

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ / NODISMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

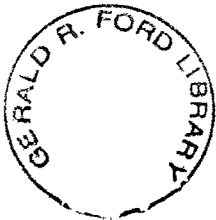
PARTICIPANTS: The President  
 The Secretary of State  
 Senator Dewey F. Bartlett (Oklahoma)  
 Congressman John J. Flynt, Jr. (Georgia)  
 Congressman William Chappell, Jr. (Florida)  
 Congressman Donald M. Fraser (Minnesota)  
 Congressman Paul N. McCloskey (California)  
 Congresswoman Bella S. Abzug (New York)  
 (arrived late)  
 Congressman John P. Murtha (Pennsylvania)  
 Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick (New Jersey)  
 Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, National Security  
 Council  
 Assistant Secretary of State, Philip C. Habib

DATE & TIME: Wednesday, March 5, 1975, 11:15 a.m. to  
 12:50 p.m.

PLACE: The White House, Cabinet Room

President: Let me say at the outset that I am pleased to see all of you and I am sorry Bella did not get here. I think the group's going to Indochina is a great asset. The ones who went were a good cross-section of Congress and your views are indicative of that cross-section of views. I want to thank Assistant Secretary Habib for going and I am sure he was helpful to you. I ask that you give Dr. Kissinger and me your observations and any recommendations you may have.

Flynt: On behalf of my colleagues I will start but everyone will participate. We were manifestly shaken and impressed by what we saw. Fraser and I did not go to Cambodia. I had an earlier appointment with Big Minh, who used to be the commander of the forces in South Viet-Nam. He was going out of town and I went to see him. I am glad I did see him as that will be part of my report.



DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines  
 By lt, NARA, Date 1/20/00~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ / NODIS

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The first point I would like to make is that the questions of Viet-Nam and Cambodia must be treated separately. There are substantive differences in each case. The second point I want to make is that the Cambodian problem is of extremely short range.

On the Viet-Nam side of the coin, it is of longer duration. We talk in terms of two or three years. I would like to see them stand on their own feet in the next 2-3 years. That may be overly optimistic. As we have discovered over the years, publicly and privately, we have had a common goal. For years we fought side by side and even as that changed our objectives were the same. The history of Viet-Nam has been a series of mistakes, tragic mistakes. Our task is to convince the United States public and Congress not to make the last mistake, not to abruptly terminate sufficient military and economic aid which could become the most tragic mistake in a series of tragic mistakes. In my part of the country, where we have supported the situation, involvement has waned and been replaced by reluctance bordering on opposition. All of us have the difficult job of convincing Congress and the people that we cannot drop the ball. We have too much investment in lives, time and material. I wish we could report we had solutions. I have no panacea to suggest, but in concert with my colleagues I hope we can, by give and take, come up with a consensus.

President: Do you anticipate making a report to the leaders of Congress? That would be helpful.

Flynt: That is our intention, but we are limited by lack of sufficient staff. We did make a report to Otto Passman's Committee.

President: Did Otto listen or do all the talking?

Flynt: He listened because he wanted his colleagues to hear us.

President: I served twelve years on that sub-committee. Has he changed?



Chappell: No, he still dances around.

Bartlett: I will try not to cover the same ground as Mr. Flynt. I see a need for military aid in Cambodia quickly so that they can expand the perimeter and hope for a political settlement. Without that hope, there will be a bloodbath. In South Viet-Nam I consider the over-all painful options. I have some concern about the three-year proposal because it gives the impression that all would be over in three years. There needs to be some kind of commitment that takes into account what comes in from Russia and China, taking into account the needs for defense. We should not be pro- or anti-Thieu in the coming election, but we should insist on the broadening of the base of the Government to bring about free elections. This would require the appointment to the Cabinet of leaders from the non-Communist group. Corruption should be ferreted out, there should be freedom of the press and proper use of the courts and police. This will help them to develop their resolve and will strengthen their capability to develop in peace.

(Mrs. Abzug entered at this point): I am sorry I am late.

Bartlett: I remember Mr. Sung said to me that at one time his dream was that Viet-Nam would be one nation without communism. That changed to a South Viet-Nam without communism and now he is thinking of a South Viet-Nam as a free institution, with guaranteed rights and including Communists.

President: Did you find Thieu agreeable to any of these suggestions?

Bartlett: All of my conversations on this subject took place on the last day we were in Saigon. They included discussions with Professor Huy and former Prime Minister Ky, both of whom agreed that Thieu should broaden his Government and bring into it all non-Communists.



Flynt: Chappell and I talked to President Thieu about an hour before we left. We were reluctant to do so but we had been asked to by several anti-Thieu, anti-communist, but loyal South Vietnamese--one of whom was Professor Huy and one was General Minh. As best we could communicate to President Thieu, we suggested that he broaden his base and take advice from people personally loyal to South Viet-Nam but not strongly associated with him. We don't know whether he got the message.

McCloskey: I concentrated on the military situation. This was my fourth time in Viet-Nam and I was surprised by the success that was evident. Ninety-eight percent of what I saw was a success and I was surprised by the capability of the Vietnamese Army. They are holding off the North Vietnamese and the VC without the firepower of the B-52's and U.S. forces. I saw two regiments near Danang that were holding an area that five U.S. regiments previously held. But the South Vietnamese are outnumbered by the North and the North has the will to prevail and is putting its troops down into the South. We were all impressed that South Viet-Nam would be successful if it were independent. The problem is that the will to fight and the terrain favors the North. There has been a shift to the VC in the Delta of 10% of the population.

On Cambodia, we agree to support your request because we believe that if the perimeter is cracked people will be butchered. We talked to the refugees who told us about people being killed. Atrocity stories about nails being pounded into their heads. I cannot tell you whether the perimeter will hold.

There is a difference in our figures and those of the Department of Defense on what is required. They are asking for the same amount of ammunition that is used in Viet-Nam, 650 tons per day whereas 1/6 of the men are engaged. That is why we decided to recommend



\$116 million for Cambodia instead of the \$222 million requested. It is a close question of whether we can get through.

President: Logistically?

McCloskey: Both logistically and with votes. I would like to recommend that you withdraw the \$300 million request for Viet-Nam. Failure to get it will hurt us in Southeast Asia. Both sides look at what Congress does. The estimate is gloomy. The North Vietnamese are going to win.

