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WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

August 25, 1976

Time and Place: 10:30 a.m. - , White House Situation Room

Subject: Korea: MAC Meeting and Poss. W. Military Action

Participants:

Chairman: Henry A. Kissinger

State: Philip Habib

DOD: William Clements

JCS: Gen. George S. Brown

CIA: George Bush

NSC: William Hyland  
William Gleysteen

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Kissinger: I see that Stilwell's now beginning to take a tough line even though he was so cautious last week when I was talking of tough action. I saw his incoherent message. As I understand it, <sup>of</sup> the North Korean proposal of ~~August 25~~ is evil, immoral, dangerous, etc. but it amounts to unilateral North Korean withdrawal of their guardposts. I want to know what's wrong with it. Would they withdraw all their guardposts and personnel from our side? Supposing we said there must be freedom of movement but that we can accept the proposal to remove the guardposts?

Habib: We couldn't send our guards over to their side. ~~Now~~ There are two kinds of personnel. They are suggesting that the security <sup>of</sup> ~~of our~~ guard personnel be split apart, but <sup>personnel could presumably</sup> ~~the other~~ <sup>could</sup> still move around within the joint security area.

Kissinger: But we would get rid of the North Korean posts on our side and this would be a good thing.

Habib: There may be some problem <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ the effect <sup>on</sup> ~~of~~ the armistice agreement.

Kissinger: I want to play it as a concession on the part of the North Koreans. We should construct our answer so that <sup>their proposal</sup> ~~it~~ looks like a concession rather than a deal. Let's first get rid of the guardposts.

Clements: Henry's saying makes <sup>it</sup> look like we kicked them out.

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Kissinger: Yes. First get rid of the posts, then deal with the problem of access by our security personnel into their part of the area.

Clements: I like that idea. Our people get treated so badly. They get kicked, spit on, cursed, and we are unable to tell our people to protect themselves. Every morning they have a special meeting where they are told to take abuse and to maximize their restraint. Remember our man who got kicked in the throat not long ago?

Kissinger: Who was that? When?

Habib: A Navy commander who got badly kicked in June 1975.

Brown: We had to protect the Pentagon the same way during the riots. Our man had to take almost endless abuse without reacting.

Kissinger: You know my preference was to hit the barracks but that was overruled. Now, we have to find a way of winding the thing up. The practical consequences will be that they will have removed the guardposts.

Clements: And the guards. (mistakenly believing that the North Korean barracks in the JSA area would be removed under the August 25 proposal )

Kissinger: Their barracks will stay. As I understand it their two guardposts on our side would go. We have no posts on their side so we would dismantle nothing.

Habib: I am reading from the North Korean statement: "In order to prevent a conflict between military personnel of both sides and in order that each side insure the security of each personnel in the conference area,

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Panmunjom, we believe it most reasonable to separate the security personnel of both sides in this area with the MDL between them so that they may perform their guard duty moving in their respective area only. This will make both sides have their guard posts only in their respective part of the conference area. And this will prevent military personnel of both sides from both encountering each other and passing by the posts of the other side. Then there will occur no conflicts."

Kissinger: In effect they are offering to dismantle their guardposts. We should say to them: We notice your proposal amounts to removing two guard posts on your side; we have none on your side; we believe there should be freedom of movement in the zone and suggest that our Secretaries meet to discuss this. First we have to get their assurances about the safety of our personnel, then we can discuss implementation of drawing a line. We should play it up as a retreat on their part. Phil -- you will have to find some form of words<sup>to</sup>/do this.

Habib: We will draft a message and we will also draft guidance. We will have to clear both with President Park.

Kissinger: Everytime I wanted to hit hard at the North Koreans last week I was told that Park didn't want to take military action. Now I gather he wants to do something.

Clements: He really was playing it very soft at the beginning of this business.

