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April 6, 1968

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH
GENERAL WESTMORELAND

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CBS 8-0-1073

Case # NLJ/CBS 38

April 6, 1968
In the Mansion

Document # 2

Those attending were:

The President
General Westmoreland
Nick Katzenbach
Averill Harriman
General Wheeler
General Taylor
Dick Helms
Clark Clifford

Harry McPherson
George Christian
Abe Fortas
Horace Busby
Jim Jones
Walt Rostow
Tom Johnson

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SANITIZED
Authority NLJ-CBS 38
By is NARS, Date 10-9-84

The document is 9 pages in its entirety.

OFFICE OF RECORDS

General Westmoreland:

1. Since Tet enemy has suffered colossal military defeat. He has lost 60,000 men and 18,000 weapons.]

2. I say to Ambassador Harriman he will be negotiating from position of strength.

3. The enemy has manpower and logistical problems.

4. North Vietnam has 20,000 men moving down. He needs 40,000 to fill depleted ranks. He needs replacements everywhere.

5. Tet offensive dates back to last summer. Lost their advocate of protracted war strategy. They moved away from that strategy in September 1967 and initiate a major two-phase offensive, first stage was offensive at Dakto. He attempted to cut Highway 4 leading to Delta to put economic pressure on Saigon. This was designed to take headlines from inauguration of newly-elected South Vietnam government and secure real estate. This was designed to be coup d'etat. He thought he would get a public uprising and mass defections in ARVN and by whole units. He was deceived by the American press into thinking the ARVN were no good. He found they were stronger than expected.

Viet Cong infiltrated with the crowd.

He did catch South Vietnam off guard in many places.

Intelligence showed he would attack in Tet period but not on D-day for psychological reasons.

He expected to dominate the "3-10 military district" and to be successful in the highlands.

I chose to hold Khesanh. We reinforced in December and January. We wanted to force him to commit. It was small enough to supply by air.

The enemy suffered severe defeat at Khesanh. He lost 10,000 to 15,000 men and 325th had to retreat to Laos.

I know there was great concern back here about Khesanh. This was a Dienbienphu in reverse. We created best targets we have had during the war. From mid-January until a few days ago we had 6,000 secondary explosions and 1,300 bodies seen on the ground knocked out 900 bunkers and 300 gun positions.

North Vietnamese are not ten feet tall as press has portrayed them. The Dienbienphu veterans are old, grey-haired men now.

The ARVN performed well. Introduction of M-16 to ARVN has helped them greatly.

We should have produced M-16 rifles sooner and given them to ARVN one year earlier. But we got in patent fights and debates between lawyers.

Harriman will have hand with four aces and enemy will have a hand with two duces.

He has 8 2/3 divisions in North Vietnam now. He could bring down two divisions, well-equipped but not well led.

He could set up multiple fronts. He has DMZ fronts, MR 10 front, 10-3 front.

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Clark Clifford: What is the situation in Ashan Valley?

General Westmoreland: It is an unusual piece of terrain 20 kilometers long and 1 kilometer wide.

The enemy has dominated and developed in the Valley. I hope to go in during May. Enemy moves by truck. He has upgraded road east toward Hue.

Ash^uan is at division line between Northeast and Southeast. Weather bad except in April and May. It is a major logistic base. It goes through tip of Laos. Enemy has strong anti-aircraft system in there. We captured 23 mm munitions.

Harry McPherson: Have you noticed any change in the enemy since the peace overture?

Is the enemy in a position to capture a city, score a tactical victory, or attack Saigon?

General Westmoreland: He will have some initiatives.

The President: What would happen if we stopped all bombing?

General Westmoreland: It would facilitate their supply during rain, Laos supply roads would be bad anyway. But he can run convoys in North Vietnam day and night and build up

The President: If he accepted San Antonio formula, what would our situation be?

General Westmoreland: It is going to be tough to determine whether or not he is "taking advantage."

The enemy will insist on cease fire in South. This would be an intolerable condition.

The President: What about his forces at home?

General Westmoreland: He can bring down two divisions in the next 2 or 3 months.

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General Westmoreland: 20,000 in two divisions. He could recruit 21,000 in the South. He could augment by 60,000 men. ^{He} ~~He~~ may lose 60,000 by that time.

We think we are inflicting 20,000 losses a month on him now.

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