President: Whether we aid them or not?

McCloskey: We gave them \$3.2 million in 1973, \$1.3 million in 1974 and \$1.3 million this year--if all goes through. There is no possibility of an increase. We will give you the votes to phase out the program, but not higher amounts. People in the South are shooting up ammunition at a rate seven times that of the North. The North is using a thousand tons per month and can use those thousand tons, but the South wants to use 54 thousand tons. We cannot support that level. We cannot support giving the South the same amount that the North gets from the Soviet Union and China. So it is difficult for the South to prevail. If we are going to get negotiations, Mr. Secretary, you should force them to a political struggle, because I see no hope over three years.

Fraser: On Cambodia it seems to me all that is left is to negotiate an orderly transition of power to the insurgents. We have the impression we are trying to get more than that. We should ask someone like the French or Waldheim and see what terms it would take for a surrender. If our expectations are high, we may be unrealistic. If I were satisfied that we were doing the right thing, I would consider it. Otherwise we are merely continuing the war and next year it would start all over again.



On Viet-Nam, we have no ability to affect the political situation or the situation in the villages, and we concentrate on the main forces. I received reliable reports that the VC infrastructure is coming back. It is a smoldering fire. Six hundred thousand people came under their control in one month--an overall 10% shift in population but actually a doubling of the population under VC control. The criticism of President Thieu is rising sharply and there are economic difficulties. Thieu is associated with corruption, which is a major political factor. People who were for Thieu in 1971 are now against him.

I went over there to see what the situation is like. Now I am for a general phase out. I would be willing to support more aid if Viet-Nam were moving toward traditional values. The problem is the United States is supporting a regime without regard to our traditional factors. I don't like to tell a country what to do, but if they did move politically to open up it might be easier to get a political accommodation.

The Ambassador we have in Viet-Nam is a first-rate disaster. He is inflexible and is a total spokesman of the Thieu regime. I cannot believe he is an adequate representative for yourself or for the United States. I have talked to others about him and get the same impression. I think he is a problem.

Flynt:

Along the lines of the last statement, I believe we must become more realistic on Viet-Nam. We received substantial reports from Embassy personnel that they are almost prohibited from sending reports to the Ambassador which he does not wish to hear. I must agree he is stifling information which he does not wish to hear. The same is true of the CIA. Pete McCloskey agrees.

Chappell:

I saw the same things as the others, but I did not come to the same conclusions. I



had a most significant visit with Mr. Buu of the Labor Federation. He lost a son in the war. While he opposes Thieu he told us he went all the way with any group that is against Communists. He is a strong anti-Communist. He expressed concern that Thieu was not keeping doors open to the dissidents. He realizes that some are not good, and lean to the other side. While he was critical he still wants to work with Thieu and he asked us to say this to him. We did and Thieu said he would talk to Buu.

President: Is organized labor a major factor in South Viet-Nam?

Chappell: They are an important influence. This man was extremely well-informed and a good contact. He said he had 1-1/2 million members.

Flynt: That may be an exaggeration.

Chappell: Organized labor is still an important factor and can be influential.

Flynt: We have no disagreement on substance.

Chappell: I look at the military factors. I went to the front with General Truong who is very competent. I found high morale and high competence. The defenses were substantial and in general I feel South Viet-Nam has an undeniably strong will to defend itself against the Communists, and I am willing to vote to support them. This is a country which I feared was a welfare leech. I now think there is a good chance they can support themselves, having become self-sufficient in rice and there is oil exploration going on.

President: Do they have a refinery capacity there?

Chappell: Not yet. With oil exploration work in the countryside, and the increase in production, I say they are on an upward trend as far as their economy is concerned. We would make a serious mistake if we did not give aid which they need. They are not asking for open end in aid. There are no troops in Viet-Nam as in Europe. Thieu said if we



help him in the transition period, he will be able to take care of their needs, and I think he is right. So, while the last time I was reluctant to support aid, I now strongly feel we should do all we can. We need to get the facts before the country.

Cambodia is very critical. The best hope is for a negotiated peace, but we need to get help there quickly. It is useless to send food and medicine without ammunition. We found substantial willingness on the part of the soldiers to do the job. The generals are good and the soldiers have a determination to stay with it. Desertion has been decreasing instead of worsening. We should give now to get help to them, so that they can make it through the rainy season. If they can hold their position around Phnom Penh and then open the river, it just might work. We should then look at it again later on. I believe they will hold if we can keep the airport open.

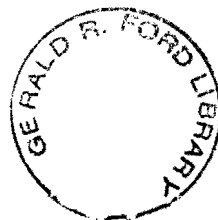
We had the vote in the Appropriation Committee 7-6 or 8-5. I thought we had Coughlin. I had a feeling it was all right, but we will be stronger if we get it with the Authorization Committee and avoid a fight in the Rules Committee. We need to push in the Foreign Affairs Committee.

President: 7-6 or 8-5 in favor?

Chappell: Yes.

Fraser: According to a military briefing, South Viet-Nam may lose two or three provinces and Hue could be isolated. If that happens, it will look as if Viet-Nam is coming apart at the seams and that will lead people to want to write it off.

President: If that happened, should the result be that the United States do less or the United States should try to do more to prevent it?





- Fraser: My impression is that there is not much difference. I am prepared to do a slow phase-out, but I was pointing out this could be a problem.
- McCloskey: There are seven reserve divisions above the DMZ. Three are alerted to move. Truong said that if two of these move they would take Hue and threaten Danang. If they commit them, South Viet-Nam could lose three provinces.
- Bartlett: One thing that impressed all of us was the fact that the refugees in Cambodia were all worrying about the savagery of the Communists and this influenced our thinking. So if there were a military victory by the Khmer Communists, it would be bloody. We should carve out more for medical needs in military aid. We should meet their needs.
- Kissinger: I have to leave because I am on my way to the Middle East. I would like to say one word before I go. First with respect to Cambodia, the tragedy we face is the disension in this country which has produced the situation. Whereas if we can demonstrate that in June and July of 1973 we had negotiations in our grasp, we had China ready to work as a intermediary for the first time. You will remember this was the time of Watergate and there was no good communication with the Congress. Congress cut off the bombing. If they had held off for three months, we would have been in touch with Sihanouk. Within three days of the bombing halt the Chinese refused to pass messages to Sihanouk which we were handing over.

