MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
              Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
              Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense
              Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
              for National Security Affairs
              James T. Lynn, Assistant to the President for
              Management and Budget, and Director, OMB

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, March 31, 1976
                9:22 - 10:30 a.m.

PLACE: Oval Office

Rumsfeld: I think on the budget committees we should say this is a first
step in the process and it reflects a desire on the part of the committees
to have the U.S. remain strong.

Next, this Belgian gun. It was decided about two years ago in
terms of standardization -- purchasing the best weapon at the best price.
There is no linkage with the F-16 and the Leopard tank. It is the right
decision and small peanuts. I hear someone bitched yesterday at the
staff meeting.

President: I did because the U.S. gun was about half the price of the
Belgian.

Rumsfeld: There is no doubt, though, about the cost effectiveness.

President: You just go up and convince Governor Loughie that you are
right.

Rumsfeld: We have been.

President: If we lose Maine, it's your fault. [Laughs]
Rumsfeld: We use the term "unilateral" on the PNE fact sheet. Better use a different term.

[Short discussion of the PNE statement.]

Kissinger: What about positioning the carrier task force off Lebanon?

President: Isn't one already there?

Scowcroft: That is an LPH. The attack carrier is at Split. It can't move before Saturday.

Kissinger: The situation in Lebanon will heat up over the weekend. If we can send a signal the Soviets would pick up, it would be very good.

[Discussion and decision to wait until we get a first report from Dean Brown.]

Rumsfeld: I want to warn you about Rickover's testimony this week. You reappointed him last fall.

The shipbuilding paper. [describes]

[Long discussion]

President: I want to look it over.

Lynn and Scowcroft: There shouldn't be a formal submission before the Navy study is complete.

President: How is Lebanon going?

Kissinger: Brown is about there. He will tell Jumblatt that if they don't cooperate, we will ensure they won't win. The Syrians can assure that. If we can get a ceasefire, we could let some Syrians in covertly.

President: That wouldn't let the Syrians clean out the PLO.

Kissinger: If there is no ceasefire, if we could work with the Syrians to guarantee they'd be out in three weeks....

[More discussion]
Some discussion of the UN vote on South Africa resolution. It was agreed that the minimum position would be abstention with a strong statement.

Scowcroft: Max [Friedersdorf] just called about a Byrd Amendment rider they are trying in the House to put on the Defense Appropriations bill. I told him we had a formal position supporting repeal. He should reiterate that but not beat the drum for it.
Of

I

P said because US gun was about 10% that of Belgium.

R. There is no doubt that was cost effectiveness.

R. We do just say and turn the gun high.

R. We have seen

P. If you had been to your fault (hanging)

R. We are a team "isolated" on NLF fact sheets.

Better mean story.

(First observation of NLF statement)

You asked about position a carrier took five offFremen.

P. Don't ask already that

S. Front is on 6 PM. The attack version is at 5 PM.

Cant move before Sat.

R. The Sat in Ibarra will lead up our command.

If we can send a second we can build pick up it would be very good

(Precession + decision to wait til we

get a 1st report from Almendarez)

R. I want to warn you don't do bean listening this

week, your report on then be still.

She could let the - (Discourtes)

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AUTHORITY

BY

NLF DATE
Cherry discussion. (Pete said to meet at
location 4:30. Anyone + S agreed against a
formal submission before 4:30, then study
is complete)

P: How is Gabin now?
K: Gabin is about three. He will still jumble that
if they don't look at it, they can't see it. The
Squishers can assume that. If we can get
a 1:0, we can get some Squishers in.
P. That wouldn't like Squishers clean out the PhD.
K: If we get a 1:0, we could work on a Squish &
prepare them out in 3 weeks.

(More discussion)

More discussion. P. [not clear] on S. Again
Agreed that Squish's position
would be a separate one. Strong detergent
S was just calling about a slight amendment
which they can agree in a month or put
on the agenda later. I agreed to bring
that position into position supporting appeal.
He should rewrite that but not break down
for it.