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By CAS, NARA, Date 10/26/05

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, March 26, 1981

TIME AND PLACE: 2:05 - 3:05 p.m.
The Cabinet Room - The White House

SUBJECT: Poland; Nicaragua/Central America;
Southern Africa

PARTICIPANTS:

President Ronald Reagan

Vice President George Bush

State

Secretary Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Deputy Secretary William P. Clark

Defense

Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger
Deputy Secretary Frank Carlucci

Justice

Attorney General William French Smith

CIA

Director William Casey

JCS

General David C. Jones

White House

Edwin Meese III
James Baker III
Michael K. Deaver
Richard V. Allen
Frank S. M. Hodsoll

NSC

Janet Colson (Notetaker)

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Mr. Allen opened the meeting, noting that the agenda items represented a continuation of the March 24, 1981 meeting of the National Security Planning Group, e.g., Central America/Nicaragua and Southern Africa. Before continuing with those agenda items, however, he indicated that Secretary Haig wished to address the subject of Poland.

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Classified and Extended by: R. V. Allen
Review on March 26, 2001
Reason for Extension: NSC1.13(d)(g)

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Secretary Haig began by noting that the State Department had reached the independent judgment that we were witnessing the most serious crisis in Poland since last August. Referencing a confidential source who is a former White House official, Secretary Haig indicated that there was a strong possibility that there would be an internal takeover by the Polish militia, the entrenchment of the Party hardliners, and a major crackdown on Polish dissidents, all of which could lead to armed conflict. The Secretary further noted that assessments now indicated that Soviet forces were positioning themselves to move into Poland from without. Citing the fact that the Polish Central Committee would be meeting on Sunday, with Parliament scheduled to meet in an emergency session on Monday, the Secretary indicated that a major move by Polish, and possibly Soviet forces, could occur on Monday.

Having summarized the above, Secretary Haig explained that some leaders believed it essential for the United States to make a strong statement, noting that such a statement last December had helped to deter any move against the Polish workers. In this regard, the Secretary noted that the Europeans were "far out in front of us" and said that a statement by the United States should definitely lay out the repercussions of Soviet action and the consequences of internal suppression, while at the same time holding out the carrot of economic assistance.

Secretary Haig further recommended that the United States move quickly, if it wished a US statement to have any preemptive benefit, and indicated that he had already prepared such a statement, which he could issue or, in the alternative, which could be issued by the President, by the White House Press Secretary, or some other appropriate individual. Secretary Haig specifically recommended against sending a letter, preferring instead a public statement.

Mr. Baker asked what the West Germans had said and Secretary Haig explained that they had noted the seriousness of the situation.

Secretary Haig then proceeded to read the prepared statement (copy attached at Tab A), which noted United States concern, its hope for a peaceful resolution of the situation on a "basis acceptable to all parties concerned," and the forthcoming visit to Washington by Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski.

Secretary Weinberger inquired if the Deputy Prime Minister had indeed been invited.

Secretary Haig noted that the Deputy Prime Minister had been planning to come for some time.

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The President raised the issue of the grain embargo and inquired whether some quiet indication that the United States might be willing to lift the embargo if the Soviet Union exercised restraint with respect to Poland might help the situation. The President noted that the Secretary of Agriculture was also interested in seeing the embargo lifted and explained that the Administration was now caught between a campaign promise and the need to resolve a domestic issue.

Secretary Weinberger stated that it would be impossible to lift the grain embargo if the Soviets moved into Poland.

The President reaffirmed the need to make a strong statement and Secretary Haig expressed reservations about mixing domestic and foreign policy issues.

The President responded that it was not a domestic issue to those people affected by the embargo.

Secretary Haig noted that there were a series of agreed-upon measures to be taken unilaterally by the United States and jointly by the NATO allies, and explained that a working meeting would be held at the State Department that afternoon for the purpose of continuing those deliberations.