We never put enough in Cambodia to win a military victory. We never did enough to bring it to a conclusion. The events in 1973 were a tragedy. Right now the question is whether the United States can have it on its conscience not to send in arms to a people trying to defend themselves. We have been trying with the Chinese and others for



months. I agree that it must be liquidated by negotiations. We have been trying since October. We had it in our grasp in July 1973.

Since October we are continuing our efforts. We know that Sihanouk has to come back. What is keeping Sihanouk from coming back is the Communists. If there was anything left to Cambodia that Sihanouk could get, he would get it. If we can get through the rainy season, the key will be Sihanouk. The question is whether or not the United States can pull the plug and have it on our conscience.

On Viet-Nam, it was my misfortune to negotiate that with the North Vietnamese for four years. They are hard cases. I wish I could agree to get a political solution instead of a military solution. It was not possible to negotiate a political solution with them without a strong military situation. They are the most devoted, single-minded abrasive Communists I have ever seen. I once took Le Duc Tho to a museum in Hanoi which he had never visited himself. All of the artifacts reminded him of prisons where he had been. We saw something from Vinh and he said that was a good prison but a miserable jailer. He is a dedicated revolutionary. They are hard cases and in some ways rather admirable. Le Duc Tho and all the others have fought all their lives. They will not give up, unless they have to. They must run out. Look at the political options they put forward. For years they said they would not accept Thieu and then they did. Now they say they will not accept the Government of Thieu again.

I agree with Don Fraser, in five years we may see Viet-Nam as we see Cambodia today. We can put in enough or not enough. The strategy problem of South Viet-Nam is different. The North Vietnamese can concentrate on one province and make one victory and it sets up a roller coaster effect. Their



casualties can go up, there can be riots which could make the Government become more repressive, and we would then say that they should broaden their base and then they would not. So if aid is given, we have to face the possibility of a phase-out. I do not like it, but if it has to be done it should be high enough to be relevant to the job. Vietnamization is over with. In Viet-Nam there is a chance. Maybe all the past has been wrong but in the process millions of South Vietnamese have been engaged. We have no legal commitment to give aid. But having negotiated it, there is a strong moral commitment. In 1972 and 1973 everyone said they would fight among themselves. We did tell them--there were no promises--the United States Congress would do enough to help them.

As far as the three-year program is concerned. I have designated Habib to work it out, but it must be done right. We have to give enough to succeed rather than produce a lingering death. The domino theory is unpopular, but when other countries look at it and see U.S. involvement in 1945 and then look at what has happened, other countries see the United States providing no arms for Cambodia and no help for South Viet-Nam, the impact will be strong. Whether we get the bill or not, I do not think we should shave it too close.

President: Henry is leaving, I will want to see him off. I will be back shortly. All of you know of my deep personal conviction. More of you have disagreed with me than have agreed with me. From the beginning I felt we should have a strong worthwhile policy of helping those who help themselves, including Viet-Nam and Cambodia. I have learned more. I have learned of our negotiating efforts. When Phil Habib went up to give the details to the leadership, Cliff Case called and urged me to expose the record to the public. He urged me to ask Congress to act now on



Cambodia. I feel obligated to ask Congress to act now. With the help of Cliff and others, I hope we can act now. With all we have done, it will become a blot on the conscience of the United States. I have talked to Senators Church and Pearson. They took my statement on three years with an adequate program which would end our aid. I agreed to negotiate a figure. If we are going to have a three-year program, we need to do it and do it well. Not by drips. Otherwise there would be an adverse reaction in Southeast Asia. We will have domino effect whether we like it or not, so I will work on Cambodia and Viet-Nam and find an answer we think is right.

(The President and Secretary Kissinger left the room. After a few minutes the President returned to the meeting.)

President: Okay Bella.

Abzug: My trip was important to me. You know of my longstanding opposition. It gave me insights. The tragedy of Cambodia was that we visited on them a war of our doing. I see it in different terms, as a humanitarian obligation. I do not see it in military terms. Our negotiating stance must be to protect those who may be targets of retribution. That would be understandable. Our giving aid when faced with our own problems would not be understandable, but giving humanitarian aid would be acceptable. Congress is not ready but we should change the emphasis, not to have military slaughter which would be the greatest hardship. The situation is lost and I want to minimize additional slaughter. You continue a bloodbath by war, in other ways too. So we should address ourselves to the humane problem and protect them during the takeover. This makes it a realistic proposal. A moral obligation can be made on both levels. Protection in case of a changeover and humanitarian aid.

President: The only question is if we could declare humanitarian aid and shut off military



operations. But, unfortunately we cannot make clear breaks by compartments.

Abzug: We can if we make a statement that we are going to resolve the problem in a peaceful way.

President: I don't know whether you have seen the chronological statement of efforts to negotiate. I can assure you they have been pursued and will continue to be pursued.

Abzug: There is a reality in suffering and I, who oppose, will do what I can. If we hand out military aid it will add to the suffering.

On Viet-Nam, the difficulty I have on the phase-out program is that it is unrealistic. Because I think continuing aid will stiffen the other side and their supporters. I think there is instability underneath and a reluctance on the part of the other side to deal with Thieu. There is also a reluctance to consider the Government without him, and unless an effort is used to obtain a broader-based Government without him, I think progress will not be viable. You can't tell me the other side will not accede. So our stance must be changed. Our Government can use our relations with Russia and China to make a different approach.

The Ambassador has not reflected a meaningful independent position. We have not been properly represented. We have to convince Congress and the people. And we need to show them a different approach. We behave as if it is still our war and seek a victory. We should try to bring about a solution that includes all elements. We will not accomplish that in a military approach.

Murtha: We need a victory there. From an historical standpoint the United States should have a victory there. Take Indonesia for example, which is rich in resources. If North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam were combined, they



would have a dedicated army to dominate that area. We have a strong economic interest and we have given our word.

