

MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

February 27, 1976

10:31 to 11:29

I gave him that Don't Tread on Me poster and suggested that Dick might want to get it over to Bo and someone might want to get it up on the Hill.

I was told that what they would like me to do is Wednesday after the President meets with the first group of Congressmen, he has now agreed to meet with three, he wants me to go down and brief the White House press, instead of the Congressmen after that meeting. At that time we will pass out the papers.

I told the President that what he and Dick had to do is to help me get the debate on the defense budget structured in a way that his participation and his interventions are at the appropriate time when something good might happen and in the proper way. He has to be seen as working on it, you know, he has ten meetings a day, and there are some that he publicizes and some that he doesn't, and these we want to publicize, so that it is clear to the public that he is doing this so that the public recognizes the importance of it and that the public interacts with the Congress in a way that is advantageous to getting the budget through.

He mentioned something that is in the President's daily brief. The point here being for me that we have to find opportunities for him to intervene in ways that make sense for raising the visibility of this issue. That requires my creative thinking and Dick's.

He said in his daily brief this morning, it shows a cross on many of these trends about 1970, and he said he would like to see the actual figures that were reduced from President's budgets in 1967, 68, 69, 70 through 76, in current terms and then in real terms.

Second, he would like a few illustrative examples of what they would have translated to in national effort, in other words, they would have bought "x" number of tanks, cruisers, so many tactical aircraft -- that someone could understand that we didn't have during that period, that we didn't fund during that period that we might otherwise have funded. I think if we put a package of six or eight items, he would have an idea of what it is. Maybe it ought to be so many of each items -- that would have purchased "x" number of ships, or "x" number of tanks, or "x" number of something, so he can pick the ones he wants to use.



We need a memo over to him on that.

I told him what happened up in the House Appropriations Committee and that I didn't have the specifics, but I gave him the sense of it.

I then told him that the way I wanted the White House to handle it and the way I was handling it, and asked if he had any suggestions. I told him basically what I told Greener this morning that the President spent a lot of time on this budget in the year of general restraint, it would have been nice to have been able to do some other things, but he made the judgment that this was critically important, and put the funds in this budget because he is concern about the trends, that he proposed a 112.7. That he has put a caveat in on restraints, a caveat in on ship building, and that is really 115 or 116 billion dollar budget if they don't go along with the restraints, plus or minus on ship building, and that that is what he feels is necessary to do the job. That he recognizes this as the first step in a process that will end on May 15 with the first concurrent resolution, he appreciates the fine work done by those who recognize the urgency of the situation. He liked that, Dick liked it, he will pass it around.

I recommended to him that sometime next week, he meet with the Service Secretaries, possibly the Chiefs, and have a 45 minute to an hour session with Curry briefing him on R&D. Said that I felt it would give him a good background so that in Q&A's he could talk knowledgeably and have the full sense of what is taking place in the future years because that is what this budget is about, that is what arresting trends is about, and that enables him to speak with conviction that we have sufficiency today and not have it seem contradictory, and yet it creates the degree of urgency with respect to the period of 2, 4, 6 or 10 years out. He said he liked that idea. Let's get it set up through Dick Cheney's office, probably through Jerry Jones rather than through the NSC. My recommendation would be that we have the three Service Secretaries, Ellsworth, Clements and the Chairman and the four Chiefs and Currie, and have Currie do the briefing.

We talked about the ALCM and the SLICM. I asked if the papers I gave him were adequate. He said they were. I said that we have some Q&A's, and Dick said that maybe we ought to get those Q&A's over into the President's Q&A book since people are starting to ask questions over there.



We talked about the fact that LBJ said goodbye to the wrong troops and the problem that Presidents and chief executives have in the public or private sector if they are arbitrary and if they are unreasonable and if they misuse power that people tend to develop a way to function around them, and that I would guess that that was one of those things. Johnson said he wanted to do it NOW and it wasn't possible to do now, and that somebody then erected that rouse, if in fact it occurred. I said that I think it is more a reflection of the President than anything else, because human nature is going to do that kind of nonsense.

However, I want Staser to get ahold of Brown and find out how that really happened, and make god damn sure that never happens around here. I tell you, I would go through the roof.

I talked to him about Weyand and told him that I had told Brown and Hoffmann that we would not urge him to stay, that he is 60 in September. The President said when he was put in there it was pretty well understood it would be for that period of time and I told the President that I would get a list of six or seven or eight possibilities and in the next few months try to see them during my normal working activities, not on the basis that they are under consideration, but to evaluate them. Staser should follow up with Hoffmann and Brown to get that list.

