

*C - Meeting of the Navy Commanders in Chief.
Jan 15, 1971
Roosevelt Rm.*

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~~TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE - EYES ONLY~~

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

their past practice of recommending initiatives, even though their recommendations and proposals frequently are not accepted. In this regard, he noted, the Navy "doesn't suffer from lack of plain speaking."

Admiral Zumwalt opened the discussion period by asking for Dr. Kissinger's views on the three big C's -- Cambodia, Chile and Cuba.

Dr. Kissinger reviewed the situation in which the US found itself last Spring. In the face of growing enemy strength, Cambodia was threatened from the very foundation and our Vietnamization Program was in peril. Every indicator pointed toward a massive offensive by four enemy divisions into Cambodia and the southern regions of South Vietnam. Still, the wise men of our government sat back complacently and said that we were doing so well as a result of the initiatives taken in the November 1969 speech that we should continue along the same course. Since this obviously was not so, the President was faced with two choices:

- get out of South Vietnam, or;
- go into Cambodia.

NAVY and JCS reviews completed

The decision to enter the enemy base areas in Cambodia was made against the unanimous recommendations of everyone in the government except the military. Now that we are on the brink of success, everyone who opposed the operation seems to have a vested interest in seeing to it that the results come out the wrong way. In reviewing the situation we faced ten months ago, Dr. Kissinger thought we might have lasted through 1970 had we not taken intervening action; however, had this been our decision, we would have faced disaster in 1971. In looking to the future, the Communists obviously see Indo-China as the key to their survival. He thought we must take those actions necessary to get through the present crisis, and to build the Cambodian military capability to an acceptable level prior to the next wet season. If we persevere, he believes we can make it impossible for the North Vietnamese to fight concurrently in both Cambodia and South Vietnam. Even under the present circumstances the South Vietnamese can operate in Cambodia with greater competence than can the North Vietnamese. In summary, Dr. Kissinger thought we should keep the enemy off balance in many different areas during the dry season, thus preventing an offensive

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campaign. At the same time, we should destroy as much of the North Vietnamese supply line as possible while we still have the shield of US manpower in Southeast Asia. As we look to the future, he thinks it may be possible for the US to maintain a credible threat with the continued presence of our carrier task forces, even though we draw down land-based air.

Dr. Kissinger acknowledged that the situation in Cuba must seem ambiguous in the light of many conflicting news stories, but he emphasized that the White House has no doubts as to the scope of Soviet intentions and the threat to our security of their base in Cienfuegos. He pointed out that the Navy had been of great assistance in identifying this threat, and in describing what in their view constituted the parameters of an enemy base in this hemisphere. He declined to go into significant detail as to our diplomatic negotiations on this subject, but assured the group that there had been a private play in addition to public pronouncements. He thought there was no doubt in the Soviet mind that the US is fully aware of their aims, since we had told them in precise written terms what constituted an unacceptable base of operations.

The recent public announcement by the President (on January 4) was intended to amplify the written record; we intentionally used the phrase "nuclear submarines" to describe the activity to which we objected, thus embracing attack submarines, as well as missile submarines, in our interpretation. This tactic prevented any semantic exercise as to what might be considered an offensive system. We desired to make a simple, unchallenged statement knowing full well that the Soviets also were in possession of our written conditions which addressed offensive weapons. We thus have restricted several elements of Soviet naval activity on the basis of both public and written pronouncements. Nuclear submarines, whether attack or missile, are covered by our public statement, while the written statement includes the conventionally-powered submarine which carries an offensive weapon (whether it be a cruise missile, ballistic missile or other). In summary, Dr. Kissinger thought we have established both a public and private record to which there has been no challenge. Under these conditions, he feels that we should say no more on the subject, particularly since we accomplished a great deal in getting the tender out of Cuban waters. In this connection, he did not think we could object in principle to the presence of a tender; however, should a tender provide services to either a nuclear submarine, or to one armed with offensive missiles, then the United States Government stood ready for an immediate showdown.

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE - EYES ONLY

my Gm's annual

*Jan 15, 1971
background memo -
G's to anticipate*

SECRET - EYES ONLY

-- Can you give us a preview of the President's new Foreign Policy message? If so, what might we expect to be the role of U.S. Naval Forces?

-- How do naval forces fit into the Nixon Doctrine?

-- Since you have assumed your duties as the President's National Security Affairs Adviser, how has Naval power served in the national interests, (e.g. Jordan crisis, rapid reinforcement of the Sixth Fleet, minimized reliance on foreign bases, helicopter platform in current operations off Kompong Som).

-- Do you feel that the decline in the Defense budget will level off in the next few years, and perhaps start an upward trend? What are the tradeoffs between domestic and defense spending?

-- The U. S. Navy is vitally concerned with the strength of NATO, not only in the Mediterranean, but the Atlantic as well. Much of our Atlantic Fleet is earmarked for NATO. Can we expect the continued maintenance of U.S. Force levels in NATO?

-- With all of the recent concern over the situation in the Middle East, do you think we are giving sufficient emphasis to the North Sea and the security of the Scandinavian countries?

-- What are our intentions regarding security in the Western Hemisphere? Is there anything you can tell us concerning our so-called "understandings" with the Soviet Union on their naval activity in Cuba?

-- Are we exerting sufficient pressure on the Allende regime in Cuba? What might be our reaction to the establishment of a Soviet Naval base in Chile?

-- There has been considerable speculation concerning Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean. Do you foresee the need for greater U.S. strength in that area?

-- Assuming the continual withdrawal of ground forces from Southeast Asia, how can we provide security to South Vietnam should Vietnamization fail or slow to an unacceptable pace?

SECRET - EYES ONLY