I went to visit the area where I was for a year in the Marines. General Truong said he was cut back to the bone because of limited supplies. The United States was spending 6,000 tons per day but the Vietnamese are using only 800 tons per day in the same area. The Vietnamese battalion will use up three radio batteries per month whereas we used to draw 9. They are using two hand grenades instead of 5 per man, so he has limited strength to defend. They strictly conserve on artillery. They worry about losing land and increasing casualties. The reason the North Vietnamese action is increasing is because the South Vietnamese have to restrict their actions. They cannot operate in sanctuaries because they have less mobility. It will be a disgrace if we do not give aid. In five years we will end up with an historical blot. Kissinger said to Thieu we would furnish aid. We have an obligation to fulfill it.

President: When were you in Viet-Nam?

Murtha: In 1966. I drove down to Hoi An and the security was good, and it is because of U.S. aid.

Fenwick: For many reasons, not only my campaign promises, but also for my convictions as well, I have been against military aid for many years. It was hard on this trip as I am shaken in my resolution. Cambodia is the third act of a tragedy. China is the key. So long as China furnishes bullets, we are going to have war. I know what efforts you have made. We must redouble our efforts until we find out what China wants.

We say that the Government is inept and corrupt, but that we will provide aid. I am prepared to do so under certain conditions, as part of a plan for peace. If we can hold



off until the rainy season, I would vote for ammunition. If we could get people out in the meantime--such as civil servants, teachers, refugees--I would vote for ammunition. If it is part of some program which would use the Mekong to get out. If we could have a plan to take care of the pitiful people, teachers, lawyers, civil servants, refugees. I don't know what we could do for the millions of refugees, but that kind of responsible action I could conceive would receive acceptance.

Viet-Nam is more complex. I spoke to many dissidents. We did not ask every person if they wanted Communism in Viet-Nam, but of those we did ask, not one did. No dissidents, nor people in prison, etc. What are we going to do to resolve this? I have not made up my mind. I do not say we are going to give them any benefit by allowing Communism to take over. I am not prepared to support Thieu. As far as his press laws are concerned, we should request that he repeal them. The party law is such that it makes it difficult for the people to register a voice. One has the feeling that he only wants to have a one party election. I spoke to Ambassador Martin and he said there is some chance that the appropriate law would be passed. We need an international election team to be present. Ambassador Martin says Thieu will win a free election. Why then won't Thieu do this?

Corruption is an issue. Thieu got rid of some people. There are other parties in Viet-Nam that are independent. There is an opposition in the legislature. The elements of some kind of a viable government are not lacking. There are no mass parties, only mass groups like the Buddhists, Catholics and the Cao Dai. We ought to put a person in charge of anti-corruption, maybe a political figure.

If you asked who could replace Thieu, that is an unsettling question because there is no one. I find myself sharing McCloskey and Fraser's view - that is we can't vote money without seeing a viable solution. We need a plan. For example



in Cambodia, we should get in touch with the UN.

The PRG gave me their terms. Forget it. They asked us to get rid of Thieu and stop aid. They said the Paris Accords are not a reality. They will have to be renegotiated.

I cannot go along with the idea of a phased-out aid program. I cannot see where it leads. The reality is China, whether or not it supplies the arms.

President: If you have reservations about a phase-out, would you stop period?

Fenwick: Not so. I will regret my vote no matter which way I vote.

President: Let me reiterate. I am grateful that you went, including those who came back with unfavorable views. I am impressed with the suggestions. We will take them into consideration - some of the important suggestions. If we could sort them out as clear-cut, but I am afraid I feel the United States must make a maximum effort, including some of what you suggested. We need to be forthright and strong in Cambodia, moving toward negotiations. In Viet-Nam the three-year aid cut-off must be adequately financed. It has better than a 50-50 chance. As I look at the past, present and future, our country must be strong and forthright and at the same time as humane and flexible as we can be.

Flynt: Most of us want to support you as much as we can.

President: You will be influential.

Fraser: I have a suggestion. Would you find it useful to bring in as consideration for policy some people who could serve in an advisory role? Responsible people who come to the problem with a different approach and who can help, like Paul Warnecke?

President: We will use every conceivable suggestion. It is a critical situation which is a broad national problem. We will not rule out any help on a national problem.





16

CONFIDENTIAL/NODIS

ACTION

March 17, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: WILLIAM E. STEARMAN *WES*

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Meeting of the President with the Congressional Delegation which Visited Southeast Asia

Attached for your approval is a memorandum of conversation (Tab A) prepared by the State Department on the President's March 5 meeting with eight members of the Congress who recently visited South Vietnam and Cambodia.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the memcon at Tab A.

APPROVE *WES*

DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guid. 105

By *UT*, NARA, Date 1/20/00



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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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March 12, 1975

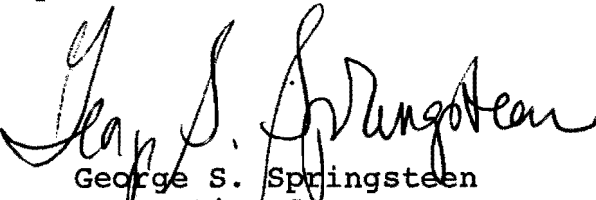
UNCLASSIFIED  
(with CONFIDENTIAL/NODIS attachment)

MEMORANDUM FOR LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Memorandum of Conversation between  
the President, the Secretary of  
State and the Congressional  
Delegation which Visited Viet-Nam  
and Cambodia

Attached for approval is a memorandum of  
conversation covering the President's meeting  
with the members of the Congressional Delegation  
which visited Viet-Nam and Cambodia from  
February 25 to March 3, 1975.

A copy of this memorandum is being provided  
to the Secretary of State. It is being handled  
as NODIS within the Department.

  
George S. Springsteen  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

Memorandum of Conversation  
of March 5, 1975.

