THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 9, 1975

Time: 11:25 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Place: Cabinet Room, The White House

Subject; Indochina

Principals

The President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib

Defense: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements

JCS: Chief of Staff, U.S. Army General Fred C. Weyand

WH: Donald Rumsfeld
Robert Hartmann
John Marsh (at end of meeting)

NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft
W. R. Smyser

XGDS - 3
DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.
BYAUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
With PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) (4)

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

NLR 92-10, #19 NSC ltr. 10/7/94
By [illegible], NARA, Date 2/6/95

President: The best way for us to proceed would be to have Bill Colby give the intelligence community's judgment. Will you please go ahead, Bill.

Colby: After a week's lull, the Communists have begun a new round of fighting, with Saigon as the ultimate target.

East of Saigon, a North Vietnamese division supported by artillery and armor attacked Xuan Loc, the capital of Long Khanh Province this morning, and heavy fighting is reported inside the town.

Xuan Loc sits astride Route 1, which links Saigon and the coastal provinces.

Fighting also has increased in the delta. The heaviest attacks occurred in the northern delta provinces of Dinh Tuong and Long An.

Elements of the Communist 8th division attacked Tan An, the capital of Long An Province, but have been pushed back.

Schlesinger: They cut Route 4.

Colby: They cut it, but they have been pushed back.

A Communist troop buildup in Kien Tuong Province had raised the possibility that the North Vietnamese were preparing to attack the provincial capital at Moc Hoa. Late reports indicate, however, that these forces have withdrawn, apparently in preparation for attacks closer to Saigon in Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia provinces.

The fighting is likely to intensify further in the near future. ..... new COSVN instructions which call for achieving final victory this year rather than 1976.

..... Communist gains have far exceeded their expectations for 1975 and have created the "most opportune moment" for total victory this year.

The COSVN instructions call for the Communists to press the attack and expand Communist territorial holdings during April by "liberating" Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong provinces.

..... when "the time comes" the North Vietnamese will attack Saigon.

..... the Communists are planning a three-pronged assault from the south, west and north on the capital itself.

As the fighting moves closer to Saigon, the likelihood of confusion, public disorder and even panic will increase.

The past week of relative inaction has given the government some chance to consolidate its military position. Nevertheless, in terms of capabilities, the strategic balance decisively favors the Communists.

The North Vietnamese now have 18 infantry divisions in South Vietnam supported by numerous armor, artillery, and air defense units. Eight of these divisions are located in Military Regions 3 and 4.

Moreover, there are strong indications that a North Vietnamese Army corps headquarters and three more reserve divisions are moving to South Vietnam. Two of these divisions have already reached the DMZ and could show up north of Saigon in two to four weeks. In addition, two NVA Air Defense divisions are in South Vietnam, one in MR-3 where it could soon threaten Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut airports.

By comparison the South Vietnamese, at this moment, now have seven combat-ready infantry divisions. They are rebuilding three from personnel extracted from the north and plan to form two more by early summer.

On paper, the GVN's long-term prospects are bleak, no matter how well Saigon's forces and commanders acquit themselves in the fighting that lies ahead.

This is already beginning to become an accepted judgment within both civilian and military circles in South Vietnam.

At this moment, pressure continues to build among the civilian opposition and among some military commanders for President Thieu either to exert the vigorous leadership which has been conspicuously needed and missing, or step aside.

So far Thieu has shown considerable skill in keeping the opposition divided. He is aided by the fact that there is no single figure who his various political and military critics believe would provide more effective leadership.

While yesterday's bombing of the Presidential palace was an isolated act, it underscores the ever-present possibility of a single incident that would overturn Thieu and bring on political chaos.

Thieu's new nominee for prime minister, Nguyen Ba Can, hopes to have a government formed by this weekend.

Can will try to encourage representatives from the civilian opposition to join the cabinet. There is considerable reluctance, however, especially among important Buddhist and Catholic groups, to be associated with a Thieu government.

In any case, we see no dramatic improvement likely to stem from this new government.