Secretary Haig again stated that while the grain embargo was an important issue, it was a peripheral one and could possibly lessen the impact of the warning statement to be issued by the United States.

Director Casey questioned whether the Soviets were concerned about the grain embargo at this point in time. Mr. Meese indicated that he thought the lifting of the grain embargo would have an impact. Mr. Casey responded that he thought it would have very little impact at this particular time.

Mr. Allen asked that the proposed text be distributed to attendees.

Mr. Casey noted that the Central Intelligence Agency concurred with the assessment of the situation in Poland as presented by Secretary Haig.

Secretary Weinberger noted the continuing nature of the threat and the President asked if the proposed statement could be strengthened with a veiled threat regarding US-Soviet relations in the future, with the implication that while the United States would like to lift the grain embargo, it is impossible to do so under the present circumstances.

Secretary Haig reiterated the need to get the message out in a short, sharp fashion and indicated that if the Soviets did not move into Poland, the United States could indicate its intentions to lift the grain embargo at some future time.

Mr. Meese asked what the European allies were prepared to do and Secretary Haig responded that they were prepared to do far less than the United States. At the same time, however, he stressed that it was important to maintain unity with the allies.

At this time, copies of the proposed statement were distributed to all attendees at the meeting.

With respect to the allies, Secretary Haig noted that the United States should tell them it was going to issue a statement, and added that the United States should send a message to NATO informing them of the importance of maintaining unity.

Mr. Smith stated that sooner or later we knew it had to happen.

Secretary Haig noted that the statement might have added impact if it was noted that it had been adopted at a meeting of the National Security Council and inquired if the meeting currently underway was a meeting of the National Security Council or a meeting of the National Security Planning Group.

Mr. Allen said that the meeting was listed on the President's schedule as a meeting of the National Security Council.

With one slight change in wording regarding the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister, the attendees agreed that the draft statement should be issued by the White House Press Office. (See Tab B for final text of statement.)

Mr. Allen then noted that Central America was the next agenda item and called on General Jones for his presentation.

General Jones reviewed the status of men and materiel with respect to any requisite emergency evacuation of US personnel from Nicaragua and briefly described the prepositioning of equipment with respect to the actual movement of American personnel. He further noted that although 14 large helicopters were en route to Panama at the present time, United States forces would not be sent to Panama for deployment to Nicaragua unless and until intelligence sources indicated that United States personnel were in danger, at which time the United States would invoke the War Powers Act.

Secretary Haig reviewed his conversations with Ambassador Pezzullo, who had indicated earlier that while he did not anticipate a government takeover of the US embassy, there was the possibility of uncontrolled mob violence which he believed would be directed at the chancery rather than the embassy. In this regard, the Ambassador had indicated that they would probably have one-hour notice of such activity, if that.

Mr. Meese said that the United States now at least had a state of readiness so that action could be taken, if necessary.

Secretary Weinberger noted that it would be possible to move troops to Florida under the guise of a search and rescue mission, thus expediting the actual deployment of forces to Nicaragua, should that become necessary.

Secretary Haig explained that Ambassador Pezzullo had indicated that while it would not help to have more Marines assigned to the embassy,

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The President stated that in view of what had happened in the past it was necessary to take all precautions. The attendees concurred and the President recommended that such personnel actions be undertaken.

Discussion then turned to the issue of Southern Africa, with Deputy Secretary Clark noting that a cable had been received from Morocco indicating Savimbi's disappointment over not coming to the United States and his desire that [REDACTED] be informed that the fact that he did not visit the United States did not mean that the United States intended to terminate its support for Savimbi.

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In this regard, Secretary Haig noted that Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs-designate Chester Crocker would be going to Southern Africa and then to Europe in early April, probably for approximately two weeks. The Secretary then raised the issue of having the trip publicly announced and indicating that Mr. Crocker was going as an emissary of the President.

