

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

February 6, 1981

SECRET/SENSITIVE

Time and Place: 1:30 p.m. - 2:40 p.m., The Cabinet Room

Subject: Caribbean Basin; Poland (C)

Participants

The President
The Vice President

State:
Secretary Alexander A. Haig, Jr.

Defense:
Caspar T. Weirberger

Treasury:
Secretary Donald T. Regan

Justice:
Attorney General William French Smith

DCI:
Mr. William J. Casey

JCS:
General David Jones

White House:
Mr. Edwin Meese, III, Counsellor to the President
Mr. James A. Baker, III, Chief of Staff to the President
Mr. Richard Allen, Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs
Adm. James Nance, Deputy Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

Vice President's Office:
Adm. Daniel J. Murphy, Chief of Staff

National Security Council:
Janet Colson
Timothy E. Deal
Charles Tyson

FORM 100-1000

CS 11/21/07

MINUTES

The President: Interagency groups are reviewing the items on today's agenda. Their work is not complete, but they will have issues for decision shortly. The NSC should meet frequently and help to formulate our policies. I urge cooperation at all levels. No one should stand on ceremony. During the campaign, I pledged to implement a new foreign policy and restore the margin of safety. I look to this group to help me. The Intelligence Community has a vital role. I intend to restore the vigor and effectiveness of our intelligence services. (C)

I will use the NSC structure to obtain your guidance, but I will make the decisions. Once made, I expect the Departments to implement them. Subcabinet appointments will play an vital role in effective implementation. The NSC is not just another cabinet agency. Although the decisions will be mine, you are the obvious source for good ideas. I want good advice. The NSC staff functions as an integral part of the White House, and Dick Allen places a premium on good management. (C)

Mr. Allen: The object of this first meeting is to provide information. We will then have an opportunity to assess what information is available. We would like to hear criticism and advice to simplify our tasks. Papers to the President take a circuitous route. The NSC staff can help expedite them. (C)

It is appropriate to discuss the items on today's agenda, especially following the visit of Jamaican Prime Minister Seaga. His visit, the President's pre-inaugural meeting with the Mexican President, and his upcoming meeting with Lopez Portillo in Mexico underscore our interest in this area. (C)

It is important to mention at the outset that Cuba's role in the area is a central fact. Cuba is in an autonomous position in the Caribbean largely because of Soviet assistance. There are 33-states in the Caribbean, 19 independent and 14 self-governing. They are small, beset by problems, and vulnerable to outside force. (C)

If the President so directs, we could develop an overall policy for the Caribbean basin within about four months. The wisdom of a comprehensive policy is that we would thereby recognize that any action taken with respect to one country or one issue will have an impact on others in the area. Such a policy would, among other things, involve finding ways cope with the Cuban problem and the situation in El Salvador, the question of foreign assistance, and the transfer of technology to the area. (C)

Secretary Haig: This area is our third border. There is no question that it is in turmoil. The middle class in the region is demanding a greater stake in societies which can't easily cope with the need for change. Yet these countries could manage if it were not for Cuba. Cuba exploits internal difficulties in these states by exporting arms and subversion. (C)

The visit of Prime Minister Seaga was a hallmark for a notable leader who had succeeded in throwing out a Marxist government. He is visible, has good sense, and is committed to creating jobs and dealing with Jamaica's balance of payments difficulties. The visit was successful due in part to the work of the Treasury Department and to our ability to provide needed aid. We established a good basis for a sound relationship. David Rockefeller will lead a group to Jamaica to encourage greater private investment in that country. (S)

Attorney General Smith: According to our drug enforcement people, Jamaica is the major supplier of marijuana to the US. They derive a substantial cash flow from drug trade. (S)

Secretary Haig: While this is a problem, we must keep our policies in tandem. We don't want to create a revolutionary situation. We kept this item off the agenda for Seaga's visit. We will do something about this problem after we have done something positive for Jamaica. (S)

The President: This drug problem has been on my mind. We are only now learning of the harmful effects of marijuana, frequently from those people who once favored its use. Drugs are a threat to our people. Once we have made progress in improving the Jamaican economy, we should make termination of the drug trade as our quid pro quo. (S)

Secretary Haig: We have a dialogue on this point. The problem is how hard and when to push it. Looking at the main issue -- Cuba -- brings us back to the mainland. The Cubans are heavily involved in Central America. 600 tons of arms are going into El Salvador in various ways. In the case of Nicaragua, we face a delicate question. We probably have enough evidence on hand about Nicaraguan support for El Salvadoran revolutionaries to cut off aid to Nicaragua. The first order of business is to show the Nicaraguans that we will not tolerate violations as did the past Administration. We have raised the question of arms traffic with the Nicaraguan regime, and they have assured us that they will take action to curb the flow of arms to El Salvador. They claim that the problem arises in lower levels of the government; the evidence does not support them. (S)

