

Insert for: "Up to Speed" Chapter -
Meetings with K

During my four years in office, I had six or seven meetings with Henry Kissinger and numerous telephone conversations. These developed in the following manner.

Soon after I took over, Henry Kissinger had called me thirty minutes before a meeting I was scheduled to have with President Mobutu of the Republic of Zaire, to ask me to report to him the outcome of the meeting with Mobutu. He was interested because President Nixon had indicated a desire to be forthcoming with President Mobutu during a subsequent meeting, and Kissinger knew that Mobutu was interested in getting some U.S. assistance with regard to boat and riverine warfare capability. During that briefing President Mobutu did ask for help from the U.S. Navy, ^{to} which I replied that I was not in a position to offer anything except advice, but that it might be advisable for him to approach his problems gradually: that is, to develop first the capability to produce river boats, and then build a few a year. The President made it clear that he needed some assets now, to which I pointed out that I was not in a position to discuss any plans that would involve financial support without permission from higher authorities.

After the meeting, I had called Dr. Kissinger and he instructed me to provide a point paper for his use in talking with the President prior to the meeting between the two Presidents at three o'clock that same day.

This I had done and had reported to both the Secretary of the Navy and the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Again, before the meeting between the two Presidents, Kissinger called and said that he believed that President Nixon would be interested in sending an expert to the Congo and properly assisting in the training of approximately two hundred naval personnel - items which I had indicated in my point paper were feasible. I indicated to him that if the President made the decision to do such training it could probably be done by the Navy but I did not wish to absorb the cost - nevertheless, the training was feasible. Subsequently, the decision was made to send expert personnel and to provide training of an amount less than about fifty-thousand dollars.

Although Mel Laird's staff personnel had been involved in all phases of the exchange as rapidly as my staff could make them aware, a considerable amount of consternation was created in Mel Laird's office when he learned of the direct liaison between Henry and me. I prepared a point paper

concerning the circumstances for Mel Laird's use but it was quite clear that this was my initiation into the problem of getting between Mel Laird and Henry Kissinger.

After the business of President Mobutu had been completed and Henry Kissinger had written on 31 August 1970 a letter expressing his appreciation for the job the Navy had done to meet the President's wish to be responsive to President Mobutu's visit, I had occasion to see Henry socially and made it clear to him that his informal requests caused problems and that it would be better if they came through Mel Laird's office in the future. Henry expressed a complete disinclination to operate that way, saying that the President did not propose to be tied down to any particular way of doing business, and that he considered each member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be a military advisor, and intended to use them that way on occasion when he felt the need to get their advice, undiluted. I made the point to Henry that when money was involved it was not military advice but line channels that needed to be used, and that I had on occasion of the Congo business found myself with the need to keep my superiors completely

informed and would plan to do so in the future. Henry replied with very explicit instructions, which he said were the President's, that when I was asked to provide information it was to be done for the sole information of the President and him, and that he would take the responsibility for it.

All subsequent meetings were referred to as "non-meetings" by Kissinger. I soon concluded that there was no ethical way I could fail to pass on the gist of these meetings and therefore did ~~not~~ deliver Admiral Tom Moorer on any important subjects discussed.