

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Briefing of Dr. Kissinger by General Pauley
and Colonel Carlson of the Joint Staff
April 28, 1972

PARTICIPANTS: General Pauley
Colonel Carlson
Dr. Kissinger
General Haig
Commander Howe

General Pauley: As you know, we are now attacking with Naval gun
fire targets as far north^{as} 25 degrees and 25 minutes
north latitude. Yesterday ships in the Freedom Train
operation struck POL targets and bridges.

Dr. Kissinger: How is the weather?

General Pauley: Yesterday was not very good. Today it is improving.
(General Pauley then showed Dr. Kissinger the satellite
weather picture which showed some clouds over Quang
Tri.)

Dr. Kissinger: Why is it raining in Quang Tri?

General Pauley: That is a localized situation. That is a fluke. We are
looking for 48 to 72 good hours in the weather.

Dr. Kissinger: Will they be able to fly in the battle area?

General Pauley: Yes, it should be unrestricted.

There were 53 sorties north of the DMZ yesterday and
we believe there were two sites on the Thang Hoa Bridge.
(The briefing sheet shows 40 TacAir sorties and 13 support
air sorties) One F-4 was shot down by MIG aircraft.
We are still trying to recover the crew.

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Turning to Arc Light strikes there were 26 in MR-1, 29 in MR-2 and 19 in MR-3 for a total of 74 out of 75 scheduled.

Dr. Kissinger:

There always seems to be one or two that don't make it but I am not holding that against you General.

General Pauley:

There was a mechanical problem with one aircraft.

There was a total of 506 air sorties yesterday by U.S. aircraft with the perponderance being in MR-1.

Dr. Kissinger:

I thought the weather was bad?

General Pauley:

At the end of the day they were able to get in quite a few Tac Air strikes. There were 181 air sorties in MR-1, there were 102 in MR-2, 126 in MR-3 and 57 in MR-4. Overall, counting VNAF and all support efforts, there were 907 sorties flown.

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Turning to MR-1 enemy shelling struck/ammunition dump at Quang Tri, destroying some 23,000 rounds of ammunition. The enemy has been pressing hard and last night Dong Ha, and Fire Support Base Pedro fell.

Dr. Kissinger:

Is the Navy there?

General Pauley:

Yes, they have been providing gun fire support. Dong Ha has been evacuated.

Dr. Kissinger:

How is it possible that tanks and enemy forces got across the river north of Dong Ha?

General Pauley:

We believe they infiltrated across the river near the north.

Colonel Carlson:

The PT-76 tank is a swimmer. It would be able to ford the river.

Dr. Kissinger:

What reason do we have to believe that the South Vietnamese can hold the line?

General Pauley:

The situation could worsen some what but I want to emphasize that it is not a route and bases are not being overrun.

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Dr. Kissinger: What evidence is there that they will fight?

Colonel Carlson: They were out flanked. They had no choice but to withdraw from Fire Support Base Pedro. Otherwise it would have been isolated. Therefore, they had no choice but to withdraw.

Dr. Kissinger: Why won't this process of withdrawal continue?

Colonel Carlson: It is a difficult situation. The losses of artillery, ammunition is particularly serious, but the enemy has lost 17 tanks. DIA estimates there are six infantry, one artillery, and one tank regiment participating in the battle.

Dr. Kissinger: What is the First Division doing? Just waiting around. It seems to me like the Napoleon wars where the aggressors were able to concentrate their forces against the defenders whose forces are spread out.

General Pauley: There has been activity down there / pulling out of Hue and would be a problem.

In MR-2 there was no activity of any consequence. The 320 Division is moving east from Rocket Ridge. The 22nd Division is being reconstituted in the Pleiku area. Sappers made three attacks in the Route 1 area.

Now looking at MR-3 there were 1,900 rounds fired at An Loc and also some activity in the Dau Tieng area. In one attack in the area, 133 enemy were KIA. In Cambodia the FANK is trying to clear Route 1.

Dr. Kissinger: It would seem to me the safest place to be in Vietnam is between an offensive conducted by General Lam with a FANK offensive coming from the other end.

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

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