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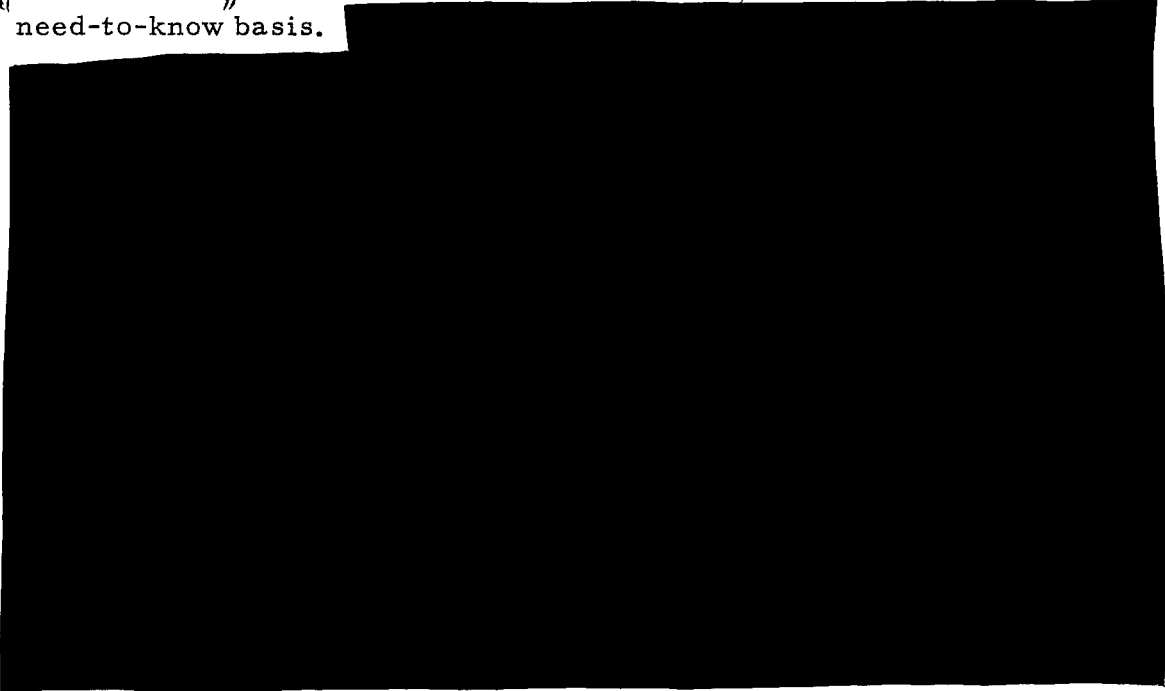
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Kissinger: I think we are coming out pretty well.

(Turning to Clements) But we called this meeting to discuss your plan. Go ahead and explain it.

Clements: (Using a map of North Korea and pointing to the area of Sonjin Hang Harbor) We all recognize this coast line is fairly open. Here is a fuel dump. It is easy to get into the harbor. I would like to interrupt to emphasize that in Defense we are treating this matter <sup>on</sup> ~~as~~ a really strict "need-to-know" basis.



Brown: Better make that November 1 rather than December 1.

Clements: It will be too damned cold.

Kissinger: How about November 2? It may not make the front page that day. What would they do?

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Clements: [REDACTED]

Kissinger: George, what do you think?

Bush: I think it would be terribly risky, but I know you don't need our advice on that score.

Clements: [REDACTED]

Kissinger: What kind of defenses do the North Koreans have?

Brown: They have superb defenses, and the operation would involve a very high risk. The North Koreans have excellent coastal radar. It would be a very high - risk operation.

Clements: I don't completely agree with that.

Kissinger: [REDACTED]

Clements: [REDACTED]

Kissinger: What would we have achieved if the North Koreans did not know who did it?

Clements: The advantage would be the element of doubt.

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Brown: They <sup>would have to</sup> ~~must~~ know we did it if it <sup>were</sup> ~~is~~ worth doing.

Kissinger: I'm just thinking the process through. No matter how we did it, the North Koreans would charge us with being responsible for it. Then we would be faced with questioning by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and what would we say to them?

Brown: According to Buchen, we would have to report under the War Powers Act to both the Speaker and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

Kissinger: What would we say to them as to why we did it?

Clements: Our Assistant General Counsel says you would not have to report under the War Powers Act.

Kissinger: They (the Congress) will say that we have to report and if we don't want to lie we would ~~have been~~ forced to take a no-comment line which would in effect be admitting that we did it.

Brown: In explaining why we would have to say that it was a response to the murder of two Americans.

Kissinger: Our explanation would look very weak, particularly after two months (??)

I respect your position. Last week I was in favor of firm action but it was overruled at Vail, not by this group. It was a tragedy. I have never seen the North Koreans so scared.

