

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
Date: 6-30-05

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Huang Hua, PRC Ambassador to the United Nations
Shih Yen-hua, Interpreter
Major General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Winston Lord, NSC Staff

DATE & TIME: Friday, March 24, 1972 - 6:05 p.m. -7:05 p.m.

PLACE: New York City

General Haig: There was not too much traffic tonight.

Ambassador Huang: There was not too much. It took about twenty minutes to get here.

General Haig: We got in quickly from the airport. Everything was going the other way.

Ambassador Huang: (Taking out a type-written note) There are two things which we would like to notify General Haig. (Reading from note)

"From 1840 hours on March 18, 1972 to 0935 hours on March 20, 1972, one U.S. warship, the George K. MacKenzie, intruded into Chinese territorial waters near Tung Island, 16° 14' 6" north, 112° 43' 48" east, off the Hsi Sha Islands, Kwantung Province, China.

On March 19, one U.S. military aircraft further intruded into Chinese air space on five successive occasions: 0738 to 0759 hours, 1500 to 1504 hours, 1510 to 1517 hours, 1546 to 1644 hours, and 1743 to 1802 hours.

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- 2 -

The Chinese Government has consistently in public warned the United States against intrusion, on whatever grounds, into the territorial air space or waters by U.S. aircraft or warships. Considering the fact that the above intrusion occurred shortly after President Nixon's visit to China, we are raising this matter privately and asking the U.S. side to guard against similar occasions.

(Lord check with Miss Shih on the island names and coordinates.)

General Haig: I was not aware of this, and if these kinds of things happen, we are usually notified. In the first place, it is against our policy to do that. We have been especially careful during the period before and since the President's trip. All we can do is investigate and find out what the circumstances were, and we will come back to you with a detailed explanation about what this is about.

Ambassador Huang: As stated in the verbal message, the Chinese side wishes that the U.S. side will guard against such intrusions into Chinese territorial waters and airspace.

General Haig: I will, of course, report this immediately to Dr. Kissinger and we will get the facts. I think the location you mention is off the southern coast of China, an island off the southern coast, and there have been some incidents of armed vessels moving from North Vietnam down to South Vietnam. These are usually the subject of surveillance which could have resulted in the penetration, which, of course, was not authorized. I prefer to get the facts. These are generally the source of the air activity; several attempts have been made in recent months to move contraband into South Vietnam. We will get an answer as soon as we can. I can assure you that penetrations of your territorial waters and air space are not authorized.

Ambassador Huang: As stated in the message, the Chinese Government has consistently issued public warnings against such intrusion on whatever grounds. Now we are raising the matter privately and ask the U.S. side to assure against the occurrence of such incidents.

General Haig: Yes, I understand.

Ambassador Huang: On the one hand we will wait for the results you mentioned. On the other hand, the Chinese side has raised the matter on the basis of facts and has asked the U.S. side to guard against reoccurrences of such situations, because this would be harmful to the Chinese situation.

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- 3 -

General Haig: Well, I think the best way to proceed on this . . . assurances that are verbal mean nothing if actions run counter to verbal assurances. I will have to have an investigation made. We have no facts from which to talk on my side. Until I get the facts I can do little but report the matter. I don't mean to question that the event happened; a similar event occurred when I was in China with respect to a drone aircraft. When I looked into the circumstances -- this didn't make it right -- it was an accident. While that does not excuse it, it puts the motives into the proper context.

Ambassador Huang: I have noted your statement. In principle, I think the U. S. side must affirm, at least in principle, that you will assure against the reoccurrence of such incidents. As to the incidents themselves, we will wait until you have reported and made an investigation.

General Haig: I have already made clear that if anything like this occurs, it is against our policy. Our policy is very clear. I don't think anyone can categorically say that it cannot occur and never occur, because they might. If they do occur, they are unauthorized and may require disciplinary action or whatever is necessary.