Another factor is U.S. aid. A prompt and large-scale infusion would tend to restore confidence. The converse is obviously also true.

The most likely outcome is a government willing to accept a settlement on Communist terms, i.e., surrender.

The Communists are repeating their willingness to negotiate with a post-Thieu government, in an obvious effort to encourage a political upheaval in Saigon.

At the same time, Hanoi is making it clear that it is not interested in a compromise but rather in a figleaf for a North Vietnamese takeover under military pressure.

In this regard, the new COSVN instructions mentioned state that negotiations or a tripartite government are merely stratagems to isolate the GVN.

We have few indications yet on how the Communists are setting up their new administration in the northern half of South Vietnam.

In at least some instances they seem to be maintaining the facade of a transitional national liberation government.

We believe, however, that there has been a basic downgrading of the Viet Cong's PRG in North Vietnamese thinking. Hanoi now sees no need for a lengthy intermediate stage of negotiation and coalition rule, and has little incentive to maintain the PRG as a separate political entity.

In sum, we believe Hanoi will take whatever action is necessary to force the war to an early conclusion -- probably by early summer. The remaining questions

have to do with Communist tactics and timing, and whether or not a political solution on Communist terms can be arranged prior to a final South Vietnamese military collapse.

Finally, Mr. President, there is the question of how these recent events may effect the attitudes of other nations toward us.

In general, the current debacle is seen not as a turning point, but as the final step on a particular path that most governments had long seen coming. They have, in short, seen the whole Indochina experience as a major setback for the U.S.

Many, especially in Europe, had long questioned America's judgment and the propriety of its involvement.

Others were disillusioned with America's ability to cope with an uncommonly complex situation.

Still others gradually lost faith in America's will to stay on a difficult course.

The circumstances of the Vietnamese collapse have dramatized these perceptions, but adjustments were already being made.

There will, however, be apprehension over the repercussions, and the American reaction to the dramatic finale.

Our allies have been disturbed, and our adversaries heartened, over trends in American attitudes toward:

-- limiting the flexibility of U.S. foreign policy in meeting new challenges,

-- reducing U.S. support for our allies and friends, and

-- reducing the share of U.S. resources devoted to maintaining our military power and foreign policy.

Any signs that the American people are beginning a prolonged and bitter internal debate will heighten these concerns and intensify fear that we may be heading into a new era of isolationism. U.S. actions in the Middle East, in particular, will be closely watched in judging our future course.

Levels of trust, however, will be affected mainly by perceptions of U.S. behavior on issues of direct and compelling interest to the countries concerned.

Western Europeans and Japan, for example, do not expect a reduction of U.S. power relevent to their immediate concerns. And none of them consider U.S. aid to their security any less necessary than before.

A number of regional powers, such as Iran and Brazil, will continue their trend toward self-reliance rather than linkage with the U.S. in anything but major confrontations with the USSR.

Among those on the firing line, uneasiness will increase, and the drive toward self-reliance will accelerate.

The South Koreans and Nationalist Chinese will see greater parallels to their own situation, and will put pressure for maximum support as long as possible.

Southeast Asians, especially the Thai, will feel more exposed, but have long anticipated eventual U.S. withdrawal from the mainland. They may now advance their adjustment to growing Communist power.

Middle East countries will see U.S. interests there as compelling continuing involvement. However, there is one particular situation on which Vietnam developments could have a direct impact. Both

Prime Minister Rabin and President Sadat have been very reluctant to place their respective nations' vital interests hostage to any agreement which was not self-enforcing, especially any agreement that was silent on matters which either regarded as being of major concern. The experience with the 1973 Paris Agreement could reinforce this already manifest reluctance.

Soviet, Chinese, and other Communist leaders, for their part, will not automatically conclude that other U.S. commitments are placed in question, unless:

The U.S. public reaction points to a repudiation of other foreign involvement, or

Internal U.S. recriminations are so divisive as to raise doubts of the U.S. ability to develop any consensus on foreign policy in the near future.