Secretary Haig added that there were both advantages and risks to such an approach and that in the final analysis he doubted that he wished to directly involve the President in such a sensitive and risky matter, thereby running the risk of limiting the President's flexibility and jeopardizing his prestige. At the same time, however, the Secretary reiterated the need to make an announcement of Mr. Crocker's forthcoming trip.

Mr. Meese asked if we didn't need a better environment for the Crocker trip and inquired as to whether or not we should make our policy toward Southern Africa perfectly clear before Crocker left on such a trip.

Secretary Haig noted that there should be an announcement that an American emissary would be going to visit the frontline states within the context of the Namibia issue.

Mr. Baker noted that the issue should be more than just the President's concern for a just settlement in Namibia, rather it should be stated as looking forward to the resolution of the Namibia situation along the guidelines of the United Nations resolution.

Secretary Haig again reiterated his concern about involving the President too directly in the trip and the issues at hand. The Secretary also noted his concern about the Angolan situation and stated that the Ambassador had told him that Savimbi couldn't effectively govern Angola, even if the opportunity were to present itself.

Mr. Casey asked if there was any "downside" to the proposed Crocker trip.

The President indicated that the United States should do what is needed to be done and the Secretary shouldn't worry about involving him, if that turned out to be the best course of action.

Secretary Haig stated that he would prefer not to raise Crocker to the level of a Presidential emissary; instead it should just be stated that a United States official would be making the trip.

Mr. Meese noted that the United States could say that it was committed to recognition of the independence of Namibia and was seeking further discussions with other concerned parties.

Mr. Meese asked who would meet with Savimbi in Morocco and it was noted that Crocker would probably meet with him, but that such a meeting was not yet confirmed.

Mr. Allen then distributed a copy of the proposed text for NSDD #2, with Mr. Meese noting that people should make known any last minute changes, additions, comments.

Mr. Meese inquired about the reprogramming of funds for El Salvador and Pakistan and wondered if there were any unresolved issues. Secretary Haig noted that everything was being taken care of in that regard.

Mr. Allen again called attention to the proposed White House announcement on the situation in Poland and suggested some minor changes with respect to the scheduled visit of the Polish Deputy Prime Minister.

The President again raised the issue of the grain embargo and Secretary Haig replied that before any decision on the grain embargo was taken, the Administration should first consult all parties involved. The Secretary of State particularly noted the need to consult with Senator Baker and other Congressional leaders so as to ensure a coordinated response with respect to the grain embargo issue.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:05 p.m.

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PRESS STATEMENT ON POLISH SITUATION

The United States has watched with growing concern indications that Polish authorities may be preparing to use force to deal with continuing differences in that country between the authorities and labor unions. We are similarly concerned that the Soviet Union may intend to undertake repressive action in Poland.

Our position on the situation in Poland has been clear and consistent from the outset. We believe Poland should be allowed to resolve its own problems without outside interference of any kind. We have scrupulously implemented that policy in our statements, while acting generously in response to Poland's requests to us for economic assistance.

We have welcomed past assurances by the Polish Government and Polish labor organizations that they intended to resolve their differences peacefully and in a spirit of compromise and conciliation. We continue to believe that this path offers the only hope of resolving Poland's difficulties on a basis acceptable to all parties concerned.

We would like to make clear to all concerned our view that any external intervention in Poland, or any measures aimed at suppressing the Polish people, would necessarily cause deep concern to all those interested in the peaceful development of Poland, and could have a grave effect on the whole course of East-West relations.

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GDS 3/26/87

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, August 23, 1997
By CL NARA, Date 2/08/01 #11

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At the same time, we would emphasize our continuing readiness to assist Poland in its present economic and financial troubles, for as long as the Polish people and authorities continue to seek through a peaceful process of negotiation the resolution of their current problems. It is in this spirit that we ~~have invited~~ ^{shall receive} Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski ~~to visit~~ ⁱⁿ Washington next week.

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