I can assure you that there is no policy that permits intrusion into territorial waters or air space.

Ambassador Huang: As to the authority, what do you mean? Authority from what quarter?

General Haig: There can be no authority to do it. It would be contrary to policy. So there can be no authority, and if it happened, it either happened against orders or by mistake.

Ambassador Huang: Thank you for your clarification. That is all I want to say.

General Haig: Those are the two items you wished to discuss today?

Ambassador Huang: Yes.

General Haig: I think it would be good to take this opportunity to raise two minor administrative things. I understand you are moving shortly. Could you be sure to have Miss Shih call Mr. Lord and give the new telephone number when you move?

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-4-

Miss Shih: I have it with me. (She takes out a slip of paper and hands it to Mr. Lord with the address and telephone number of the Lincoln Motor Inn, the new Chinese Mission at the UN.) If there is any change we will let you know. We will probably move early next week.

Ambassador Huang: We will probably move next Monday or Tuesday.

Mr. Lord: You must be happy to do that.

Miss Shih: You should ask for me. We will get a direct line later.

General Haig: The second point is that I talked to Ambassador Bush yesterday, and I understand that you had a discussion with him on security arrangements. I want to emphasize that we stand ready fully, along with the security people - both the local police and the FBI - to help you; and to be sure that the new arrangements are as secure as possible; and also to move to investigate as carefully as we can the circumstances of the very unfortunate incident which occurred earlier.

Ambassador Huang: We appreciate very much your new arrangements for security measures in our new home. And Ambassador Bush has expressed concern about our security. We believe that you will take the necessary measures according to the need of the situation.

With regard to the unfortunate death of Mr. Wang, a staff member of the Chinese Mission, by poison, I talked with Ambassador Phillips as well as Ambassador Bush the other day. We have raised the matter that we hope the U. S. side will make a serious investigation and unveil the plot and have the culprits punished. This was an incident of political murder. We also believe that the U. S. side will give it serious consideration.

As to how to proceed with the investigation and what kind of people to take part, we leave the matter to the U. S. side to decide. Ambassador Bush said he would like to have some people sent to investigate the environment before we move. We are ready to contact him tomorrow to make arrangements.

General Haig: Very good. I am sure the Ambassador knows we were outraged by the incident. We are going to make every facility and technical skills that we have available to ensure that such a thing can never happen again and hopefully trace out the source of this crime.

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Ambassador Huang: We appreciate your attention to this incident, and we hope that you will get to the bottom of this matter quickly.

General Haig: Yes. We hope so too. Everyone is giving his fullest attention, and we think there may have to be some discussion with you. Our people did not want to push nor to make themselves a problem. We want to be sure to do everything tactfully and carefully and in accordance with your wishes.

Ambassador Huang: As to how to pursue the investigation and get to the bottom of the case -- this is with respect to the U. S. side -- we will leave it entirely to you to decide.

Both Ambassador Bush and Ambassador Phillips have expressed the desire that they don't want the news to leak out so that the press makes big news in the papers and makes for big speculation.

General Haig: I think that is important, but enough time has gone by so that I would like to tell Ambassador Bush that if necessary to interrogate your people or look at your facilities at the hotel and ask questions about the habits and the whereabouts of the victim, that he feels free to do it. I think sometimes it is a case of protocol and sensitivity. It is like two men waiting at the door and no one goes through it. We want to get to the bottom of the thing as quickly as possible. We think that is the most important thing.

Ambassador Huang: We understand the desire expressed by Ambassadors Bush and Phillips to avoid newspaper reports about the matter, and this is for the convenience of the investigation and unveiling the plot. So we can agree to it. We will try to do our best to prevent the news from getting to the papers. In my talks with Ambassador Phillips I mentioned the above suggestions.

General Haig: That is very good, and we are all pleased at this way of approaching the matter. It is important that the kind of investigation that is necessary is completed before you move to a new location and new facilities. There is a lot of information on facilities and procedures that may no longer be evident to people.