UNCLASSIFIED  
(with CONFIDENTIAL/NODIS attachment)



NSC CORRESPONDENCE PROFILE

DOC		RECD		G NBR		INITIAL ACTION NO	
MO	DA	MO	DA	HR	7501543		Stearman
3/12	3/13	10					

SOURCE/CLASS/DESCRIPTION

TO: PRES \_\_\_\_\_ FROM: KISSINGER, H \_\_\_\_\_  
 KISSINGER \_\_\_\_\_ COLBY, W \_\_\_\_\_  
 SCOWCROFT X \_\_\_\_\_ SCHLESINGER, J \_\_\_\_\_  
 DAVIS \_\_\_\_\_ ST EX SEC X \_\_\_\_\_

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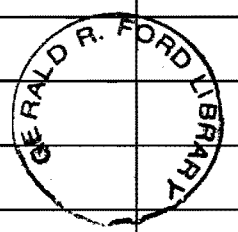
SUBJECT: MEMCON, Pres + Congressional Delegation to SEA,

DISTRIBUTION/INITIAL ACTION ASGMT

INTERNAL ROUTING AND DISTRIBUTION			REC CY FOR	ACTION REQUIRED
	ACTION	INFO		
ADVANCE CYS TO HAK/SCOWCROFT				MEMO FOR HAK <u>Senfor</u> <u>X</u>
STAFF SECRETARY				MEMO FOR PRES _____
FAR EAST <u>Stearman</u>	<u>X</u>		<u>X</u>	REPLY FOR _____
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA				APPROPRIATE ACTION _____
MID EAST / NO. AFRICA / SO. ASIA				MEMO _____ TO _____
EUROPE / CANADA				RECOMMENDATIONS _____
LATIN AMERICA				JOINT MEMO _____
UNITED NATIONS				REFER TO _____ FOR: _____
ECONOMIC				ANY ACTION NECESSARY? _____
SCIENTIFIC				CONCURRENCE _____
PROGRAM ANALYSIS				DUE DATE: <u>3/18</u>
NSC PLANNING				COMMENTS: (INCLUDING SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS)
CONGRESSIONAL		<u>X</u>	<u>✓</u>	
OCEANS POLICY				
INTELLIGENCE			<u>✓</u>	

SUBSEQUENT ROUTING/ACTIONS

DATE	FROM	TO	S	SUBSEQUENT ACTION REQUIRED (OR TAKEN):	CY TO
3/17		Senfor	X	Decision (3/28)	
3/31		NSC/IS	C	Scowcroft approved memcon	



NSC/S INSTR

DISPATCH \_\_\_\_\_  
 CY RQMTS: SEE ABOVE PLUS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NOTIFY \_\_\_\_\_ & DATE \_\_\_\_\_ BY \_\_\_\_\_  
 SPECIAL DISPOSITION: \_\_\_\_\_  
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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4.

MR 91-16, #9 NSC 94r 8/20/92  
By KBH NARA, Date 9/25/92

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald Ford  
Congressional Vietnam Delegation:  
Senator Dewey Bartlett (R-Okla)  
Representative John Flynt, Jr. (D-Ga)  
Representative Paul McCloskey, Jr. (R-CA)  
Representative Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ)  
Representative Bella Abzug (D-NY)  
Representative Donald Fraser (D-Minn)  
Representative William Chappell (D-Fla)  
Representative John Murtha (D-PA)

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and  
Assistant to the President for National Security  
Affairs

Mr. John O. Marsh, Counsellor to the President  
Mr. Max Friedersdorf, Assistant to the President  
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to  
the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, March 5, 1975  
11:15 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office  
The White House



President: Did you find President Thieu amenable to any of your suggestions?

Flynt: My conversation on this was all on the last day. It was agreed that his political base had to be broadened to bring more of the operation into the Government.

Bartlett: Chappell and I also talked to Thieu before we left. We had been asked to by the anti-Thieu loyal Vietnamese -- General Minh, the Labor leader. We suggested that Thieu broaden his base to add advisors who are loyal but are not Thieu supporters. He said he got the information.

McCloskey: This was my fourth trip there. I was surprised by what I saw. Vietnamization has succeeded from a military standpoint. It is a superb fighting force. But these things are disturbing: The South has two times

the manpower, they are firing 7 - 1 the artillery, the killed-in-action is double for the North. Yet the North has a tremendous will to fight and the terrain favors them. As you know, we supported giving military aid by 6 - 2. We were even shocked by Cambodia. If it collapses, there will be a massacre. We don't know whether the perimeter can hold. But DOD is asking for some ammunition that Vietnam is using. I don't know whether we can get the votes. I would suggest you withdraw the \$300 [million] because I don't think you can get it and I think it would hurt. But in the long term -- three years -- I think they will lose to the North. They are firing in a 7-1 ratio. I think we could get through the Congress the same kind of aid as the North gets, but that is not enough. So I think you should force negotiations now and not in three years.

Don Fraser: I fear that what we are negotiating is how to transfer power peacefully to the Communists. I am willing to support aid that is enough to allow that to happen. If our goals are higher, we are misled.

On Vietnam, I think there is underreporting on the political changes. I have a report that the Viet Cong infrastructure is coming back to life in the Delta. Even the Government of Vietnam reports a 10% shift in the population. The criticism of Thieu is rising. As the economic situation is bad, complaints grow and Thieu's tie to the corruption is hurting. I would support more aid to Vietnam if I thought the regime was more willing to liberalize in Western values. I don't like to tell others how to behave, but I am reluctant to support those who act in opposition to our political values. I fear that Thieu is moving in the wrong direction. I think Martin is a disaster. He is a total spokesman for Thieu.

Bartlett: I wrote that State must become more realistic on the situation in South Vietnam. We read reports from Embassy people that the Ambassador wouldn't receive reports he didn't agree with. Pete seconds this.

Chappell: I am more optimistic. I saw the same things and perhaps come to a different conclusion. I spoke to \_\_\_\_\_ who is opposed to Thieu but is a strong anti-communist. His fear was that Thieu is not keeping the doors to dissidents open enough. He wanted to work more with Thieu. We reported that \_\_\_\_\_ to Thieu and he agreed he would do his best.

President: Is organized labor a big factor?

Chappell: It would be an important factor in any election.



Bartlett: I would say a factor, but not a big one.

Chappell: I think Thieu is determined to improve. We looked in detail at the military situation. We found competent generals and high morale. In general, I think South Vietnam has an unusually strong will to defend against Communism and I am willing to support their efforts to do it. I had thought of Vietnam as a leech. I have changed completely. They are a strong country, a strong people and in a few years they could be self-sufficient. They are already in rice, and there are promising oil explorations.

President: Are there any refineries?

