

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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CABINET MEETING

DATE & TIME: Wednesday - April 16, 1975
2:30 p.m.

PLACE: The Cabinet Room
The White House

President: There are several items to discuss. The one that is of overriding importance is Southeast Asia. Henry?

Kissinger: Let me summarize where we are, the thoughts behind your speech to the Congress last Thursday, and where we go.

You know what is happening in South Vietnam now. We believe that the cuts in supplies being provided to the South Vietnamese and the upheavals in the United States, and so on, led to a North Vietnamese decision to go all out, in flagrant violation of the Paris Accords. Until January, our intelligence did not indicate this was to be an all-out push. This is a case where American domestic actions influenced a foreign government. In the face of his situation, Thieu ordered a retreat into more defensible enclaves. The retreat was carried out badly and led to these tragic consequences.

The one question now being asked is how the United States will conduct itself now after 15 years of support -- after even [in 1963] overthrowing a government that was suspected of wanting to deal with the North. If the President had opted just for humanitarian assistance, he would have had to do it in the knowledge that it would have created panic and negated our real commitment to the people who relied on us. The President opted for both economic and military aid, because it was the best course to take regardless of the outcome -- whether it is an evacuation, stabilization of the military situation, or a negotiation which gives them at least a modicum of opportunity to have a say about their own fate. The only figure of any viability was Weyand's figure. The \$300 million figure, if we had simply made the same request, would have been met with the argument that it was the same as before the tragedy

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
NSC Memo. 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By luk, NARA, Date 1/22/00



and thus was clearly inadequate. The issue in the Senate appropriation was not the amount but the concept. It is a matter of consequence to us and the world how we manage our exit.

What is the impact on the world situation? It is often said that those who say this affects us are producing the effect; they don't read the cables. It has a profound impact on others' perceptions of our judgment, our constancy, and the wisdom of the United States. Leaders who hardly know Indochina are asking what it means.

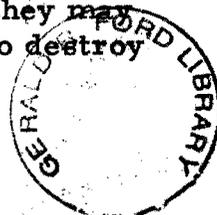
There is nothing we can do about the past, but it is important how we react to this. Will we withdraw? Will we give up our commitments and our leadership? The worst mistake we could make now is to say we are undertaking a global reassessment. What we are seeing in Vietnam are special circumstances of a commitment that was perhaps unwisely entered into, circumstances of executive weakness here, and so on, none of which could be predicted. To generalize from this would be disastrous in all areas. There can be a domino effect not related to Vietnam but to our competence in foreign policy. We must conduct our foreign policy with confidence and assurance, reiterating our commitments.

The basic foreign policy of this country is sound. Our alliances ^{are} good, our relations with the Soviet Union are okay. In energy, food, raw materials, we still have the decisive voice. Our problem is getting the authority to do what is needed. If we can get the moral authority that is required, we can have a year and a half of foreign policy achievements. So long as faith in the United States -- that means faith in ourselves -- remains, we can overcome. We have had a setback but we can overcome it and have a productive period of foreign policy.

President: Jim, would you update us on the military situation?

Schlesinger: Last Friday night we executed Eagle Pull in Cambodia. It went smoothly. It was delayed chiefly because of the surprising decision of most of the GKR -- even those on the death list -- not to leave. Eagle Pull has been planned since 1970. Had there been an attack, we would have returned the fire. The President has that legal authority under the Constitution. The behavior of the Cambodians has been very brave.

In Vietnam, the North Vietnamese keep charging this is a civil war -- that they have no forces in the South, and so on. For these reasons they may decide not to assault Saigon directly, but they probably will try to destroy the GVN army. It is fighting well but it is in a weaker position.



President: Thanks, Jim. Most of you know what I said last Thursday. We have been trying to get the military and economic aid and authority to evacuate South Vietnamese. Congress thus far has shown no meaningful cooperation. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has proposed a \$200 million emergency fund for a not very flexible interpretation, with other provisions that are not very helpful. My judgment is that amount is as bad as nothing. I intend to stick to my request in dollars and authority. If the Congress sticks to its indicated attitude, it could lead to dire circumstances. We must be consistent. We asked for the right program. I hope the Congress comes through.

