

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/NODIS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald R. Ford
Vuong Van Bac, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of Vietnam
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and
Assistant to the President
Tran Kim Phuong, Ambassador of the Republic of
Vietnam
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to
the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Saturday, October 5, 1974
11:01 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office
The White House

Kissinger: Minister Bac was in Paris keeping an eye on me during the negotiation. Ambassador Phuong also.

[The press was admitted briefly to take photographs.]

President: We think you made a fine agreement.

Bac: It was mostly Dr. Kissinger. President Thieu and Madame Thieu send their best wishes and their wishes for the recovery of Mrs. Ford.

[The press was ushered out.]

President: I want to reassure you we will support President Thieu in every way -- economically, politically, and diplomatically. Our problem is not us, but on the Hill.

Bac: We are very grateful for your efforts and U.S. efforts and we hope they can be kept at adequate levels.

President Thieu has asked me to give you this letter. [Tab A]

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DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines

By lit, NARA, Date 1/15/00

~~SECRET~~ - XGDS (3)

CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER



President: Our people are not as enthusiastic about aid, but I will do my best to get adequate levels. The attacks on aid are not just aimed at Vietnam, but across the board. When I first came to Congress, the aid bill was \$7 billion.

Kissinger: Which would be \$15 billion now.

President: But there was strong support for it.

Kissinger: And it shows if you start strong you can taper off.

Bac: We are making that point too.

President: What is the current situation in Vietnam?

Bac: It is difficult, but not critical. The economy measures are difficult. We have to cut down on our use of ammunition and so on, and that is costly in terms of casualties. The most intense conflict is around Kontum and the supply line.

Kissinger: The Vietnamese strategic problem is they must defend a 400-mile border and the Communists can hit anywhere.

President: How is the military morale?

Bac: It is good in the regular forces, but has been affected in the regional forces. What we don't know is whether we should use all we have now or be cautious.

Kissinger: We will try to get you what you need. You know of the American baseball manager, Leo Durocher, who said "Nice guys finish last."

President: How is the economy in Vietnam?

Bac: Our inflation is about 30 percent but it is not so catastrophic as the kind in Africa and Italy. The country is basically rich in resources, and in a year or two we should be self-sufficient in rice.

President: As you close now?

Phuong: Yes, and in some areas the Communists prohibit collection and try to drain it off.

Bac: There should be good crops this year, and our oil prospects are good.



Kissinger: We may have to have a confrontation on oil prices! Negotiations with the North Vietnamese in the morning and the South Vietnamese in the afternoon is a wearing experience.

Bac: We should know soon whether oil is present in commercial quantities. The companies are sanguine, but that won't solve our current problems.

I'm trying to get increased aid now. I have visited Japan, and am going to France and Germany. All together last year we got about \$100 million. It was substantial, but not compared to US levels.

President: We will do our best. We admire President Thieu and want to be a good partner.

Bac: President Thieu just heard that you will visit Japan and Korea soon. We would like to invite you to visit Vietnam on the way.

President: That is unfortunately not possible on this trip. Please don't misinterpret this; it is only a time problem. Another time I will do it. We will do our best.

Bac: We know you are very busy. Maybe you could visit President Thieu along the way to Japan.

President: I will talk to Dr. Kissinger about it. But it is likely to be very difficult.

[The meeting ended with warm handshakes and farewells.]



A





Saigon, September 19, 1974

NGUYEN VAN THIEU
President of the Republic of Viet-Nam

Dear Mr. President,

About a month ago, I wrote to Your Excellency about the situation facing the Republic of Viet-Nam as the Communist side spurned all negotiations and stepped up their armed attacks in complete disregard of the Paris Agreement.

Since then, the situation has become even more serious. In fact, the prospects for the resumption of the talks between the two South Vietnamese parties are bleaker than ever, while the Communist generalized offensive continues unabated. Now the leaders of the Hanoi regime openly declare their active support for movements aimed at overthrowing the legal Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam while they intensify their infiltrations and military action, thus baring their plans for a forcible conquest of the whole South Viet-Nam.

...

His Excellency Mr. Gerald E. FORD
President of the United States of America
Washington D. C.



I think that the main cause for the increasingly defiant and bellicose attitude of the Communists resides in their believing that the United States is now wavering in its dedication to our common goal, namely a South Viet-Nam capable of defending itself and of deciding its own future. The utterly inadequate amount of military and economic aid to the Republic of Viet-Nam which has been voted by the U. S. Congress might have induced the Communists to make such speculations.

This can in turn lead to very dangerous miscalculations on the part of the Communists, as they might be tempted to launch an all out offensive to complete their forcible conquest of South Viet-Nam.

Therefore, it is essential that the United States unmistakably demonstrates once again its attachment to a serious implementation of the Paris Agreement and its support for the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, if peace is to be restored in South Viet-Nam and in South East Asia.

In this respect, I am most appreciative of your efforts made on September 12th to persuade leaders of Congress to restore the cuts in aid funds. I sincerely hope that Your Excellency will succeed in bringing the amounts of military and economic assistance up to the levels required by the new realities of the situation and the need for South Viet-Nam to achieve an economic takeoff.



