

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DOS REVIEWED 20 JUN 2011 NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

SUBJECT: Briefing of Dr. Kissinger by Colonel Carlson of the Joint Staff and B/Gen. J. W. Pauley, USAF April 8, 1972, from 8:10 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS: JCS Briefers
Dr. Kissinger
General Haig
Commander Howe

VIETNAM

Carlson: Air operations north of 16° including the North Vietnam Panhandle are severely hampered by weather.

Kissinger: Show me the 16° parallel. It obviously covers the area of MR 1 where they are fighting (Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces). How long will this bad weather last?

Carlson: Forty-eight to seventy-two hours.

Kissinger: The President has asked me for a chart showing what bombing was conducted during March and April of 1967 and 1968. It was recollection that we were bombing during that period. We should find out what dates we did bomb the North in 1967 and 1968.

Carlson: 2961 rounds were fired by Naval ships against radar sites, SAM and AA positions off North Vietnam. There were no hits by counter-battery fire and no casualties. By the way it has been reported that there is one confirmed Mig at Dang Hoi.

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Kissinger:

What is the weather pattern? When is the rainy season, when is the dry season?

Pauley:

On 15 May the rainy season will be over.

Kissinger:

On 15 May the fighting will be over. What about the weather in MR 2? Is it dry in MR 2? When is the rainy season?

Briefers:

Not clear about rainy situation at MR 2, but believe similar to MR 1.

Kissinger:

Is it enough to stop military operation?

Carlson:

Their more sophisticated operation would be in difficulty. By that I mean that tanks and large equipments would have trouble, but infiltrators and guerrillas could continue.

Kissinger:

What is the weather situation in MR 3 and MR 4?

Carlson:

The rainy season begins on 1 June. It is dry now in MR 3, particularly in the eastern part, and dry in MR 4. Even when the rainy season begins in MR 4 the rain is spasmodic. It does not limit operations for more than a one day period of time.

Kissinger:

We have tried to bomb North Vietnam in September, October, November, December, February and March. When did we bomb that got people so excited? We never seem to be able to bomb when we want to. We have only been able to bomb two days in the last two weeks.

Pauley:

We were able to bomb the first week in March, but that was a fluke in the weather. This is a transitional period when the weather can go either way. We have had bad luck. The weather we have seen so far has been bad.

Kissinger:

Is it true that you can do nothing at all in bad weather?

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Pauley: We can use the LORAIN and the A-6 system.

Carlson: There were twenty-six B-52 sorties in MR 1 and twelve in MR 2.

Kissinger: How about MR 3?

Carlson: There were 5 in MR 3.

Kissinger: That makes 43. What about the other eight.

Briefer: There were six flown in Cambodia, ten diverts, and two aborts. For tomorrow we have scheduled forty-five in MR 1 near the Dong Ha and five for MR 2 around Dak To (briefing notes indicate nine).

Kissinger: Why are we only flying forty B-52s? We never seem to get the full fifty.

Carlson: Here are some of the reasons: no IRON HAND support due to weather, lost radio contact, MSQ malfunction, one did not hear the final countdown, and one had no heat in the forward compartment. Today we are adding three B-52s and there will be three more on Monday. This will get the total daily effort up to sixty.

Kissinger: You are moving two more as well?

Pauley: Yes

Kissinger: And are you also finding how many can be configured for this type of mission by Wednesday?

Pauley: Yes.

Kissinger: It is important that I get an answer on that. The President has been bugging me.

Carlson: There were 158 air strikes by U.S. aircraft and 30 by VNAF. There were 58 in MR 2 and 127 in MR 3. One gun destroyed in MR 1 and four in MR 3.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

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Kissinger: What?

Briefer: These were guns that were destroyed; the size was not identified. In addition in MR 2 220 enemy were KBA. There were also 296 secondary explosions reported in MR 1.

