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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~/XGDS

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By dal NARA, Date 8/6/09

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense
William Clements, Deputy Secretary of Defense
The Joint Chiefs of Staff
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy
Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs

DATE & TIME: December 22, 1973

PLACE: The Cabinet Room

The President: Carrero Blanco was a great man.

Moorer: The Spanish were very good during the Middle East war.

Zumwalt: So were the Arabs.

The President: With all the kicking around of the Europeans and Japanese, in their position, what would you do? The British are on a three-day week. Whose side would you be on?

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Moorer: NATO cannot fight without Arab oil.



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CLASSIFIED BY Henry A. Kissinger
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
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The President: I want to say a couple of things. It came out better than expected on our appropriations. I was afraid that after Vietnam, the peaceniks would cut \$15 billion. Ironically, the Middle East war helped us come out well. The Israeli lobby helped defend against cuts in the defense budget. Southeast Asia is still dangerous and our hands are tied. But the GVN will fight well.

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..... The rest of the world matters in humanitarian and raw material terms, but not in power terms.

Critical to us playing our role in the world is our strength and a policy which will command respect.

That gets us to our Armed Forces -- and your problems. On the All-Volunteer force -- I hope it will work but I'm afraid the quality will decline. If you can keep up the quality of the officer corps. Good people go to the academies in war and depression. I talked with Jim. We will support a strong budget. Jim, have you told them about the increased numbers?

Schlesinger: I said you were considering it.

The President: We are helped right now by the Israeli crisis. That will help with the airlift; and energy, which will cause some slack in the economy. Not much, but we will get Congressional support to boosting the budget a bit. We need the money in defense -- particularly in hardware areas. But we won't get it unless there are good reasons. We won't get unlimited amounts but we want to look at some ideas.

My major concern is the power balance. But in order to sell it, we have to use the energy and airlift factors to get the money. That is where we stand.



I can't tell you where we stand in SALT and MBFR except it will be tough.

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If I had my way, I would add \$20 billion to the budget but we can't do that.

Admiral, you head off.

Admiral Moorer: This Christmas was better than last. Last year there was a major equipment push into Vietnam. This fall another push into Israel. We have reduced our staying power.

It was a good move, which had JCS support. Israel was not defeated and Arabs weren't either.

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We could discuss SALT and MBFR later if we have time.

The President: It's probably premature. We want a deal, but we will be tough.

Admiral Moorer: Defense has closed ranks.



Admiral Zumwalt: I applaud your decision to add to the budget. I would like to compare the Mediterranean fleet now with where we were after Jordan. We have now less cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean than we had before. There are three elements: First is force levels. In '70, we already were starting down. The most worrisome is the drop to 13 carriers from the peak of 24.

The President: Jim told me about that.

Admiral Zumwalt: Vietnam pushed us back and the Middle East crisis has delayed the climb back up.

On the good side, we have used part of the money for laid-up ships to buy new ones. We are now buying at more than the replacement rates if Congress gives us our program.

We need to procure some low-cost ships in order to get numbers. The Soviet Union does this; they still buy diesel submarines. We in '75 will have a cruise missile submarine.

Congress doesn't like this -- they are giving us two DLGN, which will cost \$7-8 million. Conventional ships. We have to have a mix.

The President: Brent, make a note on the bases and on the force mix.

All these Prime Ministers know the importance of the Indian Ocean.
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Why are the Thais shifting? Because they fear we may be leaving. There is a feeling in that part of the world that the U.S. is going home. What we have to do from a foreign policy standpoint -- the U.S. has to have bases and naval strength. Everyone has to play a role -- it must look apparent.

Take the British and the great role they played. It is the appearances of strength. We need that now in terms of bases, less expensive carriers. If the Air Force... You buy less expensive planes. We need the numbers. We need to have a presence, get the flag out. There will be bitching, but it is essential. We need to maintain a presence in Japan, Korea, irrespective of the real threat.



Admiral Zumwalt: You just took my conclusion out of my mouth, Mr. President. I wind up with 55 in our current capacity and 45 into modernization in '70. Next year it is just the reverse. We will be able to keep up now with the Soviet rate.

The President: Abe?

General Abrams: I am trying to make the Army we have as combat-ready as we can. On manpower, we will make the combat level of the Army stronger and bigger. Even though the Army is smaller, the combat need is larger.

The President: What does that mean?

General Abrams: It means we reduce headquarters, consolidation, modify the training establishment. Maybe we'll do more than we should, but we've got to go that way.

President: I agree if that is right -- but not just because it is popular.

General Abrams: Materiel -- here we have been supplying our friends with what we need for ourselves. As we are able to replace these, combat readiness will improve. The third thing is the officer and NCO esprit. They have to have strength to take the brick bats.

The President: I remember talking to MacArthur. He was tough in practice. Your people are in the service because you believe. That is what we must have.

