On Tuesday morning, at 11:30, the individuals invited
the night before, plus a number of others, assembled in the
Cabinet Room to meet with the President. A complete list of those
attending is attached as Annex A.

The President entered the room at 11:30, and made a
circuit of the room, shaking hands with those present and exchanging
a few words of personal greeting with each Member of Congress.

The President opened the meeting by stating that he had
invited a group of Senators and Congressmen to the White House so
that he could describe the situation in the Far East to them, and
inform them of a number of important decisions which he had made
during the previous 24 hours, and to read to them a statement which
he intended to release in a matter of minutes to the press. The
President said that he would ask the Secretary of State to give a
brief account of events in the Far East.

Mr. Acheson ran over briefly the events in Korea, beginning
with first word that arrived in Washington on Saturday afternoon that
the Republic of Korea had been invaded by communist forces from the
north of the 38th parallel. He stated that as soon as word of this
invasion reached Tokyo, Gen. MacArthur had (in accordance with a pre-
arranged plan) begun to evacuate American personnel and had moved
naval and air units into the area to protect evacuees. Mr. Asheson continued that, when the situation began to clarify and was recognized as a major threat to the peace, the President returned to Washington from Independence, Missouri, and met with a number of State and Defense officials at Blair House on Sunday evening. At that meeting, it was agreed that instructions should be sent Gen. MacArthur to the effect that he should provide immediate military assistance to the South Korean forces.

On Sunday, Mr. Asheson continued, it became apparent in Washington that the United States adopt a very firm stand in the Far East, for two reasons; (a) the Korean forces appeared to be weakening fast and their leadership was weak and indecisive; (b) the governments of many Western European nations appeared to be in a state of near-panic, as they watched to see whether the United States would act or not. Therefore, Mr. Asheson concluded, the President had called another meeting at Blair House on Monday evening at which he decided, after consultation with his State and Defense advisers, to take additional steps which the President would now describe.

The President thanked Mr. Asheson for his summary but pointed out that the Secretary had overlooked a most important element in the situation; namely, that the United States had called for a special
meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations in New York on Sunday, June 26, and that our military assistance to Korea was being given pursuant to the Security Council resolution passed at that meeting. The Secretary of State was quite obviously embarrassed at his failure to mention the United Nations.

The President then read his statement very rapidly, which is attached (annex 2). Upon finishing his statement, the President gave a brief summary of what lay behind this government's decisions. The communist invasion of South Korea could not be let pass unnoticed, he said, this act was very obviously inspired by the Soviet Union. If we let Korea down, the Soviets will keep right on going and swallow up one piece of Asia after another. We had to make a stand some time, or else let all of Asia go by the board. If we were to let Asia go, the Near East would collapse and no telling what would happen in Europe. Therefore, the President concluded, he had ordered our forces to support Korea as long as we could — or as long as the Koreans put up a fight and gave us something we could support — and it was equally necessary for us to draw the line at Indo-China, the Philippines, and Formosa.

There were a few moments of silence after the President had finished his statement.
Sen. Tiley asked the first question. He wanted to know if orders to Northrup were pursuant to the Security Council’s resolution. The President assured him that they certainly were.

Sen. Tiley then wanted to know if Northrup had enough military strength to give effective aid to Korea — what kind of planes, for example, could Northrup give the Koreans? Gen. Vandenberg arose and summarized briefly the numbers and types of planes in Japan and adjacent United States areas. Secretary Johnson broke in and quite brusquely stated that this was secret information and that, unless he got pledges of secrecy from those attending the meeting, he would have to ask Gen. Vandenberg not to continue. There was general agreement around the table that the meeting would be regarded as an “executive session.”

Sen. Tydings said that he thought the President would be pleased to know that the Senate and House conferences on Selective Service had agreed earlier in the morning to extend Selective Service for one year and that a number of crippling resolutions had been taken out of the bill and additional powers for the President inserted. That action was taken, Tydings said, in the light of Far Eastern events. The President thanked Gen. Tydings and said that Selective Service extension was vitally essential.
Sen. Connally asked if we would continue to pursue our case in the United Nations. The President and the Secretary of State assured him that all of our actions would be carried out through the United Nations.

Sen. Alexander Smith wanted to be sure that the military assistance we were giving to Korea was actually pursuant to the Security Council resolution. He was assured by the President that it was— that every thing we were doing for Korea was in support of the Security Council resolution.

Rep. Short said that he was glad we were working through the United Nations.

The President asked Mr. Johnson to discuss the forthcoming Security Council meeting which was to be held at 2:00 o’clock in the afternoon. Mr. Johnson said he did not know whether the Russians would attend the meeting or not; if they did, they would probably try to veto whatever action the Security Council tried to take. If the Russians vetoed any further actions of the Security Council, we would go right ahead—without interruption—and supply assistance to Korea under the terms of the Security Council resolution of Sunday.

The Russians could not in any way veto that resolution, which was already on the record. Mr. Johnson said, however, that he doubted very much that the Russians would attend.
Sen. Lucas expressed the hope that the nations of Western Europe would back us up, and would help us out in United Nations procedures. Mr. Dean said that he was confident, on the basis of the telegrams he had received from Europe, and on the basis of discussions which various State Department officials had been having during the past 24 hours with the European Ambassadors, that we would have the fullest possible support from Western Europe and that we would also get what little assistance they might be able to give us.

Sen. Connelly said that it was quite apparent that this was the clearest test case that the United Nations has ever faced. If the United Nations is ever going to do anything, this is the time, and if the United Nations cannot bring the crisis in Korea to an end, then we might just as well wash up the United Nations and forget it. There was general agreement around the table that this was the case and the President once again stated that he was going to make absolutely certain that everything we did in Korea would be in support of, and in conformity with, the decision by the Security Council of the United Nations.

Secretary Johnson began to discuss the position of the Soviet Union in regard to Korea. The President called for attention
and said that he wanted everyone to be attentive to what Mr. Ashburn
was saying. The Secretary called attention to the fact that the
President's statement did not refer in any way to the Soviet government
nor to the Soviet Union. It simply referred to "communism," Mr.
Ashburn said this Government is doing its best to leave a door wide open
for the Soviet Union to back down without losing too much face. The
Secretary said it would be very helpful if the Members of Congress
would avoid any reference to Soviet participation or involvement in
the Korean crisis. If we publicly say that the Soviets are responsible
for the actions of the communists in North Korea then, as a matter of
prestige, the Soviet government will be forced to continue supporting
the North Korean forces and we will find ourselves with a really tough
scrap on our hands. If, however, we leave the door open the Soviet
Union may well back down and call off the North Koreans.

By this time, mimeographed copies of the statement which the
President had read earlier in the meeting were available and were dis-
tributed to all present in the room. A number of questions were asked
about the precise meaning of certain phrases. The meeting closed after
Judge Bee re-stated the point that had been made earlier in the meeting,
namely, that we were acting -- and would continue to act -- under the
United Nations. The President said that was correct and that if the
Soviet Union attended future Security Council meetings and attempted to veto Security Council actions, we would go right ahead on our own and justify our actions on the grounds of the Council resolution of Sunday, June 26. The President further remarked that our defense of the Philippines, Formosa, and Indo China was on behalf of our own security and general stability in the Far East. Only our actions in Korea, he concluded, are in conformity with the Security Council resolution.