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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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National Security Council Meeting  
July 26, 1985, 10:00 AM-11:00 AM, President's Residence

SUBJECT: Meeting on South Africa ~~(S)~~

PARTICIPANTS:

The President

White House

Mr. Donald Regan

The Vice President

Mr. Robert C. McFarlane

Admiral John Poindexter

The Vice President's Office:  
Craig Fuller

NSC

Mr. Phillip Ringdahl

State:

Deputy Secretary John Whitehead

Deputy Assistant Secretary Frank Wisner

Treasury:

Secretary James A. Baker, III

OSD

Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger

Justice

Attorney General Edwin Meese

CIA

Director William J. Casey

JCS

General John W. Vessey, Jr.

Minutes

Mr. McFarlane opened the meeting by noting the recent headlines concerning South Africa and the increasing violence there. It was a complex situation. In the past four or so years, the South African Government (SAG) had taken ten or so measures - including limited political participation for Asians and coloreds, lifting of inter-racial marriages ban, discussion of citizenship rights -- which had created a gap between the reforms and the black expectations they aroused. A conservative reaction to these reforms had also set in, constraining the SAG's political maneuverability. In the region we have also had successes -- the

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Nkomati accord, South African withdrawal from Angola, a reduction of regional tension and violence -- but which events of the past 2-3 months were now crowding out. There had been a turn downward with the SAG raids into neighboring countries and their moves in Namibia; now capped by the State of Emergency. (S)

An emotional reaction has set in against SAG actions -- most notably in the U.S. in the form of proposed economic sanctions. This was unfortunate, because U.S. investment and companies in South Africa play a very good role. But we should be under no illusions -- problems there won't go away. We have to decide how to best portray our policies, and what best helps, or doesn't help, the situation. Mr. McFarlane then asked DCI Casey to give an assessment of SAG intentions, and the general situation in the region. (S)

Mr. Casey noted that President Botha is determined to maintain order in South Africa. The present situation in the black communities was unclear: there was continuing unrest in two major urban areas, but major political or tribal groupings such as the UDF or the Zulus either had little control or were standing aside. There was also the uncertain possibility of major black work strikes or stoppages. But the SAG security forces were expected to contain the situation, using whatever force was necessary. Afterwards, once peace and order in black communities had been restored, we expected the SAG to try and restore dialogue with the blacks, but the problem would be finding blacks willing to talk given recent events. Economic sanctions would reduce SAG receptivity to influence from outside, and thus increase chances for further repression if the violence continued. (S)

In the region, Mr. Casey said recent SAG actions confirmed a renewed emphasis on unilateral actions, with much less confidence in multilateral or cooperative efforts with neighbors; [REDACTED]

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As Amended  
Sec. 1.4(c)

[REDACTED] In Namibia, this had led the SAG to support the installation of a coalition government that could keep the pressure on SWAPO and try to entice some elements of SWAPO to participate. In Angola, the SAG was maintaining a two-track policy of supporting UNITA and Jonas Savimbi while maintaining a dialogue with the Angolan government principally in order to contain SWAPO in southern Angola. SAG support of UNITA was designed to serve as a check on the Soviet/Cuban presence in Angola, and provide leverage and flexibility in dealing with internal Angolan matters and SWAPO activities. In Mozambique, the SAG continued to support the Machel government, but were increasingly nervous as the RENAMO insurgency steadily expanded. (S)

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There were powerful voices within the SAG that were counseling increased contact with the insurgents. The Soviets continued to help both Mozambique and Angola, and the latter was again gearing up for a major offensive against UNITA. The Botha government viewed U.S. regional diplomacy as being at an impasse, and was insisting on strict parallelism on Cuban vs. SAG troop withdrawals. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

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Mr. Whitehead reaffirmed that the major U.S. policies -- the end to apartheid inside South Africa, independence for Namibia under UN Resolution 435 in conjunction with Cuban troop withdrawal, and the reduction of regional violence and cross-border raids -- had been pursued with diligence and had achieved some notable successes. There had been some progress made toward eliminating apartheid -- one need only look at the improved situation of black labor unions, steps taken toward black citizenship, discussion on the issue of force removals, the positive steps toward dialogue -- compared to the lack of progress over previous decades. The Nkomati agreement and the Angolan dialogue had produced improved chances for peace with active U.S. involvement. However, the already mentioned recent SAG actions called into question basic SAG attitudes and willingness to continue these processes. We must face the situation that the situation is likely to become even worse in the short-term. We had severely criticized these SAG actions, and had disassociated ourselves from all acts of aggression and repression. We had recalled our ambassador, a significant diplomatic rebuke. Despite these steps, we were being wrongly perceived by the public as being soft on apartheid, and cooperating with the SAG; calls were being made for a policy review. (S)

Mr. Whitehead added that despite these perceptions and pressures, we believe we are on the right track. Though we need to be sometimes hard with the SAG, it does not change our basic objectives or belief that we must maintain contact with the SAG; we need to express more effectively opposition to certain SAG policies, but we must stay involved and not withdraw. To do so would increase chances of chaos there and benefit the Soviets and their friends. (S)

Mr. Whitehead mentioned five new approaches aimed at explaining our policies or exploring new approaches: 1) a Presidential radio broadcast, which would express the U.S. abhorrence of apartheid and express the critical need for internal reform, 2) a major Vice-Presidential speech on U.S. responses to recent SAG actions

