

Tuesday, October 17, 1967
6:20 p. m.

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~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

MR. PRESIDENT:

Herewith a self-explanatory report of a conversation with Henry Kissinger, which I have showed to Mac Bundy and sent Eyes Only to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara.

W. W. R.

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ attachment

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By RA, NARA, Date 10-5-91

Tuesday, October 17, 1967
6 p. m.

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Henry Kissinger called this afternoon at about 5:35 p. m. He said:

1. He had spoken to Ben Read, who had indicated the wholly negative interpretation of the latest message from Paris, indicating a likelihood we would act on that assumption soon.

2. He said he strongly disagrees with that interpretation and the indicated course of action; but we can count on his absolute loyalty to any decision we make.

3. When asked what he found positive in the message, he said: "Discussions can take place" as opposed to "could" take place. He went on to say that if you assume North Vietnam is a small, uncertain power, with a split government, facing an immense power whose intentions it does not understand or trust, the message could be read as follows: We will talk if you end your bombing without condition; and we might explore your proposition further if you de-escalate in degree.

4. I asked what he recommended. He recommends that we send him back to Paris, with either of two messages:

A. We interpret your message to mean that you are willing to enter productive discussions when bombing has ceased unconditionally; and that you are willing to regard a period of de-escalation as the occasion to explore the time and place for such discussions. On this basis we have cut back our bombing to, say, the 20th parallel; and we are prepared to cease bombing unconditionally if you confirm that our interpretation is correct.

B. We have examined your message and find nothing responsive in it. If we do not hear in a week anything more, we shall assume that our wholly negative interpretation of your response is correct, and act accordingly.

5. Kissinger underlined that M is "paranoid" on the question of bombing, and something like a week ought to be allowed between the time he has his next conversation and our resumption of bombing in the presently denied area.

6. I told Henry that, with the best will in the world, none of us have been able to find anything but a rather dignified flat negative in the message. Nevertheless, given our great respect for his conduct of the exercise, I would make his views available to the principals.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NJ 94-458
By CL, NARA, Date 5-9-95

W. W. R.