Chappell: Not yet, but they could be put in easily. For example, they have taken the refugees, put them through training programs, put them into the countryside, fishing, etc., where they could be productive. I think we would be making a serious mistake not to give them the aid they need. Thieu is not asking for an open-ended situation. He wants to help them in this transition situation.

I was before a reluctant supporter, but now I am a strong one. I think we should do whatever we can to strengthen the fight against communism in that area. Cambodia is desperate. But what we can hope for is a negotiation. But we must get enough food and ammunition in there to keep them going. We found a lot of esprit in the troops. Desertions are down. If we would act now to get help in.... The Communists are making an all-out effort now. If they fail, and they hold, I believe Cambodia has a chance.

We had the votes yesterday, 8 - 5 or 7 - 6 is the worst. But it was decided we would be better to go the regular way to get this thing authorized.

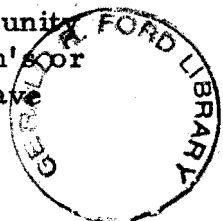
Fraser: Our briefings indicated that South Vietnam could lose 2 - 3 more provinces this spring and Hue would be isolated. If that happened it would look like Vietnam was falling apart.

President: So what is your suggestion?

Frazer: I only mention this because it could result in a pull-out syndrome.

McCloskey: Seven reserve divisions could at least isolate the northern provinces.

Kissinger: Could I say a word? The tragedy we face is that the disunity in this country means that had we followed either the Administration's or the opposition's strategy we might be better off. But as it is, we have done first but not enough.



We never tried for a military solution in Cambodia. We did at first enough to keep them alive. In the 1930's, 98% of the people praised Chamberlain -- two years later he was a pariah. I don't know how the people will treat those who led them to disasters, even if it was done in response to popular feelings.

The obstacle to Sihanouk coming back is the Communists, not us. If we get to the rainy season we will have to make the best deal possible.

Can the United States have on its conscience pulling the plug on Vietnam? That is the question. It is easy to say get a political not a military solution. But from my experience with the North Vietnamese, you can negotiate with them only if there is a convergence of forces. When I was visiting a museum in Hanoi with Le Duc Tho, every exhibit of an archaeological excavation in the museum reminded him of a prison he had been in. He had spent most of his life in French prisons. Unless they have run out of military options, they won't negotiate.

I agree with what Don said. In five years we may see Vietnam in the position Cambodia is in now. We go on just not giving enough. The North can concentrate in one place and Thieu must defend a 700-mile border. There is a lot of moralizing -- "Thieu gets more repressive." We press him and he eases up not from conviction but to get aid -- and that is taken in Vietnam as a sign of weakness.

I would urge that we do what is right -- give enough to give it some chance to succeed rather than doom them to a lingering death. The domino theory is discredited. But if we let these people down, the impact on the United States in the world would be very serious indeed.

President: Henry has to leave now for the Middle East. I will go out and then come back and finish. You know my conviction from my House days. It has always been that we should help those who want to help themselves. I have learned more, but my conviction now is deeper. It is interesting to note that when Case (you know his feeling) saw the negotiating record he wanted it made public and he urged aid for Cambodia. We have a fighting chance. If we don't move, we don't have a chance. It will be a blot on the conscience of the United States. I spoke to Church and Passman about my statement. We agreed to negotiate a figure. That figure has to be adequate. We must do it well or concede that our policies will have an adverse effect in Southeast Asia and actually have a divisive effect. We need to find a way to do what is right.

[The Secretary leaves]





Abzug: My trip was important to me although you know my opposition. The tragedy of Cambodia was striking. We have an obligation, but I see it as a humanitarian one. I think military aid only brings more suffering. I, too, worry about what the takeover will bring, and I think one purpose of the negotiation must be to prevent retribution. I think the American people would accept a massive humanitarian effort, but not to continue the military slaughter. There is no way out -- it is lost and we want to minimize a bloodbath, and military aid maximizes that. We have a moral obligation and to protect them in the event of a changeover. Anything else will be misunderstood and make things worse.

President: If we could divide it, that would be fine. But we can't make that clean a break.

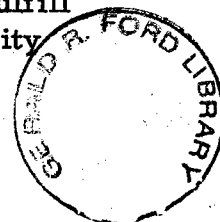
Abzug: You can if we make a realistic appraisal.

President: I don't know if you have yet seen our negotiating efforts. They have been pursued and will be.

Abzug: I agree with Don that the basis of negotiation may not be there. Giving military aid is a gesture and doesn't solve the situation. On Vietnam, the difficulty I have with the three-year idea is that it will stiffen the resistance of the South. Unless we broaden the government and maybe remove Thieu, there is no hope. If we increase aid, the other side will. Why don't we look at a different diplomatic approach? We have not as of now been prepared to offer a realistic negotiation. I see the possibility to convince the American people only if we change our objectives. We still behave as if it were our war and we have to bring about a victory.

Murtha: I want to reinforce what Secretary Kissinger said. I think it is imperative we have a victory in the United States. The rest of the world is watching us. Southeast Asia is rich in resources and people. If North Vietnam wins they will have a strong army dedicated to communism.

The army has been cut back to the bone because of shortages. The United States' forces there used 6,000 rounds a day, the ARVN is using 800, to defend the same territory. They are now making efforts to conserve ammunition, so their casualties have increased, and they are losing land which will have to be taken back at great expense. If we don't give them aid we will end up with a historic blot on the record of the United States. I think the American people know that. We have an obligation to fulfill our words. There is no doubt about the improvement in the security situation since I was there before.



Fenwick: I have been against our military activities for many years. This trip has been hard because I am shaken in my conviction. In Cambodia, we are in on the third act. The key is China. As long as China sends bullets, there is no end. It doesn't matter who is sitting in Phnom Penh. Can't we redouble our efforts to see what China wants for the area?

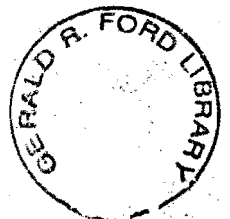
I will vote for military aid only if it is part of some program to settle the situation. We have to have a way to get the small people out -- the non-coms, the teachers, lawyers, refugees, civil servants. If we could organize with Thieu and South Vietnam to take these people, I would vote for military aid. I feel the United States best serves its own prestige by that kind of action.

