

## THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION  
KISSINGER/NETWORKS BRIEFING

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and  
Assistant to the President for National Security  
Affairs  
Marvin Kalb, CBS-TV  
Tom Jarriel, ABC-TV  
Ted Koppel, ABC-TV  
Richard Valeriani, NBC-TV  
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant  
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, April 10, 1975  
6:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: President's Foreign Policy Speech to the Congress

Kissinger: Let me explain to you what we are trying to do and why we have made these particular recommendations.

We have two problems: The tragedy of Vietnam and the conduct of United States' foreign policy in the face of the difficulties of Vietnam. There are two problems -- the management of Vietnam and keeping our foreign policy so that it is carried out with design, conviction and purpose. We cannot avoid the tragedy of Vietnam by denying that it has any foreign policy importance. But we can assure that the basic structure and conduct of our foreign policy remain strong.

On Vietnam we have several concerns.

On the domestic scene we are aware of the polls, but the President feels he will be judged by history, not just by the polls. There is the impact of the speech in Vietnam itself, which he has to consider. Also, there is an international audience. Each has its own requirements and consequences. Then there is how a country conducts itself in a crisis. There has been a military disaster in Vietnam caused by many factors in which it is idle to deny that our action played a role. That is not to blame us; there was also the massive attack and the faulty execution of the withdrawal.



South Vietnam now faces a large North Vietnamese force whose intentions are uncertain.

The President's judgments don't rest on legal commitments or any secret commitments -- which we never tried to assert. The commitment results from a decade of close cooperation with tens of thousands of people who committed themselves to us.

Weyand thought that there was a chance that the situation could be stabilized. The President had to look at the broader picture, and knowing the military estimate from Vietnam, they have been in enormous proportion. If he asked for anything, it had to be for something which made some rational sense.

The President is aware it is within his power to trigger the collapse in Saigon. He is aware that if he reflected what most Americans want, he would trigger that. If he did, even those who were in favor would recoil. We have a deep moral obligation -- not based on secret commitments, but on the whole character of our relationship.

This is the analysis the President went through. What could he do? He could stop everything and bring about an immediate collapse and with profoundly tragic consequences. Or he could take a figure between zero and \$722 million -- and any one is as good as any other. He chose the figure he could justify concretely, in terms of:

- (1) a chance for stabilizing,
- (2) what gives the best prospects for negotiations,
- (3) what gives the best chance for extricating Americans, and
- (4) what gives the best chance to make an effort to save some of those tens of thousands of Vietnamese who relied on us.

We are not seeking a national blame, or a scapegoat. We want to get on with our business in the world, so we want to lay it out honestly in a way which makes sense. Vietnam will not paralyze the policy of the United States.

The President thought that the figures he was asking for were best suited to the objectives of all groups in the country. It also avoids the moral decision that people elsewhere no longer have the right to fight.

We have given Congress deadlines. We have no intention of starting a debate on who lost what. It is a statement of a serious man on how to handle a tragic situation.



In the second part of the speech he is setting out an agenda for our foreign policy which will be carried out whatever happens in Vietnam. Vietnam will have an effect, but if we come together, we can accomplish our goals of moving the world toward a global and lasting peace. That is the philosophy and background of the speech.

Jarriel: Does the figure represent Congressional consultation?

Kissinger: The President met with the leaders yesterday and outlined his proposal. He didn't bargain; he set forth what he thought was right. He did consider consulting, but decided it was impossible, whether they were close to him or far off. In the latter case they would then be affronted if he went ahead against their view; if they were close, he would have to negotiate. The military situation may make any amount moot, but he wanted to do what was right in any case.

Koppel: Is there any appraisal that Congress will grant anything near this or within the deadlines?

Kissinger: The judgment was that a deadline was required if this is to make any sense. And not to repeat the Cambodian situation which dragged on without end.

Kalb: Is the nine days how soon Congress can act or how long Saigon can hold?

Kissinger: Both.

\_\_\_\_\_ : What is this evacuation?

Kissinger: No, it is just a thinning out.

\_\_\_\_\_ : How many are you talking about if there is an evacuation?

Kissinger: This is a heartbreaking problem. The optimum list would be over a million. Those whose lives are clearly in danger are between 100,000 and 200,000. I am not saying this will happen, but we can't plan that it won't.

\_\_\_\_\_ : How about next year?

Kissinger: I have not made an independent assessment of the amount. The Department of Defense thinks \$1.2 billion is probably about right.



Kalb: How about the French negotiation proposal?

Kissinger: The French proposal is not new. The political framework in Saigon is not for us to determine. And a negotiation is up to the Vietnamese parties.

Koppel: How about an evacuation? If there is a deterioration, and fighting to get aboard?

Kissinger: It is a nightmare. We are thinking about a deterioration. But we can't even rationally discuss the subject with the Government of Vietnam without doing what we are doing.

Koppel: ARVN won't fight a rearguard action while the leaders get on the aircraft. Will you use Marines?

Kissinger: The President is asking for that authorization. We are planning to do it under the best possible circumstances. We will do what we can.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Isn't asking for \$700 million and a vote in one week an attempt to blame Congress?

Kissinger: The amounts of money have not affected the intensity of the debate. We should get it done in a hurry because we do have other heavy responsibilities in our foreign policy.

Valeriani: Do you think there is any chance of getting \$1 billion?

Kissinger: I think there is a chance Congress will work with us to get a substantial amount. We are not trying to saddle Congress with anything. There is an emergency in Vietnam. We can't go through the Cambodian experience. The funds are needed now. We aren't after a negative vote just to get it over with. We are saying this approach is best whether you want to get out, negotiate, or stay in.

\_\_\_\_\_ : How can Congress clarify the restriction?

Kissinger: There are two laws involved. We think it is legal to go in to extract Americans. We have no authority to evacuate Vietnamese.

Kalb: Would we have to fight the ARVN?

Kissinger: There are many scenarios: a Vietnamese feeling of betrayal or a cooperative effort. How it comes out will be partly determined by our actions.



Valeriani: How about the reactions around the world?

Kissinger: If a statesman was worried, the last thing he would want to get in his press is stories which would help confirm his fears, anyway.

What can be achieved will depend importantly on the military situation, and on how one behaves. The prospects obviously are not brilliant.

I won't speculate on the political evolution in Saigon. Some sort of negotiation is probable as the situation evolves and it will depend significantly on the military situation.





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Koppel - How about war, distribution & fighting  
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But we can't even remotely discuss a  
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Koppel ARVN would fight rearguard action while  
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