

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

BY *dal* NARA DATE 3/10/09

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald Ford  
James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense  
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy  
Assistant to the President for National  
Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, January 7, 1975  
2:30 p. m.

PLACE: The Oval Office  
The White House

Schlesinger: You look good.

President: I should, after all this exercise and respite [skiing at Vail].  
I go slowly enough.

Schlesinger: It can be hard on the knees.

President: I have had that problem for 40 years. I do exercise etcetera.  
I was operated on last two and one half years ago.

Schlesinger: I probably need an operation myself soon.

President: I waited too long, but they have learned new techniques in the  
meantime. You don't have to worry about infection like when I had the  
first one in 1932. [They discussed operations and doctors.]

What can I do for you today?

Schlesinger: I have a variety of things.

First, the Congressional items: John Stennis and the transfer of  
the Suitland facility. He had the heads buy bonds to build a NASA facility.

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~~TOP SECRET~~ - XGDS (3)  
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER  
*Downgraded 5/25/04*



This is the first time Stennis has hit me on this. I think he feels he enticed them to buy the bonds and he is out on a limb. The issue is he failed his people.

President: How many people are involved?

Schlesinger: About 2000. The Navy would like to move -- because of the high cost of living.

President: If Mathias and Beall come to you, what will you say?

Schlesinger: That the Navy wants the Mississippi facility.

President: Can it be justified?

Schlesinger: Not really. The cost of living is the only one, but that is not very persuasive.

President: You will have to take the heat.

Schlesinger: That I understand. But you said you wanted no moves in this direction.

President: I will take the position that I assume the Navy can justify it and that it makes sense.

Schlesinger: I will try to hold Stennis off, but I just wanted your prohibition lifted.

President: Okay. But Beall and Mathias are yours.

Schlesinger: I am worried about Pastore. He wants that to replace the stuff and he wants the Navy out of Newport.

Hebert said he didn't want any publicity before he got back to town. It is in the Wall Street Journal today.

President: I will get the paper. But I plan to give a speech Sunday authorizing the thing. I will call Eddie.

Schlesinger: The next issue is Jackson. I have tried to meet with him on Vladivostok. He has delayed talking with me. I could fly out to Washington to talk to him.



President: What is his objection? He wants us to renegotiate for lower numbers?

Schlesinger: That is a non-starter. He wants publicity, but he also has a problem. One problem is in cruise missiles. The Vladivostok stories were about ballistic missiles; now it isn't included. It is better for us to get it out rather than have him do it. He will say it's a concession after the fact.

President: How much substantive difference does it make?

Schlesinger: The real difficulty is to have this issue wrung out of us. He will work it like he has the G-class submarine issue. I think it should be aired prior to his hearings.

President: How?

Schlesinger: I haven't thought it out.

President: Is it still a live issue?

Scowcroft: Yes, we said we would consider it as applying just to cruise missiles. But we have an uphill fight.

President: The fact is that at Vladivostok we used the term "ballistic." DOD hasn't been all that eager for cruise missiles. Is there a substantive issue?

Schlesinger: It is not clear to me that we can deploy one before 1982-83. As a substantive issue it is not that important. That is only important to handle so Scoop can't make an issue of it.

President: Can't we say that actually we were talking about ballistic missiles and substantively it doesn't make much difference? We will be negotiating further reductions, and knocking cruise missiles out of the R and D program as a first step.

Schlesinger: The cruise missiles have been worrisome to the Soviets.

President: If the Vladivostok agreement is so fragile it can't survive this in the Senate, we are in bad shape.

Schlesinger: The trouble is that this could be a cause celebre. We could perhaps announce our position -- if it is as Brent says.



Scowcroft: The problem with publicity is it freezes our position or forces public discussion of our quid pro quo for falling off it.

President: Didn't Congress knock out the money for cruise missiles the year before last? Get me the record on that and how hard Scoop worked to keep it in.

Schlesinger: Scoop worked hard to keep it in. That will make him more bitter.

President: Let's get the whole story.

Schlesinger: Congressmen are prone to change arguments.

President: We'll look it over, but my intuition is as I have indicated. I don't think it is that significant an issue.

Schlesinger: Scoop can't make a very strong argument on Vladivostok because it is an equal agreement. The statement Perle wrote up is not very good; it says "the MIRV numbers are wantonly high." Actually he had the same sort of MIRV numbers in his earlier proposal. I think we are not in bad shape.



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