In Vietnam, no dissident I talked to wanted to see the communists win in Vietnam. It doesn't matter how opposed they were to Thieu. That being the case, what do we do? I don't know. I am in an agony of spirit. We don't benefit the people by allowing a takeover that no one wants. Thieu's press law and the law restricting parties must be reprovod. Finally, I think Thieu should ask international observers in to monitor the elections. Martin says Thieu would win. If so, why wouldn't he let it? Now the corruption -- the elements of some kind of viable system are there, but there is no mass support for the parties. Only the Catholics, the Buddhists and the Cao Dai have mass support. The reality is there is no substitute for Thieu. We can't continue to vote money where we don't see the hope for a viable solution.

In Cambodia we must get to the UN, the refugee committee and plan to get the people out. I don't know what to recommend in Vietnam. I don't agree with Don to phase out because I don't know where it will lead us.

President: Let me reiterate. I am grateful that you went, including those of you who came back with negative views. I am impressed with your sincerity. We will take account of your suggestions. I wish we could sort things out as easily as some people think. I think the United States must make a maximum effort -- being forthright and strong and in Cambodia arriving at a negotiation. In Vietnam, I am willing to go along with a three-year cutoff. I think that gives them better than a 50-50 chance of making it. I think our country must be strong and forthright and forthcoming in negotiation.

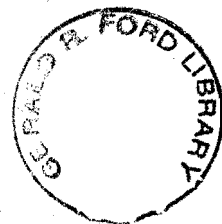
Bartlett: We want to support you and help achieve support in the Congress and the public.



Fraser: If you could pull in people who have had a different approach -- like Paul Warnke -- you might get some more support on this side of the aisle.

President: We won't rule out any suggestion.

[The meeting concluded]



5 Mar 75

Wm

(Come in late)

February

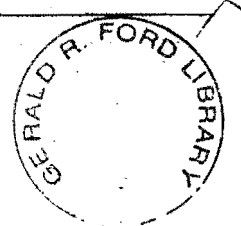
P Did you find Thieu somewhat of a guy of your suggestion

My conversation on this was all on last day. It was agreed that a line had to be drawn between doing more of a spectrum into a Govt

Buntlett Chappell & I also talked to Thieu before we left. We had been asked to try anti-Thieu loyal Vietnamese Gen Minh, habe leader. We suggested Thieu broaden his base to add advisors who are loyal but not Thieu supporters. He said he got a info

one. Clotkey

the way of a top. I surprised by what I saw. <sup>personnel was somewhat</sup> VNg has succeeded. It is a tough fighting force. There are disturbing; South has 2 times a tonnage, they firing 7-1 ratio, KIA double in North. Yet the North has tremendous will to fight & a terrain favors them. As you know, we requested mil aid 6-2. We were shocked by Cambodia. If it collapses there will be a massacre. ~~As we don't know~~ whether perimeter can hold. But DOD asking for some arms that are VN using. I don't know whether we can get a veto. I would suggest you withdraw a 300 cause I don't think you can get it and I think it would hurt - but as long term - 3 yrs - I think they will lose to north. They firing 7-1 ratio. I think we could get them a very same level of aid as North gets, but that not enough. So I think you should force negotiations now - not in 3 yrs.



Does Fraser  
Fraser

I fear that what we negotiating is how to transfer power peacefully to Castro. I am willing to support and even to allow that to happen. If our goals are higher, as are needed.

START →

On VAC, I think there is considerable negotiating and pol change. I have report that US infrastructure is coming back to life in Delta. Even SVN reports a 10% shift in population. Corruption of Thieu is rising. As soon as set back, complaints grow & Thieu tie to corruption is hurting. I would support more aid to VN if I thought a regime was more willing to liberate in Western values. Don't like to tell others how to behave, but reluctant to support those who act in opposition to our political values. I fear Thieu is moving in wrong direction.

I think Thieu is a disaster. He is total system for Thieu.

Northcutt

I would like that State must become more realistic on sit in SVN. We need reports from Emb pleth that Army wouldn't receive reports he didn't agree w/.

Chappell

I was optimistic. I have some things & perhaps come to diff. conclusions. I spoke to \_\_\_\_\_ who opposed to Thieu but a strong anti-comm. His fear was that Thieu not keeping doors to channels open open enough. He wanted to work more w/ Thieu. He reported that to Thieu & he agreed he would do his best.

P I disagreed like a big factor.

Chappell

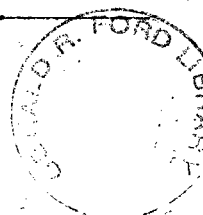
It would be an <sup>important</sup> factor in any election.

Northcutt

I would say a factor, but not a big one.

Chappell

I think Thieu determined to resign. We looked in detail at mil sit, we found very potent goals & high morale. In 7 and I think SVN has one



unusually strong will to depend on them & I  
am willing to support their efforts to do it. I  
had that of an over beach. I have changed completely.  
They are a strong country, strong people in a  
few years they could be self suff. They are  
in line, there are pressing and replication

P Any spring?

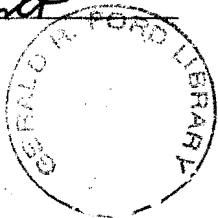
Chappell Not yet, but could be put in early. For example, they  
have taken a refugees, put them in training camps,  
put them in countryside, fishing, etc, where  
they could be productive. I think we be making  
serious mistake not to give them and they  
need. Then not asking for open ended aid.  
He wants help then this transition set. I  
before a relief supplies, more so a strong one.  
I think we should do whatever we can to stop the  
a fight against them in that area.  
Cambodia is desperate. But we can help for a  
a while. But we must get enough food & arms  
in there to keep them going. We found a great  
in a troops. Desertions are down. If we would  
act now to get help in - we are making almost  
effort now. If they hold, & they hold, I believe Cambodia  
has a chance.

We had a vote yesterday. 2-5 vs 7-6 a vote.  
But it decided we be better to go a regular way  
to get this thing authorized.

Fraser One briefing indicated that SOR could lose 2-3 more  
promises this spring & have isolated. If that happened  
it could look like the US falling apart.

P So what is your suggestion

Fraser I only mention this because it could result



in a full out syndrome.

