

MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

JAMES R. SCHLESINGER

Friday - March 28, 1975

2:00 p.m. (30 minutes)

The Oval Office

ON-FILE NSC
RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

From: Henry A. Kissinger

I. PURPOSE

To discuss defense issues of concern and to receive Secretary Schlesinger's views on procedures being followed for responding to requests by the Senate Select Committee to investigate intelligence activities for information and documents.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS & PRESS PLAN

A. Background: As you know, the Senate Select Committee has sent requests to each Department and Agency concerned with intelligence matters for all documents, Executive Orders, decision memoranda or policy directives pertaining to the organization, charter and functioning of the various elements of the intelligence community. In order to facilitate cooperation with the Committee and in the interest of precluding the compromise of sensitive intelligence information, sources and methods, an inter-Agency Ad Hoc Committee has been formed under the Chairmanship of Director Colby. The Committee will, (1) coordinate requests for information among the agencies concerned; (2) make recommendations as to the character of response, [e.g., authorize sighting but not custody, sighting of an abstract, provision of an abstract, provision of the actual document]; and (3) serve as a central reference repository and indexing center for all documents being provided. Once agreement is reached within the Committee as to the character of the response to a specific request, the proposed response will be submitted to the White House where it will be reviewed by representatives of the NSC, White House Council and Legislative Affairs under the overall aegis of Phil Buchen.

OSD Review Completed

In meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee to date, considerable concern has been expressed as to the very high risk of compromise of any information provided as a result of willful disclosure by selected staff members of the Select Committee. In the hope of minimizing such disclosures, Phil Buchen will attempt next week to establish, in coordination with the Chairman, ground rules that would permit sanitizing documents in certain cases or providing oral briefings to Senators only, so as to minimize the risk. The first group of documents, which was carefully screened and does not contain highly sensitive material, was submitted to the Committee yesterday.

Secretary Schlesinger has expressed particular concern over how the Executive Branch review process is conducted. He has reservations over what he views as a trend within the Ad Hoc Committee toward supplying more sensitive information than is necessary or desirable.

There is no question but that extreme care must be taken, particularly in the early submissions, to guard against the disclosure of sensitive information. At this meeting you may wish to assure Secretary Schlesinger of your personal concern for the protection of sensitive information and of your intention to support whatever measures are necessary to prevent its disclosure.

- B. Participants: Secretary Schlesinger, Phil Buchen, Brent Scowcroft.
- C. Press Plan: Meeting will be announced; White House photographer only.

III. TALKING POINTS (As appropriate, depending on Schlesinger's concerns.)

1. I have reviewed the Senate Select Committee's requests for information with Phil Buchen, Henry Kissinger and Jack Marsh and want to insure that we take every possible precaution to prevent the disclosure of sensitive intelligence information. The investigation promises to be a very searching and aggressive effort. We face the very grave risk that some of our most sensitive and vital sources and methods could be compromised with the most severe impact on our foreign relations and national security.

2. A great deal of information has been requested. Much of it can be provided and I want to insure that where that is the case, we are organized to complete our review process and expedite submission. The focus of the Committee's efforts will probably be on those areas of greatest sensitivity. In preparation for dealing with these cases it is imperative that our positions are well reasoned and thoroughly developed.
3. The Ad Hoc Committee organized by Bill Colby will provide an adequate mechanism for processing the requests and coordinating the inter-Agency review process. The ultimate responsibility for preserving the integrity of our intelligence institutions is with me however. That is why I have tasked Phil Buchen together with the NSC and Jack Marsh's office to make the final determination of whether and how information in a particular case will be provided. I want Phil Buchen's group to be aware of and approve every document that goes to the Hill.
4. We are facing six to nine months of difficult deliberations. There will be much public and press interest. Our responses must be handled with the greatest forthrightness and discretion we can muster. While I want to assist the Committee in performing its function, I do not intend to compromise on principle.