Turning to the military situation in MR 1, there was no significant change. There was also no significant activity in Laos or Cambodia. In one battle in MR 1 two ARVN Ranger Battalions engaged an enemy force and killed 212. (Also, 10,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and fourteen weapons were captured). At another point VNAF tactical aircraft killed forty enemy soldiers and destroyed two enemy tanks (to the West). There is also a report of heavy contact in an area West of Hue.

Kissinger: Are they holding well?

Briefer: Yes.

Kissinger: My concern is that they might try to drive between Hue and Quang Tri. They may be holding on because they are effective, or it may be because they have not been attack^d massively.

Carlson: There have been 161 SAMs fired since 31 March. (There were more than fifty fired yesterday and possibly as many as sixty).

Kissinger: Are we hitting more than SAMs over North Vietnam?

Pauley: The greatest effort has been against the SAMs. They have knocked out five or six.

Kissinger: What if we ignored the SAMs and went after supplies?

Pauley: It would be a little more risky.

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Kissinger: How many SAMs are there?

Pauley: They have twenty-four SAM battalions and about four SAM missile launchers per battalion.

Kissinger: That means it would take a month just to get at the SAMs. We have got to get some supplies too.

Carlson: There were two aircraft losses during this period -- one AH-1G in MR 4 and one OH6A in MR 3.

Turning to MR 2, there have been 234 enemy bodies discovered killed by air and fifty-one weapons found. The ARVN is patrolling effectively.

Kissinger: How long before the rainy season closes things down there? How long can they operate there?

Carlson: I'll check on that.

Pauley: 15 May is the best mean figure that we have right now.

Carlson: Turning to MR 3, as you know yesterday Loc Niah fell. At the BINH MINH fire support base, our force evacuated. Two 105 mm howitzers were destroyed and two were evacuated by helicopter. The ARVN force moved to the East to link up with other forces in the vicinity of Thien Ngon.

Kissinger: What ARVN division is that?

Carlson: Elements of the ARVN 25th.

Kissinger: Are they any good?

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Carlson: Yes sir. They did a good job in operations at Tong Tang and in recent Cambodia operations. It is the top ARVN division in the area.

Kissinger: What about the other divisions? Is the 18th any good?

Carlson: Yes, they are good. However, the 5th Division is the one which was waxed at Snoul.

The 21st ARVN Division will move from the Ubon Forest area in MR 4 into III CORPS. When it arrives, the 1st Airborne Division will go back to act as reserve. (The briefer did not note that the 9th ARVN Regiment is now considered combat ineffective due to losses of personnel and equipment).

Kissinger: Will the airborne then go North?

Carlson: I don't know. We only have a report of a Thieu conversation. They will probably be waiting in reserve.

Kissinger: This means they are achieving just what they want to by tying down ARVN reserves.

Carlson: Yes sir. The 21st ARVN Division was supposed to lead the current attack in MR 1 cross the lines held by ARVN 3.

Kissinger: So we think that three ARVN divisions are not enough to hold them in MR 3.

Carlson: I believe they want to have a reserve around Saigon.

Kissinger: I heard a news report that a town fifteen miles from Saigon was under attack. Where would this be?

Carlson: I believe they must mean Lai Kei. It is farther than fifteen miles however.

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Kissinger: What is the situation in MR 4?

Carlson: A Vietnamese District Headquarters was hit by two hundred rounds of mortar fire followed by a ground attack. This was repulsed. We have an up-dated report regarding the bridge on highway four at Cam Tho. The explosion that knocked out the bridge yesterday came from a sampon passing underneath.

Kissinger: What about other activity in IV CORPS?

Carlson: There were forty instances yesterday, but right now the situation is calm.

Kissinger: When will there be another ground attack in MR 1?

Pauley: We believe it will come pretty soon.

Kissinger: Could we get General Abrams to explain why he is doing certain things and what he expects on a daily basis? What we are getting is not sufficient to evaluate the situation.

Pauley: Yes.

Carlson: The situation in Laos and Cambodia is quiet.

Kissinger: Thank you.

ATTACHMENTS: Briefing notes used by Colonel Carlson

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