiltration must end. We are ready to withdraw our forces in accordance with the pledge of Manila.

Will resist any admission that North Vietnam forces are in the South. May finally admit some "volunteers" are present. Will resist any meaningful enforcement machinery to supervise withdrawals. May agree to encourage "volunteers" to withdraw, but insist U. S. forces pull out -- or at least back to base areas.

(If NLF and GVN join talks and the subject turns to internal settlement, Hanoi will let NLF take the lead. The GVN should take the lead on our side.)

NLF will push for abolition of present constitution.

NLF may push for new elections in the South.

GVN should stand fast on present constitution. May wish to point out ways exist for legal changes in same.

GVN will resist. We should back their stand publicly, work quietly with them in private to bring them around -- If we are confident they can make a good showing in any such elections and, in particular, will back one non-Communist candidate.

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GVN and we should push hard for abandonment of force by VC/NLF, urging all South Vietnamese to rejoin the mainstream of political life in the South. GVN should offer pledge of good treatment for all who foreswear violence, including promise of no retaliation -- which we should back.

May seek international supervision of elections -- with Communists, or course, included.

Election should be run by legal authorities, including Election Commission which proved its integrity in elections last year. Foreign observation -- as opposed to control -- would be welcome.

W. W. Rostow

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