

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

PART III of III

Date: Thursday, May 15, 1975
 Time: 5:30 p. m.
 Place: Cabinet Room, The White House
 Subject: Middle East

Principals

The President
 The Vice President
 Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
 Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. George S. Brown
 Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary Robert Ingersoll
 Ellsworth Bunker, Ambassador at Large
 Defense: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
 WH: Donald Rumsfeld
 NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft
 Robert B. Oakley

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GRF Papers: Kissinger - Scowcroft files: NSC Minutes series, b. 1, f. "May 15, 1975."



NSC, May 15, 1975

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

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Vice President: I have used "survival as a free and independent state" for 26 years. I have attended the kick-off dinner of the United Jewish Appeal every year and have a lot of experience in finding just the right words. I have had to be careful. This will avoid the territorial issue which is linked to security.

President: That is okay. Survival or survival as a free and independent state.

Schlesinger: Could I raise another issue? Senator Church's committee has asked to interrogate three of our people without a monitor present, two of them in connection with the Huston report and one for some other report. We need guidance on how to handle this problem, since it will set a precedent.

President: Have the employees asked to have a monitor present?

Schlesinger: The employees have not yet been notified directly. The notification came to the Department of Defense.

Colby: I talked to Church today. Hills and I showed them some very delicate stuff and they have begun to realize how important it is to compartmentalize their operation. The problem of organization is as important as anything else, since they are now operating with everyone having access to everything. There was some sympathy for the idea of interviewing the employee with a monitor present with a brief period at the end where there would be unrestricted access to the employee. Our Counsel would be there most of the time.

I also testified before the entire Committee today. It was like being a prisoner in the dock, there was a real interrogation. All the questions were on assassination and it was like "when did you stop beating your wife?" That was all they wanted to talk about but I insisted on covering the whole range of covert action in a larger way, otherwise it would have been a disaster. I explained to them how covert operations are conducted, what are the procedures followed, what orders are given, who does what. Then I gave them some specific



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Colby:
(Continuing)

cases that have already been blown for the most part, such as Guatemala. This left them groping for a way to tackle the whole problem. Then I went on to propaganda and agents of influence, telling them, for example,

Kissinger:

I am not sure that example will impress Kennedy.

Colby:

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..... Then I talked about Radio Free Europe. And then at the end I got to assassination. I described the delicacy of the problem and how little of this sort of thing the U.S. has really done. There were attempts against Castro in the early 1960s but our information is very scarce.
.....

..... Then they wanted to know whether we had ever had any of our own agents assassinated, you know, the Green Beret stuff. I told them we never do that. I also told them that our policy and our orders are very clear: we will have nothing to do with assassination: Church ended by saying that is not enough. That to be certain we need more than orders. We need to have a law which prohibits assassination in time of peace.

President:

Who was in the meeting?

Colby:

All of the Senators.

Kissinger:

It is an act of insanity and national humiliation to have a law prohibiting the President from ordering assassination.

President:

Was there staff present?

Colby:

Four staff members.



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President: And court reporters?

Colby: Yes.

President: Jim [Schlesinger], at what echelon are the employees they want to question and when are they to testify?

Schlesinger: It will be soon. They are of a lower level and the implication is that it is a question of wrong-doing that the Committee is after on the part of the individual rather than the Department.

Colby: There is a big difference between individual action and responsibility and the way in which the institution conducts its operations.

President: I have asked my Counsel, Rod Hills, to draw up some guidelines for testifying.

Schlesinger: Can we say to the Church Committee that we are developing an Administration-wide policy and we will be back to them as soon as it has been developed?

President: Yes. You should get together with Rod Hills who is already working on this.