McC (7 reserve divisions could at least control a western  
province)

~~Flight~~

A Could I say a word. The tragedy was face at that  
a division in this country means that had we followed  
either a administrative or operational strategy we might  
be better off. But as it is we have done just  
not enough.

(Uganda in '73)

We were tried for total solution in Cameroon.  
We did not fail to bring the down.

90% of people praised the operation - 2 yrs later for  
was a parade. I don't know how people treat  
those ---

The obstacle to Sikemak working back to control,  
not now if you get the security issues we will  
have to consider but shall possible.

Can the US know or its concerns pulling the plug.  
On UN. Every to say get a ful with a total solution.  
You can negotiate with them only if there is an emergence  
of forces.

(he says I know - prison + guerrilla states)

Unless they have removal of total options, they won't  
negotiate.

I agree w/ what Dan said. But you can see  
see UN in position involved is now. We agree  
just not going enough. The North can concentrate  
the in place it falls to them most defend  
200 miles. (Described merely - I think gets  
more expression. We pass him to the edges up  
not from evacuation but to get it back - that later



as sign of weakness)

I would say that we do what is right - give  
enough to give it some chance to succeed rather  
than down them to bringing death.

Downing them is discredited. Best if we let these  
people down, ~~people~~ <sup>people</sup> ~~in support of~~ <sup>in support of</sup> US in world  
would be very serious setback.

P ~~What~~ If it has to be done, I would go out & then  
come back & finish.

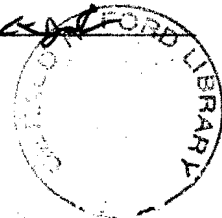
You know my conviction <sup>from Howard Long</sup>. It has always been  
that we should help those who want to help themselves.  
I have learned more, but my conviction never  
changes. It interests & notes that when Case (you  
know his policy) saw a negot record he wanted it  
made public & he negot aid for Cambodia.

We have a fighting chance. If not last move, we  
don't have a chance. It will be a blot on  
conscience of US.

I spoke to Church/P. about my statement. We  
agreed to negot a paper. That paper has to  
be adequate. We must do it well or course  
our policies will have adverse effect in SE Asia  
actually have a dramatic effect. We need to  
find a way to do what is right.

(K leaves)

Bella My trip was important to me tho you know my  
opposition. The tragedy of Cambodia was striking.  
We have an obligation, but I see it as human  
conscience. I think that only being more  
suffering. I too worry about what to do and will  
try, and I think we negot must be to  
prevent retaliation. I think US people would accept





massive humanitarian effort, but not of countries  
with sloughing. There is no way out - it is lost  
and we want to minimize bloodshed - not and  
maximize that. We have several objectives to  
protect in event of changeover. Anything else will  
be restricted & made things worse

1 If we could divide - that would be fine, but we can't  
make that clear a break.

A You can if we make a declaration of journal. >

P I don't know if you have yet seen our report effects.  
They have been pursued & will be

A I agree w/ Don the basis of negot<sup>ing</sup> is not to three.  
Giving oil and is gesture & doesn't solve it.

P In UK, the dip I have w/ Joyce idea is that  
it will stiffen our resistance for north. Unless  
we broaden a offer quite & maybe remove things,  
there is no hope. If we increase oil, cotton will  
will. The great thing hasn't created why don't we look  
at a dip day approach. We had not as of now  
been prepared to offer a substantive report.

I see possibility to compromise on people only if we  
change our objectives. We still believe oil it  
will cover arms & we have to bring about a solution.

Murtha

Murtha I want to reinforce what K said. I think it important  
we have a strategy in US. The rest of world is  
watching us. ~~SEA~~ SEA is rich in resources &  
people. If NAM was they will have a strong  
dedication to arms.

The Army has cut back to a loss because of  
shortages. US used 6000 ST/day, Army using  
800, to depend some territory (Cited overwriting)  
Capacities have increased, they losing land which



would have to be taken back at great expense.  
If we don't give them aid we will end up w/ a  
historic blot on US. I think US people know  
that. We have obligation to fulfill our words.  
There is no doubt about our government's sincerity  
at this time here.

Franz I have been against our mail activities for many years.  
The situation here has been shaken in  
my conviction. Cambodia we are on 3<sup>rd</sup> act.  
The key is China. As long as China sends  
bullets, there is no end. It doesn't matter who  
sitting in P.L. Court we should have efforts to see  
what China wants for a area.

I will vote for mail aid only if it part of some  
plan to settle it. We have to have a way to  
get the small people out - <sup>teachers, lawyers</sup> ~~business~~,  
contractors. If we could organize w/ them + SVN  
to take these people, I would vote for mail aid. I feel  
US best serves its own prestige by that kind  
of action.

VN. No dissident wanted to see courts in VN. Doesn't  
matter how opposed to them. That being a case, what  
do we do? I don't know. I am in an agony  
of spirit. We don't benefit a people by allowing  
them to see what we want. The press laws  
and restricting parties must be repealed.

Finally I think there should be with observers  
in to monitor elections. Inaction says they  
would win. If so, why wouldn't we let it?

Trans corruption - The elements of some kind of  
market system are there, but there is no mass  
support for parties. Only Catholic, Buddhist & Cao Dai



have mass support. The reality is there is  
no substitute for them.

We can't continue to vote money where we don't  
see a hope for a viable solution. In Cambodia  
we must get to UN, Wjaya ~~can't~~ & please get  
people out.

I don't know what to recommend in UN. I don't  
agree w/ Dara phase out because I don't know where  
it will lead to.

P Let me reiterate - I appreciate your interest - incl those  
who come back w/ negative views. I'm impressed w/ your  
sincerity. We will take account of your suggestions  
I wish we could sort things out as easily as some  
of you think. I think we must make max  
effort - being forthright & strong in Cambodia  
aiming at a negot. In UN, looking to go along  
w/ 3 yr cutoff. I think that gives them better  
than 50-50 chance of reaching it. I think  
our country must be strong & forthright  
& forthright in negot.

Bunker M We want to support you & <sup>advice</sup> support in  
Cory and public

Fraser If you could pull in people who have had dif  
experience - like Paul Wankar - you might  
get some more support on this side of the

P We want rule out any sug.