Ambassador Huang: About the on-the-spot investigation, I will contact Ambassador Bush as soon as possible.

General Haig: Excellent and I will . . . We would like to be sure that our federal investigative assets are included, so there is no limit of funds or resource skills of a technical nature not being applied because of the local shortages of capability.

DECLASSIFIED
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E.O. 12958, as amended
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Ambassador Huang: Well, we leave it to you to decide.

Just now you mentioned enough time has passed, and I will explain the reason for this. As soon as we found Mr. Wang dead in his bed, we immediately notified the policeman on duty, as well as Mrs. Loeb's office, and an ambulance came to our hotel, and the policeman came to the spot.

That afternoon on the same day, some detectives were sent to make an on-the-spot investigation. Afterwards we asked the Chief Medical Examiner's Office of New York City to make an autopsy of the body in an attempt to find the reason. (Ambassador Huang corrects the interpreter by saying "cause" instead of "reason.")

The resulting autopsy failed to show the cause of death. Later, we asked them to carry out a toxicological analysis. That took some time, and later the Chief Medical Examiner of New York City - he got the preliminary results of the toxicological analysis which was acute nicotine poisoning. So we asked them to give us a written report of the conclusions of the analysis as soon as possible. And that also took quite a lot of time, and we pressed them quite a few times.

The next day, after we got the written report, we transmitted this to Ambassador Phillips and affirmed that this was a political incident of murder; we asked the U.S. side to make an investigation and unveil the plot and have the culprits punished.

So some time had passed before we got the results of that, and this was acute nicotine poisoning; and between the preliminary report and the written report some time also passed, but we notified the police at the beginning.

General Haig: Oh yes. It is very difficult because of the local jurisdictions, the local New York police. I was aware that much time had passed before realizing they had foul play. Now they must move for two purposes. One is to make every effort to find the culprits. Then we must be sure as you move into the new location, be sure that there is no possibility of repetition. So we have the two problems.

I have one other thing. I have learned that your ping pong team is coming. We are very pleased and very honored that they are going to come. We want to be very sure that their tour is made as comfortable and enjoyable for them as I am sure it will be for our people to observe it. I am talking here too about security. We want to be absolutely sure that as they travel,

there are no incidents; that they are not subject to incidents of any kind that would discomfort or embarrass them, or us as your host. We hope to do as well for your team as you did for our team when they visited your country.

To ensure this hospitality we think it would be very helpful . . . and we have assigned Mr. Scali, who went to China with me and with President Nixon when he was there. The President has asked him to watch over the project and to give his personal attention to assure that this is a most successful tour.

Ambassador Huang: The original plan was for the ping pong team to leave Ottawa and arrive in the U. S. on April 10. And now the plan has changed, and they will leave on April 12 because they will get some rest there.

As to the members of the delegation, originally there were twenty men on the ping pong team, and six correspondents and photographers, and later the team was increased by two. We have already notified Mr. Steenhoven about this.

As to what city the ping pong team will arrive at first, and as to their itinerary, these are things that are still under discussion between us and Mr. Steenhoven. This visit here will last two weeks, and then they will leave for Mexico. This is one of the items in the exchange of sports between the two sides agreed upon during the President's trip to China. As you do, we also hope the visit will be a success.

General Haig: I want to say, as I told the Premier when we took newspapermen with us on our trip, these are independent people as Mr. Steenhoven is and other organizations assisting. We cannot control them with the same kind of precision as government officials. Maybe at times they will be more difficult than we would like. If there is some incident or misunderstanding that gives you a problem, Mr. Scali will be watching from behind the scenes. But we want to make sure that nothing like this occurs. We want you to alert us. Our principle is to do everything you want us to do and to make the visit a success. The working out of the details sometimes is not as smooth as you or we would like. With some patience we will get the job done.

Ambassador Huang: When we have agreed upon the itinerary with Mr. Steenhoven, we will let you know.