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and SAG responsibilities in protecting human rights and continuing dialogue with blacks, 3) proceed with a high level meeting with the SAG, probably at the Pik Botha (Foreign Minister)-Armacost level, which could also be the opportunity for a Presidential letter which would set forth our views and expectations concerning future SAG actions and behavior, 4) return Ambassador Nickel to South Africa under conditions not suggesting U.S. approval but reassertion of U.S. influence there (absence makes effective dialogue more difficult), and 5) avoid imposition of sanctions by Congress, or if legislation is inevitable, work to keep it as mild as possible. (S)

Mr. McFarlane raised the question of the extent of U.S. influence -- if President Botha is in a box and can only respond narrowly to basic law and order or internal issues which do not take into account our concerns, should we invest a lot when chances of failure are high? What should be the level of U.S. activity? The S.A. issue is likely to be very hot when students return to campuses this fall, and we need a really effective public affairs program of what helps and what hinders the process of reform, as well as realistic concepts of what the U.S. is trying to achieve. (S)

The President noted that we could be faced with a great tragedy in South Africa, and we must be careful not to make the situation worse. The South African whites are not like the other colonial peoples of Africa -- in many parts of South Africa whites settled before blacks and the problem is as much a tribal problem between blacks as a white vs. black problem. Some blacks had come into those areas looking for a better life. There was also the fact that the violence and demonstrations were being caused by a small minority -- Chief Buthelezi's Zulus for instance were not included, though Buthelezi was working effectively to end apartheid. We had our own problems in the American South which took a long time to resolve -- the important thing is that we can't wash our hands or walk away simply because the problems are difficult or we are being criticized. We must find a way to bring to the fore what we are trying to do there, to better explain our policies, and the likely disaster to follow if we don't use our influence on all parties. (S)

Mr. Casey, in response to the President's question on a possible Soviet role, said there is no hard evidence that the Soviets have been involved in instigating the recent violence, though they do influence the ANC which has been involved in terrorist acts. Still, the ANC itself has not taken a leading role in the recent violence -- much of it in fact has been uncontrolled -- though the ANC has the potential to add to the problems or stir up trouble. (S)

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Mr. Weinberger said that what is happening in South Africa has parallels in other countries, notably Iran and the Philippines. We must oppose apartheid, but what is the best way to change it constructively and not simply bang away to gain some political hay at home? In Iran, there was great pressure on basic law and order issues -- the previous administrations had not helped the Shah at a critical time and the result is a regime far more repressive than anything under the Shah, in addition now to being violently anti-American. We lost a strategic country. In the Philippines, a lot of people are arguing for the same type of pressure, but we can't afford to lose that vitally strategic country. We do not help these countries through our loud denunciations. We need more quiet diplomacy, and quiet pressure, not public arguments. Public denunciations contribute to the downfall of friendly governments where we have strategic interests. Looking at Africa, there is little else we can count on in that vast region, and our loss surely would be the Soviet's gain. (S)

The President said it is often self-defeating to go public with demands; no government can be seen to be taking orders, quiet diplomacy remains the best way to persuade any government along a desired path. However, we need to do a better job of publicizing what we have achieved, and what we want to accomplish. The South African situation can be bettered through gradualism, of keeping up the pressure behind the scenes but not forcing situations which get out of control or would lead backwards. The President asked about constitutional models which could help point the way toward peaceful, long-term change. (S)

Mr. Whitehead added that U.S. opposition to apartheid is based not only on moral grounds, but also on practical considerations -- unless the SAG is brought to institute gradual reform and to meet legitimate black grievances, there inevitably will be chaos. We cannot permit that to happen. (S)

Mr. Baker wished to reemphasize the statement there had been successes in our southern Africa policies, but that little credit had been given. It was easy to be demagogic, but we must not back away in the face of criticism. We must do a better job of explaining what we have done, and what we propose to do to make things better inside South Africa, without kicking the SAG into an unresponsive mood. Baker added that he was very concerned about possible legislative sanctions, and the importance of the Administration adopting a policy -- the Lugar/Dole bill was going to conference Wednesday (July 31), and we must discuss the bill with Lugar. It was important to count votes -- could we sustain a veto of Lugar/Dole? If not, a veto would be the worst of both worlds -- vetoing a Republican leadership bill then having it overridden. We should quietly sit down with Lugar to explain the Administration position, and also tell him what clearly would not be acceptable. (S)

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Mr. Whitehead said that the Lugar/Dole bill is much less onerous than other proposals, and it contained some positive and negative things. Mr. Baker added that we would prefer no legislation, but something probably will emerge and we must negotiate and try to influence that process. (S)

Mr. Meese said there is clearly a need for improved public diplomacy, and wondered what steps the White House Public Liaison could take to improve the public's knowledge of the situation -- especially the positive role of U.S. companies and the explosive alternatives to a peaceful, gradual change. He seconded Mr. McFarlane's comments about South Africa being a big issue this fall on college campuses -- some people in this country had been looking for a cause which could unite them, and they had found it. We must counter with an effective program. (S)

The Vice President said he had to excuse himself to attend an IDU meeting, but said that he had talked to Mr. Seaga and other Caribbean friends only yesterday, and that South Africa had taken up much of the discussion. There is a perception abroad that we are not really opposed to apartheid or are being too soft on the SAG -- we need to reach out not only in this country but abroad to better explain our policies and positions. (S)

The President closed the meeting by saying that we must continue to seek the end of apartheid, but through gradualism in the political process that serves the best interests of all in South Africa who want to avoid bloodshed and revolution. We need to work more closely with the Congress and the public - to do a better job at home explaining what we are doing. (S)

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