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MEMORANDUM





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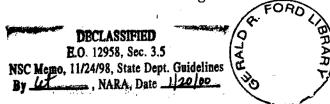
MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:	 President Gerald Ford Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense <u>Republican Congressional Leadership</u> Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
DATE AND TIME:	April 22, 1975 - Tuesday 8:00 a.m.
PLACE:	Roosevelt Room The White House

<u>The President:</u> I have three subjects I would like to discuss this morning: Vietnam, energy and the budget.

<u>Kissinger</u>: Jim [Schlesinger] will update the military situation, but it is clearly hopeless. The North Vietnamese have the capability to force a military solution. Our objective is to achieve the most controlled situation possible for evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese. This requires the cooperation of many -- the Congress has to understand the shoals between which we are trying to navigate. We have had a steady reduction in the American presence. We have tried not to leave so many that we couldn't get them out, and we have avoided pulling them out so fast that we create a panic. We will be down to one lift by tonight: one batch will leave from Ton Son Nhut by C-130 and one from Saigon by helicopter. We are evacuating the high-risk Vietnamese by trickles.

The diplomatic situation is delicate and we can't say too much. Hanoi has continued to say that Thieu is the only obstacle. I never believed it. They will probably start trying to unravel the government, although they may want to project an air of responsibility by negotiating for Saigon. We are in touch with several countries. Unless there are controlled conditions, it won't be possible to get out large numbers of Vietnamese. The evacuation from Saigon will be much trickier than the one from Phnom



STOP SECREJ - XGDS (3) CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER Penh. We are trying not to trigger a panic, but also not to jeopardize Americans. We could have the refugees from Vung Tau but our prupose is not to be indiscriminate but to rescue those who would suffer the most if we left them. The trouble in the ports would be to sort out the highrisk people from the mass of refugees. Any substantial evacuation of South Vietnamese would therefore depend on negotiations.

There is no question North Vietnam could take over Saigon and unravel the government by keeping to make demands for further change. The only glue holding the country together is the military. They have the only viable administrative structure. Huong will probably be replaced soon and his replacement soon after.

Some of the terms of the debate on aid are no longer relevant. The thought that aid is an open commitment is no longer relevant, as is the argument that it would prolong the fighting. What it does now is give North Vietnam some incentive to say in a negotiation they have stopped our aid, and to give the government some confidence to keep things under control. We think it is important to vote some part of the aid package to give us some control over these tragic events.

The President's objective from the outset was to achieve a controlled situation, and these events, while happening rapidly, were somewhat predictable. It is important we get out with the maximum dignity and unity.

<u>Rhodes:</u> What sort of government will it be? Will the Viet Cong be allowed to run it?

<u>Kissinger</u>: It is not clear yet. Sometime over the next two-three years North Vietnam will absorb it, but whether they will go through an interim PRG Government or move quickly to absorb it is not clear. The occupied areas are being administered by cadres from the North because there are no PRG cadre. My guess is they will move rapidly. The ones most unhappy over these developments will be the Chinese.

Scott: Right.

<u>Kissinger</u>: I can't imagine the Chinese wanting a large military power on its border, so the Chinese could be excpected to want to support some sort of PRG government.

Rhodes: How about Cambodia?

<u>Kissinger</u>: The last months of the war were being fought against Sihanouk, not the government. Sihanouk has known for a long time that we would support his return. The obstacle to his return was the Khmer Rouge, not us. The Khmer Rouge wanted to prevent Sihanouk from coming back as anything but a tool. That is why they refused even a ceasefire and that is why they are exterminating every vestige of leadership. It may be even worse than what will happen in Vietnam. Cambodia will be a total Communist-controlled state. The question is who will be in control -- Hanoi or Peking? Peking has long supported Sihanouk as a counterweight. They are aided by the hatred between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese.

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Over the years it is obvious that there will be a conflict between the large Communist countries and the only hope for Laos and Cambodia will be to balance between them. North Vietnam will take over as much control of Laos as they wish; that is probably true of Cambodia also. The Hanoi leaders have done nothing but fight all their lives.

<u>Cederberg:</u> We have a tactical problem over the next few days. Yesterday I could see more military than economic aid would be a problem, so I recommended equal amounts. But I still think we will have trouble on the Floor, and I see no way to get it to the Floor before next week.

<u>Case:</u> We have a bill on the floor now. One hundred million dollars could be used for anything at all. It would be a while to see what is needed. We might get it raised to \$200 million.

<u>The President:</u> I still believe we need some humanitarian aid and some military aid.

<u>Schlesinger</u>: The situation is crumbling. The East is being pulled back. Bien Hoa will be under attack within two-three days. The Hanoi propaganda line has always been that the PRG is doing the battle, so that they may not want to assault Saigon. We have five carrier groups in the area. We can lift 1,700 and have about 2,000 now. Any evacuation from Saigon will be risky and could be interrupted or terminated by brute force. It will be a hairy exercise.

<u>The President:</u> The Ambassador is under orders to get down by the end of the day. We are getting the Americans and dependents down to the bare $\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{F}$ minimum.

It is my judgment we should try to get something through the Congress to help stabilize the military situation.

Tower: I have a bill in my pocket to add \$200 million in military aid.

<u>Griffin:</u> I would vote for it but I think it would be defeated. About half the Rapublicans would vote against it. I think the Democrats are on the hook now. If we were to add military assistance and get it defeated one would get the Democrats off the hook because a lot of Republicans would vote against it.

[There was much discussion -- all negative. The President read a number of reports about foreign leaders' doubts about American constancy. He asked them not to use the quotes.]

<u>Cederberg:</u> What has happened to bipartisanship? The Democrats give us nothing. It is not like when you were minority leader.

The President: There is no leadership there at all.

<u>Griffin:</u> Mr. President: You have to keep pushing for aid, but you should know what the realities are on the hill.

[Secretary Lynn and Mr. Zarb each gave a short report on the economy and energy situations respectively.]

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