

April 2, 1954

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT

Present: The President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Mr. Dulles showed the President the draft of a possible congressional resolution dealing with the Indochina situation. The President read this over, and said that it reflected what, in his opinion, was desirable. He thought, however, that the tactical procedure should be to develop first the thinking of congressional leaders without actually submitting in the first instance a resolution drafted by ourselves. Mr. Dulles said that that was his intention, but that he had put the matter down at this point in resolution form so as to be sure that we ourselves knew what it was that we thought desirable. The President said he quite agreed with the importance of having our own minds clarified.



Mr. Dulles said that he thought there might be some difference in approach between Admiral Radford and himself which ought to be clarified before meeting with the congressional leaders. Mr. Dulles said that it was his view that the authority which we sought was designed to be a deterrent, and to give us a strong position with which to develop strength in the area by association not merely with France and the Associated States, but also with Thailand, Indonesia if possible, the UK (Malaya), the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. He mentioned that he was having meetings with the ambassadors of these countries within the next few days, and that he felt it very important from the standpoint of congressional and public opinion that adequate participation in any defensive efforts should be made by these other countries.

Mr. Dulles suggested that perhaps Admiral Radford looked upon this authority as something to be immediately used in some "strike" and irrespective of any prior development of an adequate measure of allied unity.

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Admiral Radford said that he had thought of the "strike" primarily in relation to Dien Bien Phu, but he felt that the outcome there would be determined within a matter of hours, and the situation was not one which called for any US participation. Therefore, he had nothing presently in mind, although he did not exclude that military developments in Indochina might take a turn following the fall of Dien Bien Phu, if it did fall, which might call for more active US intervention. He repeated, however, that he had nothing specific now in mind.

Secretary Wilson indicated that he felt that the proposed congressional action was designed to "fill our hand" so that we would be stronger to negotiate with France, the UK and others. I agreed with this interpretation.

Secretary Wilson said that he would be absent on Saturday, but that Roger Kyes and Bob Anderson would be there in his place, along with Admiral Radford.



John Foster Dulles

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