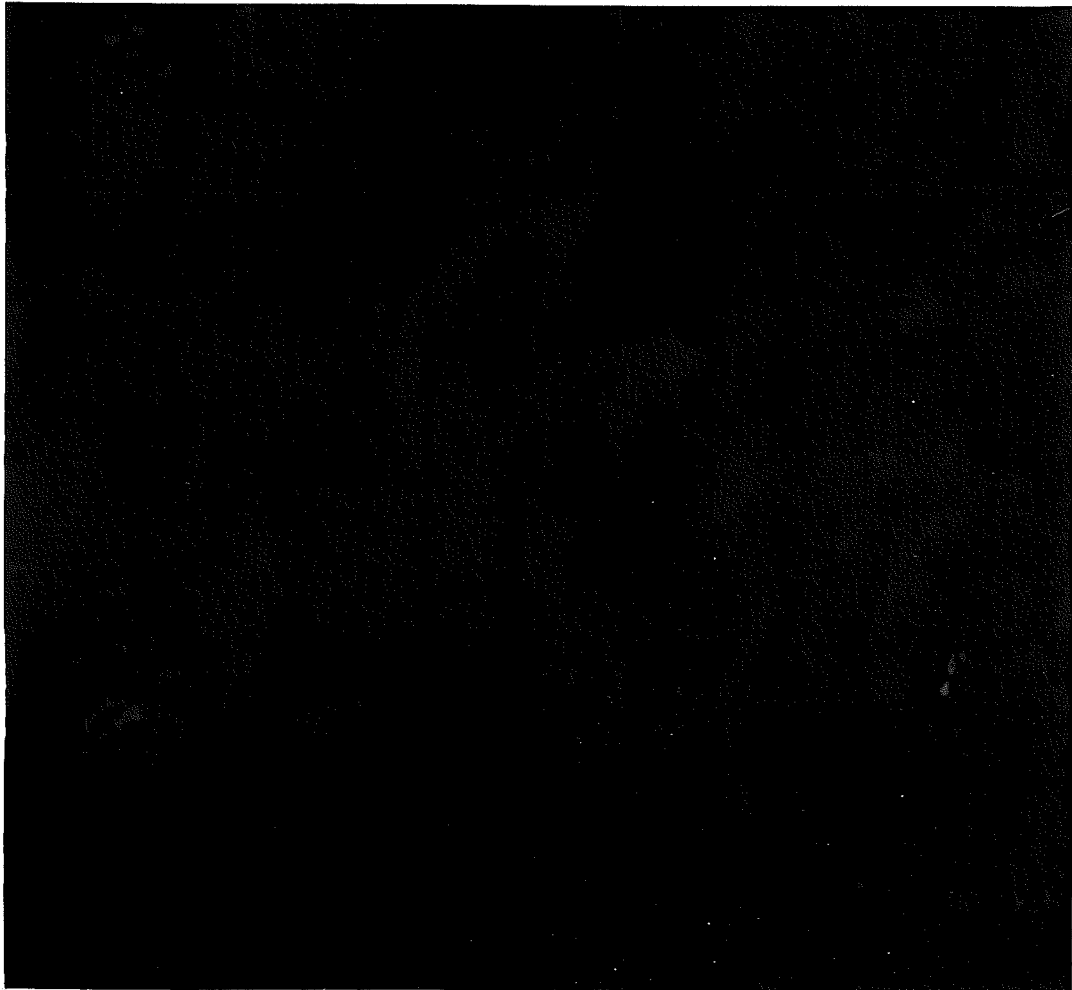


I told the President that George Brown's time comes up in June, it is a two year term, that there have been eight Chairmen, Brown, Moorer, Wheeler, Taylor, Limnitzer, Twining, Radford, Bradley. All but two came from the Chiefs, one came from retirement (Taylor), and one came from SINCPAC (Radford). I said that given SALT and the election, that he ought to keep Brown, that I didn't have a logical replacement in mind, that I recognized that he would like to have flexibility, and that I asked Brown what options the President had, and Brown said the law says a two year term, one reappointment during peacetime, no limit during wartime. I asked Brown what about a one year or three year or is there any flexibility there, and he said, "Well, look, anytime a President said to a Chairman that he wanted his resignation, he was sure it was easy to work out.



The President said his instinct was to think in terms of keeping Brown for a year, appoint him to two years and maybe try to develop an understanding with him whereby possibly after a year he might want to make a change after the election.

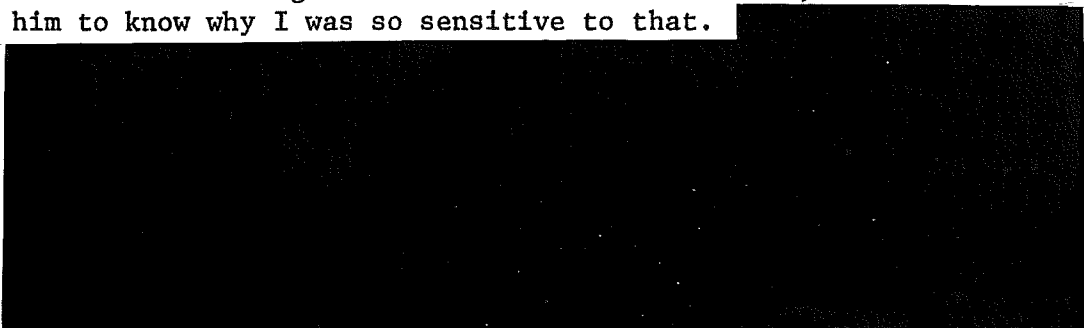
I said I would think about that and I thought we ought to give Brown some signal within a month because he has no house to live in and has to make plans and he has speaking requests for July and August and that type of thing. The President said fine, sometime three to four weeks from now we will set an appointment and I will visit with Brown and you about it. In the meantime I have to think through that so Staser should tickle that and in the meantime I will think through how I would do that one year possibility.

