

Secret White House papers

Is Nixon pushing India toward Russia & hoping to win China market back for U.S. goods?

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WASHINGTON — Publication of the secret Pentagon Papers exposed, all too late, the miscalculations and misrepresentations that entangled the U.S. in a jungle war in faraway Vietnam.

Without waiting for history to overtake the Indian-Pakistani War, therefore, we have decided to publish highlights from the secret White House Papers dealing with the crisis.

These papers bear a variety of stamps: "Secret Sensitive," "Eyes Only," "Specat (special category) Exclusive," "Noform" (no foreign dissemination) and other classifications even more exotic.

Yet astonishingly, the documents contain almost no information that could possibly jeopardize the national security. On the contrary, the security labels are used to hide the activities — and often the blunders — of our leaders.

We believe the public is entitled to know about these blunders. For the U.S. posture is in shambles on the Indian subcontinent, which is enormously more important than Vietnam. Every year, the births alone exceed the entire population of Vietnam.

Here are our conclusions from studying the White House Papers:

Blunders Cited

1. President Nixon, apparently because he liked Pakistan's strongman Yahya Khan and disliked India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, placed the U.S. on the side of a minor military dictatorship against the world's largest democracy. Thereby, he aligned the U.S. against the Bengalis, whose freedom Yahya had brutally repressed. He overturned their free election, jailed their elected leader and sent troops to terrorize the populace.

2. The President gruffly overrode the advice of the State Department's professionals who urged him to use his special influence with Yahya to stop the Pakistani persecution and to grant the Bengalis a measure of autonomy. When the Indian Army finally came to the aid of the Bengalis, the pros pleaded with Nixon to remain neutral if for no other reason than Pakistan looked

like a sure loser. Instead, he supported the repressor and associated the U.S. with Pakistan's eventual humiliation.

3. In a fit of petulance, the President sent a naval task force to the Bay of Bengal and risked a military confrontation with Soviet warships. Russia's Ambassador to India Nikolai M. Pegov, according to "reliable" intelligence, immediately assured Indian officials that "the Soviet Union will not allow the Seventh Fleet to intervene." Nixon's derring-do served merely to increase India's dependence upon Russia.

4. As a reward, the Russians are expected to seek military bases on the subcontinent. "The Soviet military ambition in this exercise is to obtain permanent usage of the port of Visakhapatnam," suggested Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, the Navy chief, at a secret strategy session. An intelligence report also declares that Bangla Desh, the new Bengali state, has "already offered military bases in Chittagong to the Soviet Union in exchange for economic aid."

5. At the height of the two-week war, the White House scabbled around for some way to rush arms shipments to Pakistan. This would have been a violation of our own 1965 arms embargo against both India and Pakistan. Since 1965, the U.S. has delivered only "non-lethal" supplies, chiefly spare parts, to the two antagonists. To get around the ban, Nixon's chief foreign policymaker, Henry Kissinger, explored the possibility of sneaking arms to Pakistan through third countries.

Secret Minutes

Here are excerpts from the "Secret Sensitive" minutes of Kissinger's White House strategy sessions:

"Dr. Kissinger asked whether we have the right to authorize Jordan or Saudi Arabia to transfer military equipment to Pakistan," declare the December 6 minutes. "Mr. Van Hollen (Asian expert, State Department) stated the United States cannot permit a third country to transfer arms which we have provided them when we, ourselves, do not authorize sale direct to the ultimate recipient.

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"Mr. Sisco (Assistant State Secretary in charge of Asian affairs) went on to say that as the Paks increasingly feel the heat, we will be getting emergency requests from them. Dr. Kissinger said that the President may want to honor those requests

"Mr. Packard (Deputy Defense Minister) then said we should look at what could be done. Mr. Sisco agreed but said it should be done very quietly."

The December 8 minutes pick up the subject again: "Dr. Kissinger referred to an expression of interest by King Hussein relative to the provision of F-104s to Pakistan

"Ambassador Johnson (Ambassador-at-large) said that we must examine the possible effects that additional supplies for Pakistan might have. It could be that eight F-104s might not make any difference once the real war in (West Pakistan) starts. They could be considered only a token

"Mr. Packard stated that the

overriding consideration is the practical problem of either doing something effective or doing nothing. If you don't win, don't get involved"

The following day, a secret message was flashed to Ambassador to Jordan L. Dean Brown: "You should tell King Hussein we fully appreciate heavy pressure he feels himself under by virtue of request from Pakistan. We are nevertheless not yet in a position to give him definite response. Whole subject remains under intensive review at very high level of USG."

In New Delhi, Ambassador to India Kenneth Keating received a copy of the secret orders to Brown. Keating sent an anguished message to Washington, pleading: "Any action other than rejection (of the plan to ship planes to Pakistan by way of Jordan) would pose enormous further difficulties in Indo-U.S. relations."

We will print additional excerpts from the White House Papers in future columns.