

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

INFORMATION
March 20, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: GENERAL HAIG/S/
SUBJECT: Ambassador Watson

Ambassador Watson has sent you the attached message (at Tab A) on the subject of the Jack Anderson article about his behavior on the airplane.

Some Democrats such as Wayne Hays and Frank Church have tried to make mischief out of this article, but I believe the incident has now blown over in the press. It may not be dead on the Hill.

I spoke with Ambassador Watson on the phone and told him our strategy here is one of damage-limitation, not a punitive one. Dr. Kissinger and I spoke to Secretary Rogers and we are all agreed that damage limitation not recrimination is to be the strategy.

Ambassador Watson did not issue the statement he refers to in his message.

Attachment

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

MORI/CDF per C05141136

State Dept. review completed

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

Retyped:AMH:nm:3/20/72

SECRET

25X1

15 March 1972

FROM: AMBASSADOR WATSON, PARIS

TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, FOR THE PRESIDENT (EYES ONLY)

MR. PRESIDENT:

In view of the fact that a most scurrilous article is appearing in the Anderson column of Thursday about me, I wanted you to have the statement I will issue here in Paris when the article appears.

I certainly don't want to embarrass either you or the Administration and therefore at any time you felt compelled to find my replacement, I would be willing to resign.

The following is the statement I will issue when the article appears:

"I have read the Anderson article. It is an exaggeration of what in reality was a rather trivial incident.

"I boarded the flight involved after having worked through the prior night and, therefore, not having slept in two days. I was of course, tired, and, I regret to say, irritable. As I recall it, harsh words were exchanged between me and members of the crew.

"The most that one could reasonably say about this matter is that I was exceedingly, and, I believe uncharacteristically, rude. For that reason, before deplaning, I apologized to the crew members involved.

"Although this appears to be the sort of episode that finds its way into the Anderson column, it was not, in fact, the kind of event which warrants print."

SECRET