But I want no one here to talk about evacuation. That is a codeword in Saigon for a bug-out. It is my hope that we can get the dollars and the authority, to stabilize the situation and hopefully get negotiations started.

I want to thank Henry and Jim for their efforts. It hasn't been easy but they are carrying out the right policy and I think history will demonstrate the wisdom of our course.

Kissinger: I want to read to you the letter we received from Sirik Matak, one of the Cambodian leaders, to our Ambassador when our Ambassador invited him to leave with the evacuation: "Dear Excellency and Friend, I thank you very sincerely for your letter and for your offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a cowardly fashion. As for you, and in particular for your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people which has chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection, and we can do nothing about it.

"You leave, and my wish is that you and your country will find happiness under this sky. But, mark it well, that if I shall die here on the spot and in my country that I love, it is too bad, because we all are born and must die one day. I have only committed this mistake of believing in you, the Americans."

Butz: What will we do about Cambodian aid after the government falls?

President: I think it is wrong for the United States to give to the Communists humanitarian aid which makes it easier for them to overcome our friends. That is especially true in Vietnam. It eases their problems as they overwhelm our friends. So for now, I would limit our aid to our friends.



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Kissinger: In South Vietnam there is no question. The Soviets and Chinese, having supplied the ammunition, can also supply the rice. In Cambodia, if Sihanouk comes in, aid may help him, but we should wait and see. The war for the past three months was against not the GKR but Sihanouk.

Schlesinger: I think there are higher priority areas for the funds.

President: Turning to domestic affairs, let's turn to consumer protection legislation. A Consumer Protection Agency would be on the back of the Departments constantly.

[Jim Cannon, Virginia Knauer, and Alan Greenspan spoke.]

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✓ Cabinet Mtg
Apr 16 '75

P Several things to discuss. One of overriding importance - SEH
K Let me summarize where we are, & things behind your
speech, & where we go.

Declining supplies, upheavals in US, etc led to NUN
decision to go all out, in flag. violation of Accords. I'd
you, until did not indicate this was to be an all-out
push. This is a case where US domestic & trans-
national & foreign part. The retreat was essential badly & led
to those tragic consequences.

① Our question is how US with credibility stay now after
15 yrs of support - even overthrowing a part suspected
of wanting to deal w/c North. If the Pres had opted just
for human assist he would have had to in knowledge
it could have created panic, ~~to~~ & rejected our word
credibility to the people who relied on us. Popted for evac & aid
and because it's best course regardless of outcome - evac,
stratize, & report: w/ at least a medium of oppor
to have a say about their fate. The only figure of any
credibility was Weyand figure - & 300 mil would have
not a argument that it's same as before & trophy & thus
clearly inadequate. The issue in Sm app was not the amount
but a concept. The matter of consequence to us & world
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judgment, consistency, & credibility of US leaders who
hardly know Indochina are asking what it
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Nothing we can do about the past, but it is important how we react to this. We'll we w/d know, give up our credibility + our leadership. Worst mistake we could make is to say we are undertaking a global mission. What we are seeing in VN are special circumstances which of control perhaps unusually intense on spec to the weaknesses, etc none of which could be predicted. To generalize from this would be disastrous in ~~all~~ all areas. There can be a domino effect not related to VN but to our competitors in FP. We must conduct our FP ~~on~~ w/ confidence + assurance, with our credibility. The basic FP is sound. All our goals, SV relations R. In energy, fuel, raw materials we still have decisive voice. Our job is getting a commitment to do what is needed. If we can get minimum commitment upfront, we can have 1/2 eye of good FP achievement. So long as faith in US - that means faith in ourselves - remains, we can overcome. We have had a setback but we can overcome it + have a productive period of FP.

- P Jim would you update us on our visit.
- S Host Fantasy night, we executed Eagle Hill in Cambodia. Went smoothly - delayed chiefly because of a surprising decision of most of GKR - woman death but - not to leave - E.P. planned since 1970. Had there been an attack we would have returned from. The Pres has that legal auth under Const. Behavior of Cambodians has been very brave. (I left room for minutes)



Shelters for of Ambo.
Egypt military equipment

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Jim Connor

Virginia Kramer

Alan Crossman