..... We want to be sure you all know we've got to have a strong officer and NCO Corps. The great earlier military leaders led rabble. The leadership is important. I know in an All-Volunteer force the blacks have gone up. Don't wring your hands about them. They can become fine men. The job of the military is not rehabilitation but it is a great service the military performs and they can turn into fine Americans. In sports, the blacks might not have the brains and education, but they have more drive and guts. Americans are snobs -- about color, education, etc. The blacks, with the training the service can give them, can contribute to this country.

General Abrams: We are snobs. When we decided to help the RF/PF, we made a rule that the only people who could work with them were those who had served in a rifle company. That was because a rifle company combat forces men to change their values. They come out of this experience with a better sense of values.



The President: They see who the men are.

General Abrams: I was addressing a group once and a black asked me about the number of blacks coming into the Army. I told him it was of no concern to me. The audience went wild with applause. The same thing with women. They are trying harder; they have a motivation the men don't have.

The President: Are our tanks inferior to Soviet tanks -- straight out?

General Abrams: No, they are not.

The President: Do we need more and better tanks and anti-tank weapons?

On supplying our allies, we have got to do it. That damned State Department. Take Peru -- some of the Latin Americans need tanks as a front. But they will buy them and we should sell them. If you get more money, what is the first thing you would do? Which would affect production?

General Abrams: Tanks.

The President: I want a hard look at getting more tanks.

Let's hear from the Air Force.

General Brown: In this supplemental, I think the dollars will count for a lot. These are not manpower dollars. The inspired airlift will help us greatly.

The President: We were better in the October airlift. Why?

General Brown: Because of the C-5's.

The President: Should we buy more?

General Brown: We are studying both the C-5 and 747.

Secretary Clements: We need to study this.

The President: All our talk of bases may come to naught because of Fulbright and the others. The airlift is an impressive thing that people see. Won't the C-5 and 747 produce jobs quickly?



Secretary Clements: Yes, but it will take time for Lockheed.

The President: Don't discuss jobs outside this room, but unemployment could go to 6-7% and still we'd get nothing. Congress will go to public service jobs -- that means nothing to the country. To goose the economy, the private sector is the best place. In government the best place is the military, because it helps the country. Don't write any memos on this. We are doing it for the right reasons -- the recession just gives us the excuse.

General Brown: I have two other points, in addition to the need for bases. We will get programs to increase your options in strategic forces and to apply the lessons of the Middle East. We are working on stand-off systems -- and we will use the supplemental to keep this going -- for us and for the Israelis if war comes again.

Our manpower quality has never been higher.

The President: I read every day about the improved Soviet strategic capability. Aren't we falling behind?

General Brown: The Soviet Union is doing development rather than prototypes; we used to, but we try to do it now on paper. That is where they have it over us.

The President: Let's do more of that.

For MAP, let's try to have not just the most sophisticated systems, but something we can sell that they can use.

General Brown: We will increase the yield of the Minuteman. We are looking at a bigger missile.

The President: Do we need it?

General Brown: Yes. Depending on SALT.

The President: Yes. The fact that we are ahead of the Soviets in Navy helped us in SALT I. We are ahead in submarines and navy missiles, aren't we?



General Cushman: We need to modernize. We get tanks and anti-tank from the Army and ships from the Navy, so whatever helps them there, helps us. People are our secret weapon. I agree with Abe, but my only concern with the blacks is they tend to concentrate in units where the fighting would be, leaving us open -- wrongly -- to racial charges.

The President: This add-on idea is mine and it will be a job selling it. In your speeches, don't put it into anti-Soviet tones, but say that we must be second to none; if SALT fails we have to be able to take care of our needs. Stress being number one -- not anti-Soviet stridency. We can't afford to be number two. We need a sense of direction and the right perspectives.

You were magnificent today. I think people should be proud of the uniform. Wear your uniforms when you are out -- tell your people to.

The great sadness in America today -- and we are part of the elite -- is the state of the elite class. The ministers, professors, the media, -- with many exceptions in all of them -- these groups who mold the youth are wrong-headed. Much of this comes from businessmen also.

The character flaw in the elite is they are ashamed of our country. They are unilateral disarmers. They don't believe we should play a role in the world. They won't face the question: if we don't play the role, who will?

I have met with all of them. You are part of the elite. You must confront them, try to show them what should be our real values.

.....Our system is better. America has a crisis in its elite class.

.....The day we look down on the threats and we blink, we are finished.

Let me say in conclusion, we must be proud of the United States and every war we have fought in this country. We are nonaggressive; we have no designs on anyone. We have never had a greater chance for dealing with



the Soviet Union and the Chinese and in the Middle East. The key to it all is in this room. We won't get all we want, but what we need is the spirit of our military and with the elite.

I know you are sick of the speeches to Kiwanis and all that, and the badgering you take, but stick with it. We have to carry the burden.

Thank you.



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