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Brown: They didn't get any comfort from the Chinese or Soviets.

Bush: Or from the third world.

Clements: I like the plan.

Brown: I think we should go ahead working out the plan.

Kissinger: Yes. Develop the plan.

Brown: If we have the plan developed, it would be ready if we wanted to use it.

Kissinger: I think this is a good way.

Clements: I like it. It doesn't have <sup>an</sup> overt character. I ha<sup>ve</sup> been told that there ha<sup>ve</sup> been 200 other such operations and none of these <sup>had</sup> ~~had been~~ <sup>have</sup> surfaced. ~~had~~

Kissinger: It is different for us with ~~the era~~ of the War Powers Act. I don't remember any such operations.

What barracks were we going to hit in North Korea?

Clements: We thought we would need 36 Max (??)

Kissinger: I am positive they would not have hit back. Unfortunately, we can't do it now. My idea had been to cut down the tree, get out of the JSA, take out the North Korean barracks, and then stand down. Of course, there was the risk of further casualties.

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Could we have done it with Walleyes? How many Walleyes would it have taken? Could we hit the <sup>barracks</sup> <sup>^</sup> from our side of the DMZ?

Brown: I don't know how many bombs it would take because I haven't studied the target, but I'm sure we could hit it from our side of the DMZ

Kissinger: (The advantage of a Walleye would be to) avoid counter-battery fire.

Clements: Why would an air strike avoid counter-battery fire?

✓ Hyland: Because they would not be responding to <sup>masked</sup> ~~matched~~ artillery. (22)

Clements: I still think they would have reacted.

Kissinger: You told me last week of your concerns and asked me to relay them to the President, and I did. But the real problem, I think, was not your concerns but the President's speech on Thursday night saying that there were no Americans in combat anywhere in the world. Second, the President was in Vail and I was on an airplane, not the best arrangement for conducting military operations. I don't think the decision had anything to do with your recommendation.

If we can first get the North Koreans to <sup>guarantee</sup> ~~agree~~ the safety of our men, then we can cooperate with them on practical plans. We can say that we will have our Secretaries work out the problem of movement of personnel in the JSA while maintaining the principle of the freedom of movement. There are two things to do. First, draft a message on the JSA and second,

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continue to develop the military plan (for hitting North Korea) but also look at other targets. Then we will have contingency plans next time if there is a further incident.

Brown: I would like to stress once more the close hold we have put on this operation.

Clements: For example, Don (Rumsfeld) knows about the plan but Holcomb doesn't.

Kissinger: Let's keep our extra deployments in Korea until we get the guardposts removed and get some satisfaction from the North Koreans. Don't remove DefCon 3 until we get positive action. Let's try to get a MAC meeting Friday or Saturday.

Habib: We will ask tomorrow and get one Friday. I don't think the North Koreans will stall.

Kissinger: After the meeting, then we can start the drawdown. After we get some satisfaction, we can start to move things down but I want to keep something there for a while.

Clements: We have in mind keeping some of the F-111's in Korea.

Brown: We have sent Stilwell a planning message outlining our views about drawing down from our current alert but they have been told to make no changes without execute order. So far, we have not had any comments from Stilwell on our plan. The B-52's will continue flying through Sunday. If we allow them to <sup>stand</sup> ~~stay~~ down for a while, we would

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then have the option of resuming them as a pressure tactic if the North Koreans keep giving us trouble.

Kissinger: (to Habib) Ask for a MAC meeting on Friday. Demand assurances from the North Koreans for the safety of our men and then discuss the deployment of our security personnel. The first thing is to get the guard posts removed. Then we can let the Secretaries work out movement of personnel in the JSA.

Habib: I don't think we should make an assurance about safety a pre-condition.

Kissinger: I want the principal <sup>be</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>ed</sup> accept ~~it~~, first of all.

Habib: Why don't we imply that they have accepted it or <sup>talk</sup> ~~state that~~ on the assumption that they are accepting it?

Kissinger: You can say on the assumption that the North Koreans accept <sup>our</sup> ~~or~~ demand for assurances for the safety of our personnel, we are prepared to have them remove their guardposts on our side and to discuss the deployment of our security personnel, while maintaining the principle of freedom of movement in the JSA.

We will discuss the future of B-52 operations next Monday.

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