Mr. Casey: There have been 100 planeloads of arms from Cuba over the past 90 days. The Nicaraguans can't be ignorant of that. (S)

Secretary Haig: The Salvadorans have captured American arms left behind in Vietnam. Not even the Cubans are capable of orchestrating such complicated arms transactions alone. (S)

I saw Amb. Dobrynin last night. Senator Percy had apparently arranged for me and Dobrynin to have a discussion on arms control. Percy and Dobrynin had obviously been concerting beforehand. I told Dobrynin that the first order of business was to establish an acceptable code of international behavior. The first order of the day was Soviet activity in Afghanistan and the use of Cubans proxies in troubled areas. The US would not stand by and permit the Cubans to draw us into another Vietnam.

We would get to the source of the problem. The Soviets have other ideas: they want to provide some formula for a phased withdrawal from Afghanistan, say, over two years in return for arms control talks.

Secretary Weinberger: We should make no promises on timing that we could not accept at a later date. That is why I had said that six months were needed before any resumption of arms talks. We don't want to appear too eager since this weakens our position. (S)

Secretary Haig: Secretary Weinberger and I have work underway on Caribbean contingencies. We will have to deal with Nicaragua, El Salvador, and, most especially, with Cuba. The worst thing would be to have the US dragged into another draining experience like Vietnam. (S)

In the case of El Salvador, former Ambassador White was totally wrong. He claimed that the government's recent success in repelling the guerrilla offensive was a victory due to our policy of not arming the Salvadorans. The guerrillas did have a setback; they did not get the popular support for which they hoped. Now they have adopted a classic guerrilla stance. But there are only about 200 professional Salvadoran military officers left. The military ranks are thin; a collapse could come suddenly. The situation was so bad in San Salvador under Ambassador White that Duarte couldn't tell our Defense Attache what was happening. Only now is the truth beginning to trickle out. (S)

Our interagency group is active. We are sending down a qualified, interim replacement for White. DOD will also send a senior adviser. In the meantime, highly sensitive contingency planning continues. (S)

The President: My own feeling -- and one about which I have talked at length -- is that we are way behind, perhaps decades, in establishing good relations with the two Americas. We must change the attitude of our diplomatic corps so that we don't bring down governments in the name of human rights. None of them is as guilty of human rights violations as are Cuba and the USSR. We don't throw out our friends just because they can't pass the "saliva test" on human rights. I want to see that stopped. We need people who recognize that philosophy. In Angola, for example, Savimbi holds a large chunk of Angolan territory. With some aid, he could reverse the situation. We should also reestablish relations with countries like Chile who have made substantial progress -- and stop worrying about Allende's fate. (S)

Secretary Haig: One important case is Bolivia. We withdrew our Ambassador and cut off aid. When countries like this have tough things to do, we should help them. If you beat them up, it works against us. We need to send a good person there and open the lines of communication. (S)

Secretary Weinberger: There is no doubt that we face a tough situation in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The problem stems from Cuba. With some covert aid, we could disrupt Cuban activities. I am not sure that most Americans understand the situation there. The majority probably believes that these governments are repressive and that we should not do anything provocative. We need to explain to people that this is a dangerous situation for the US, and that we may have to move strongly. (S)

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Mr. Casey: Yes. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Allen: ~~[REDACTED]~~

E. O. 12958
As Amended
Sec. 1.4(c)

Mr. Casey: The most effective way to put pressure on Cuba would be through Angola. We should seek a repeal of the Clark Amendment and consider aid to Savimbi. ~~(S)~~

Secretary Haig: We are considering tactics to obtain repeal of the Clark Amendment, but we don't want to lose. ~~(S)~~

Attorney General Smith: After Afghanistan the President proposed a blockade of Cuba. Even George Kennan supported that notion. If the Soviets invade Poland, we might find a blockade desirable. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Casey: The developments in Central America have implications outside the continent, especially if the British pull out of Belize. The Guatemalans will face a guerrilla war on two fronts. The guerrillas will create problems for them in the upcoming elections. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Allen: We need a positive policy for the region that provides justification for everything we do. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Meese: We should have options for dealing with these situations. ~~(S)~~

Secretary Haig: We are working on that now. ~~(S)~~

The President: We can't afford a defeat. El Salvador is the place for a victory. ~~(S)~~

Secretary Haig: Regarding Poland, the Soviets view the situation there as more critical now than last November. We have a list of contingency actions ready. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Meese: We must have agreement on how to deal with the press. We should not make available the agenda or content of these meetings -- with no ifs, ands, or buts. ~~(S)~~

The President: There can be no room for argument on that point. For too many years, we have been telling adversaries what we can't do. It's time we make them start wondering what we will do. ~~(S)~~