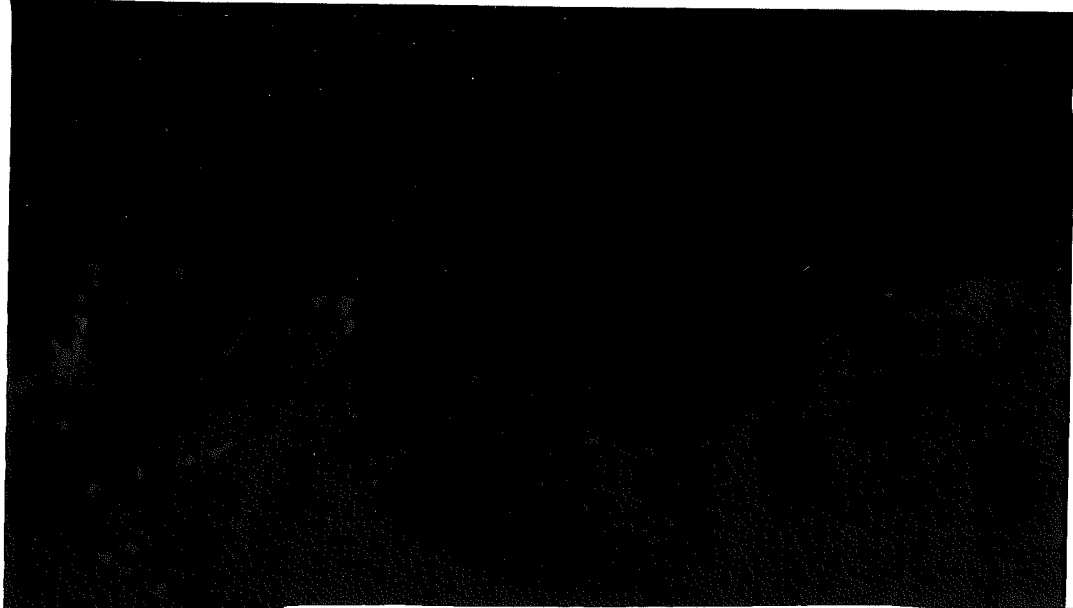


Nancy should in the future put on my calendar how long my meeting with the President is, whether it is 30 minutes, 40 minutes, 60 minutes, whatever it is, so that I know and can get out myself at the right time.

I cautioned the President about the fact that I had begun to see three or four articles in the paper indicating that the State Department people were quoted as saying that SALT depended on the Presidential election schedule, and that for certain reasons the President did something with respect to China that related to the election, and that I thought that he and Dick ought to be very careful to recognize that people from the Department of State, National Security Committee tend to be people who are political observers. They spend their lives looking at people around the world, countries, politics, and reporting on them, and that it is inevitable that they are going to watch the President and pieces of paper and he ought never to mention Reagan or Democratic candidates or the campaign in front of anyone connected with that community. Someone will make a note, some junior G-man on the staff will say "ahah, the President is making a decision that affects those things based on a political timetable, and that he ought not to give them any handles like that, knowingly or unknowingly. He said he fully agreed and saw what I was saying. I told him that Marilyn Burger had asked me about the SALT timetable in connection with the political campaign year and that I just shoved it aside because I really believe in fact that Mayor Daly's right when he said that good government is good politics, but there are so many people this year in this electric political atmosphere that are going to try to accuse somebody of making a judgment based on politics that they ought not to be given any substance to beat them over the head with.

I told him that the reason I had argued so vigorously with him yesterday on his statements on Angola saying that the Congress had no guts and they had bugged out and that I disapproved of that was something that took a little discussion, and I wanted him to know why I was so sensitive to that.





The President said, "Well goldang it, they did bug out. I said, yes that is fine, but the two most devastating things for a person in public life -- one is ridicule and the other is to be seen to be not up to it, and that I felt that the approach for the Congree was not to say they had bugged out and not to be that brass, but to use more of the father/Eisenhower type approach as President, and say almost in a not quite patronizing way that you really don't believe that they are going to make that same mistake again. That kind of puts them on a different level, which is the level they were behaving on, which puts you considerably above that, and it is probably more effective and it avoids having people think that you have fallen into the same pit that Johnson and Nixon fell into.