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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

JCS REVIEWED 05-Oct-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

SUBJECT: Briefing of Dr. Kissinger by General Pauley
and Colonel Carlson of the Joint Staff
April 10, 1972, from 7:51 a.m. to 8:19 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS: JCS Briefers
Dr. Kissinger
General Haig
Commander Howe

General Pauley: The weather situation remains the same but there was slight improvement in MR 2. Although the 36 hour forecast is not good, there appears to be an improving trend. Hopefully MR 2 will open up today and MR 1 tomorrow.

Dr. Kissinger: Where in the world would there be 5000 foot ceilings day after day. What kind of a war are we able to fight?

General Pauley: The B-52s can operate in bad weather and we have LORAN and the F-4s.

Dr. Kissinger: How many 5000 foot ceiling days do they have in the USSR? What could we do against them?

General Pauley: The weather is better than this but your point is a good one. This is one of the worst areas. We do have the MSQs and LORAN and B-52s.

Dr. Kissinger: When will the 36 hours end, tomorrow night? When you say 36 hours that to me means an indefinite period. It is too far in advance for a firm prediction.

General Pauley: The upper air charts give some hope. There is something developing off Burma which may upset the monsoon. Tomorrow we will be looking for work in MR 1.

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The B-52s struck petroleum storage areas and railroad yards in Vinh.

Dr. Kissinger: Could we shut up the guy in MACV who is saying that all of South Vietnam is a battlefield?

General Pauley: I'll talk to Dan and see if one of his people is putting this out.

Dr. Kissinger: I believe they sighted sources in Saigon.

General Pauley: I'll check into it.

Dr. Kissinger: Do we have any indications of the success of the B-52 strikes?

General Pauley: There are some indications. We cross-checked the bombing with MSQ radars and scored the first strike (which was against the Vinh railroad yard) with a 150 foot CEP; strikes against the POL area were given a 500 foot CEP. Additional numerous heavy secondary explosions were observed. Two F-4s saw 10 secondaries four of which were termed heavy. (B-52 crews claimed BPA of 4 large secondary explosions. The support forces which fired 24 air to ground missiles and dropped 42 500 lb bombs, claimed 6 large secondary explosions.) A Drone was scheduled to conduct photo recon of the targets. However, even it was cancelled due to bad weather in the recovery area. Reconnaissance aircraft are standing by at Udorn to conduct manned reconnaissance. We are optimistic about the results. There were 49 support aircraft participating in the strikes.

We were unable to get any tacair off against North Vietnam. Turning to Naval gun fire support there are 8 ships on station off North Vietnam and they attacked roads, POL areas, troops concentrations, bridges and ferry ships as well as SAM sites. Since the commencement of these operations more than 8,000 rounds have been fired.

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Dr. Kissinger: Are they receiving fire from shore batteries?

General Pauley: Yes, but it is sporadic. The major concentration of fire is to the South. The USS Craig was hit and had to be pulled off the line yesterday (there were no personnel casualties).

We now have the capability for 60 B-52 strikes per day. There were 24 scheduled for MR 1 but only 6 went. There were 9 flown in MR 2 and 20 in MR 3. The 6 sorties in MR 1 still are in progress. So out of a total of 60 scheduled sorties, 53 went. We lost 3 of the missions due to friendly units in the area. The battlefield situation is constantly changing.

In MR 2 it was quiet yesterday but as I said we were able to get B-52s in there. Yesterday there were a total of 334 US tacair strikes and 147 VNAF. Counting B-52s and other flights there were a total of 614 sorties. With regard to tacair strikes there were 138 in MR 1.

Dr. Kissinger: I thought the weather was bad.

General Pauley: These were primarily with LORAN and MSQ. There were 78 US sorties in MR 2, 108 in MR 3 and none in MR 4. There were also 12 in the Plain of Jars. The BDA was small for MR 1 because of the weather; however, in MR 3 it was reported that 6 tanks and 33 trucks were either damaged or destroyed and there were numerous secondary explosions (the report says 48).

We now have 10 surface vessels off MR 1 providing gunfire support and they have been shooting at infiltration routes, coastal defense sites, tank parks, storage area, and suspected troop concentrations. As I said previously, 1 destroyer was hit and had to be taken off the line. They fired a total of 1400 rounds during this period.

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Dr. Kissinger: Do you think there will be a weather window there tonight?

General Pauley: Yes sir, in the next daylight period in MR 1 we expect some breaks. There are hopefully of several days of good weather -- the pattern for this period has been two to four days.

There was considerable activity in MR 1 and a number of interesting encounters. At one point an enemy force supported by tanks attacked ARVN elements and lost 12 tanks, 30 weapons and 595 soldiers KIA (point was just to the West of Dong Ha).

Dr. Kissinger: (To Carlson) Do you believe it?