General Haig: That is fine. I just want to let you know that we are pleased and will approach this with a most positive attitude, as we did with some of the more troublesome details with the newspapermen in China. (Ambassador Huang smiles.)

I hesitate to raise one last thing; Dr. Kissinger would be very made at me. He is in Acapulco enjoying a vacation. He left me with a newspaperman who calls me every day and is driving me crazy. And this is our friend, Mr. Alsop, who is so anxious to go to China that he will not let me sleep. I would like to tell him to go to Ottawa or write to Ottawa or something. I think he feels no one understands his special problem.

Ambassador Huang: Joseph Alsop?

General Haig: Yes. (Ambassador Huang smiles.)

Ambassador Huang: I can convey the desire of Mr. Alsop to the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry.

General Haig: Anything to help my sleep at night. (Ambassador Huang laughs.)

I am pleased and happy to see the Ambassador again. I haven't had the opportunity to thank you for the wonderful reception in China that was given to me and my party and to tell you what a wonderful visit it was.

Ambassador Huang: We also were very pleased that your visit was a comfortable and enjoyable one.

General Haig: It was wonderful.

Ambassador Huang: I know Mrs. Lord (looking toward Mr. Lord), your mother.

Mr. Lord: She mentioned she met you and was very pleased to do so. She thinks that we only met in Peking.

Ambassador Huang: Yes.

(There was some more closing pleasantries as the Ambassador waited for his car and then left.)

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1. The Chinese side has noted the promise conveyed in the April 3, 1972 message from the U.S. side that U.S. ships and aircraft would no longer come within 12 nautical miles of China's Hsi Hsa Islands. At the same time, the Chinese side reiterates that the Hsi Hsa Islands are indisputably Chinese territory, that the width of the Chinese territorial sea stipulated by her is 12 nautical miles, and that it requires all quarters to show full respect for this.

2. Regarding the second point of the April 3, 1972 message, the Chinese side has the following comments.

The spirit with which the Chinese and U.S. sides have conducted relations consists of frankness in the exchange of views without concealing the great differences existing between them and an effort to seek common ground. The Chinese side has always acted in this spirit. The U.S. message reproaching against the Chinese side is unacceptable.

The U.S. side can be under no misapprehension concerning China's principled stand on the question of Indochina. The U.S. side knows full well that the Chinese side firmly supports the peoples of the three Indochina countries in their war against U.S. aggression and for national salvation. The Chinese side is convinced that the Vietnamese

7 point proposal and the 2 points of elaboration have provided a reasonable basis for a peaceful settlement, that any attempt by the U.S. side to intensify the war and exert pressures can only give rise to even stronger resistance by the Indochinese peoples, that the Chinese people sharing weal and woe with the Indochinese peoples will certainly give them strong support, and that the Chinese believe that such actions on the part of the U.S. side can only exacerbate tensions and provide opportunities for others to take advantage of it.

In the light of these conditions one cannot but be surprised that the U.S. side should express difficulty in understanding recent Chinese statements on the Indochina issue. China realizes that the United States of America is in a difficult position on the Indochina issue. However, the U.S. side must understand that this situation was brought about entirely by the U.S. itself. The concentration of U.S. naval and air forces for the wanton bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the clamors about expanding the war, the indefinite suspension of the Paris talks, etc. decidedly will not help the U.S. gain its objective but can only make the U.S. even more bogged down in an embarrassing position.

The Chinese side wishes to call attention to the following passage in the Shanghai Communique:

" . . . the two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-aggression against other states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence."

On the question of Indochina, it is the U.S. that has violated these principles and harmed Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, and not Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos that have harmed the U.S. If the U.S. takes its above statement seriously and truly has a desire to effect a reasonable settlement of the question of Indochina, then it should reexamine its own attitude.

The Chinese side reiterates that it attaches importance to the normalization of Sino-US relations and that it is firm in upholding its principles.

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