The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam had signed the Paris Agreement in good faith, under the double assurance that, on the one hand, Russia and Red China will exercise a restraining influence upon Hanoi and that, on the other hand, all necessary military equipments and economic assistance will be provided by the United States to the Republic of Viet-Nam to maintain its capabilities of self defense and to develop its national economy.

The first assumption turned out to be an empty promise, as Russia and Red China continue to give North Viet-Nam all the ingredients to pursue an aggressive war in South Viet-Nam.

But I am convinced that thanks to your generous efforts, the second assumption will be borne out.

Our valiant soldiers by enduring daily sacrifices in the battlefields have proved beyond doubt our will to resist Communist aggression. It would be unfortunate indeed if sufficient means could not be supplied to them because of the lack of resolve and misconception on the part of our allies.

Beside providing us with an adequate amount of military and economic assistance, the United States can also show its support for the just cause of the Republic of Viet-Nam by solemnly restating our common goals. In this regard, I hope that some time in the near future, we can meet together



to discuss about ways and means to achieve a genuine peace
in South Viet-Nam.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my
lasting friendship and highest consideration.

A handwritten signature, possibly "Nixon", is written in cursive above two parallel horizontal lines.

SECRET

MEETING WITH VUONG VAN BAC
FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Saturday, October 5, 1974

11:00 a.m. (15 minutes)

The Oval Office

From: Henry A. Kissinger

I. PURPOSE

To demonstrate the constancy of U. S. support for South Vietnam and to convey to President Thieu assurances that we are making a strong effort to secure adequate aid for his country.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS & PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

- A. Background: Recent Congressional cuts in U.S. assistance to South Vietnam undermine South Vietnamese confidence in continued U.S. support and in South Vietnam's ability to resist Communist pressures. Your meeting with Foreign Minister Bac and your conveying through him assurances of our continued support to President Thieu can help bolster South Vietnamese confidence at a critical time. Bac is carrying a letter and verbal message for you from President Thieu. Bac will probably briefly review South Vietnam's current economic and military problems and press for higher aid levels.
- B. Participants: Foreign Minister Bac, Secretary Kissinger and Republic of Vietnam Ambassador Phuong.
- C. Press Arrangements: Press photo session. Meeting to be announced.

III. TALKING POINTS

1. I share your concern about recent Congressional cuts in Vietnam aid levels. We are fully aware of the impact these cuts will have on South Vietnam.

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By lkt, NARA, Date 1/10/02

2. You may be assured that this Administration will do everything possible to provide adequate military and economic aid to South Vietnam.
3. We believe it may be possible to raise aid levels, above those so far established by Congress, and we will try our best to accomplish this.
4. Please convey to President Thieu my personal assurances that this Administration remains steadfast in its support for the Republic of Vietnam. President Thieu's efforts to defend his country's independence and to promote its well being have earned our profound respect and admiration. Please give him my warmest personal regards.



Transcribed by
PME 10/16/74

P/Bac/K/Phuong
5 OCT 1974

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K Bac was in Paris hoping on to see me
Phuong also
(Pers)

P We think you made fine agreement

B Another K. Thier + some send best wishes & for many of
(Pers out) ^{miss it}

P We will support Thier in every way, e way, pol,
dip. Our prob is not us, but we c'd ill

B We are very grateful for your efforts + US efforts +
we hope they can be kept at adequate levels.
(Thanks letter from Thier)

P Our people not as enthusiastic about aid but
I will do my best to get adequate levels.
^{attacks are}
It's not ~~you~~ just arrived at VN but across channel
which just arrived Com, aid bill was 2 bill

K which would be it bit more

P But there was strong support for it

K And it shows if you start strong you can Tokyo

B ^{off}
We making that point too.

P What is current sit?

B It is diff but not critical. The ^{economic} ~~economic~~ ^{instruments}
are difficult. We have to cut down on ~~our~~ ^{our} ~~use~~ ^{use}, etc
use + that is costly in terms of casualties.
The most intense conflict is ~~in~~ ^{at} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~front~~ ^{front}
+ supply line.

K VN that prob is they must depend for milk
+ Com can hit anywhere

P How much more

B It good in regional focus but has been
opposed in regional focus. What we don't
know is whether we should use all we have
now or be cautious



we will try to get you

K (Leo Danachon)

P How many

B One exploration is about 30% but most so catastrophic as seen in Africa & Italy. Country is basically rich in resources & in yr or 2 we should be off top in size.

P ~~How~~ are you doing now

Phuong Yes, in some cases & limits prohibit collection & drain it off

B Should be good energy this yr & our oil projects are good

K Many have had oil compensation on oil prices. (2 yrs w/ NKK in over & SKK in for is increasing)

B We should know soon whether oil present in and qualities. The Companies are engineers, but that won't solve our current prob.
I trying to get increased oil now. Visited Japan, going to France & Germany. All together last year we got about 100 mil - substantial but not compared to US levels

P We'd love best. We advised I think & want to be a good partner.

B We just then first heard you would visit Japan & Korea. Invite you to visit our way.

P Not possible this trip. Don't want to fail - it only a trial problem. Another time. We will dream best.

B We know you very busy - maybe you could visit & bring along a way to Japan

P I will talk to Kabanat it but it is likely to be very difficult.