Colonel Carlson: Yes sir, in this area the enemy would be in the open and the defenders would be able to pick their positions.

Dr. Kissinger: Are our tanks better?

Colonel Carlson: Yes, better.

General Pauley: The total take in these actions over the weekend includes destruction of 58 enemy tanks and losses of 1200 KIA (his notes say 1345). This is the first time there have been large tanks in the open supporting troops. The enemy has really laid themselves wide open. In another engagement (several miles south of Dong Ha) ARVN forces employed 105mm howitzers as anti-tank weapon in indirect fire against the enemy tanks.

Colonel Carlson: It's like a duck shoot with those 105s. The combination of the Marines and tanks fighting as a coordinated team is tough to beat.

Note: At this point Dr. Kissinger left briefly to take a phone call from Secretary Laird.

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- General Pauley: The number of enemy tanks which have been reported destroyed is close to the DIA estimate of enemy tanks in the area. North Vietnam is only credited with 300 tanks. Overall their losses are close to their inventory.
- Dr. Kissinger: Where is the 325th Division?
- General Pauley: Just south of Vinh. In MR 2 activity was light. In MR 3 the situation at An Loc is the same with enemy units to the West, North and Southwest.
- Dr. Kissinger: That sounds to me like a description of being surrounded.
- General Pauley: It is really not that bad. Yesterday the enemy's activity was limited to a series of reconnaissance probes. There were also a number of B-52 strikes against enemy forces in the immediate area (there were 8 B-52 strikes). Units of the 21st ARVN Division are off loading and have established a position at Lai Khe.
- Dr. Kissinger: Both the ARVN reinforcing units are in a blocking position. Why aren't they being moved to the battle area?
- Colonel Carlson: It is probably because of some engagements in other areas, but it is difficult to tell.
- Dr. Kissinger: We shouldn't try to second guess them.
- General Pauley: They are probably positioning them so that they will be able to put them where they want to.
- Dr. Kissinger: Is that the 5th ARVN Division up in the An Loc area? Do you think anyone in the 5th Division will do well?
- General Pauley: The 9th Division unit was declared combat ineffective after an earlier engagement but other seem to be doing okay.
- Colonel Carlson: The others are not doing badly.

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Dr. Kissinger: By what theory are they blocking the enemy with one division at a time? Why is the 21st there (blocking positions to the Northwest of Saigon)?

General Pauley: I can't answer your questions concerning tactics.

Dr. Kissinger: Will you ask MACV to tell us why they are doing it? It may be a brilliant tactic, I just want to understand it.

General Pauley: Activity in MR 4 was characterized by small unit actions. A Vietnamese naval landing craft transporting troops struck a water mine and 2 ARVN soldiers were killed and another 125 wounded at the U Minh Forrest. Twenty-eight PF soldiers are missing and 23 weapons were lost in an engagement.

Dr. Kissinger: Do you agree that in MR 3 they can't resupply after using their present stocks?

General Pauley: We don't know how much is in the base areas but they probably will be in fairly short straits soon.

Dr. Kissinger: Can't the Cambodians do something behind them?

Colonel Carlson: No, they don't have the strength.

Dr. Kissinger: What do you need to harass from the rear.

Colonel Carlson: The Cambodians don't have anything in that area.

General Pauley: It would certainly be useful.

Dr. Kissinger: (Turning to Haig) Isn't Ladd still out there? Why don't you ask him what he thinks.

Attached at Tab A are the notes used by the briefer.

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Highlights of JCS Briefing - April 10, 1972

- The weather conditions are unchanged but the outlook for the weather after this 36-hour period is better. There should be some visual bombing in MR-1 during the next day-light period.
- B-52 strikes against POL and railroad yards in Vinh caused numerous heavy secondary explosions. Radar checks indicated bombing accuracies of 150 and 500 feet and two F-4's aircraft reported ten secondaries, four of which were considered heavy.
- We are now able to provide 60 B-52 strikes per day; however, only six went in MR-1 yesterday and 20 went in MR-2.
- There were 136 tactical air strikes by US aircraft in MR-1. BDA was small for MR-1 due to weather. In MR-3 six tanks and 33 trucks were reported destroyed and there were 48 secondary explosions and 24 secondary fires.
- There are eight destroyers providing gunfire against targets in North Vietnam and ten ships off MR-1 in the DMZ. (One ship has been pulled off the line due to damage; there were no personnel casualties.)
- There was considerable activity in MR-1 with ARVN reporting destruction of 58 tanks and one captured, killing 1,345 of the enemy and captured 141 weapons. (24 of the tanks were reported yesterday.)
- Activity was light in MR-2 and in MR-3 there were a series of reconnaissance probes around An Loc. A number of B-52 strikes were concentrated in that area.
- The 21st ARVN Division is moving into MR-3 blocking positions.

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