North Vietnamese leaders will exploit their victories to denigrate U.S. power, especially among third-world countries.

Hanoi may increase its support to Thailand's insurgency.

Its principal energies, however, at least for the next year or two, will be devoted to consolidating its control over Indochina.

Do you wish me to go on to Cambodia now or later?

President: Please go ahead now.

Colby: In Cambodia, it is difficult to see the government holding on for much more than another week.

Communist attacks in the Phnom Penh area have weakened government defenses north and west of the capital to the degree that they could collapse at any time.

..... the Communists are calling in even more units from the countryside for an all-out attack against the capital's defenders.

The Communists are also placing additional artillery near the capital.

The insurgents will soon have their forces ready to begin the final push.

Meanwhile, the time is rapidly approaching when ammunition shortages will directly affect Cambodian Army capabilities.

By April 17 all ammunition earmarked for Cambodia will have been delivered. In-country stocks of some types of ammunition will be exhausted soon thereafter and all ammunition will be gone byApril 25.

In the face of the steady battlefield pressure and uncertainty over U.S. assistance, morale in the army is plummeting.

The army high command is nearly paralyzed and is issuing only limited guidance to units in the field.

A number of key unit commanders in the Phnom Penh area have expressed the belief that the end is near and the fight may soon go out of the army completely.

..... government troops in at least one isolated enclave have contacted local Communist forces to discuss the possibility of surrender.

On the political front, most Cambodians now realize that President Lon Nol's departure has had little effect on the prospects for meaningful negotiations with the other side.

Prime Minister Long Boret returned to Phnom Penh yesterday saying that there wereno prospects for a compromise solution or a cease-fire.

Boret met with Sihanouk's son, Prince Yuvaneath, in Bangkok. Yuvaneath admitted that he was not authorized to speak for his father but his claim that Sihanouk would not negotiate is undoubtedly correct.

The government may soon invite Sihanouk to return and try to tie the invitation to an agreement that Communist forces not enter Phnom Penh or hinder the flow of relief supplies to the city.

At this point, this sort of an orderly surrender is the best that can be hoped for.

President: Thank you, Bill. Are there any questions?

Schlesinger: .....an attack on Phnom Penh may occur on Friday. We do not have much time.

President: Fred, will you give us the benefit of your report?

General Weyand: In preparing this report, I went back and referred to the report I did on a trip I took in July, 1973, about two years ago. In that report, I said that the position of the North Vietnamese and of the PRG had been dramatically improved since the start of the cease-fire. They were shipping major quantities of supplies to their forces.

On the other side, the leaders of the South Vietnamese army were aware that they were now engaged in a political struggle. General Truong's civic actions in MR-1 were especially impressive. The political struggle was engaged, and the GVN was determined to win it.

I found this interesting in the light of recent developments. The South Vietnamese continued the concept that this was a political struggle and they organized their forces to this effect.

I said then that the top South Vietnamese leaders thought the question was not if the Communists would attack but when. Those leaders were very sensitive to American support and they were counting on the intervention of U.S. air power in the case of such a Communist attack.

They are still in this mood. They clearly still cherish the hope that the U.S. will help them. There are many reasons why they responded as they did; that is one of them.

I found the situation critical. It is clearly going in favor of the other side. Hanoi has many options; the GVN and the U.S. have few.

The South Vietnamese have suffered heavy losses. Their morale was very low when we got there, but it has been improving since then. I believe your decision to send a team, whatever may be said about its composition, is clearly vindicated.

I believe the South Vietnamese are on the brink of total military defeat. I examined a plan that is intended to deal with the area that they now hold. They have been thinking of this for some time, once they saw that American support was dwindling and would continue to dwindle whereas North Vietnamese support would grow.

They have been rationing arms and ammunitions for some time. They have been trying to husband their resources. They have cut down the use of rifle ammunition and of grenades very dramatically.

They had made plans to complete their resources in an area which corresponds roughly to what they now have, though they had hoped to hold more of the coast, especially to the extent to which they had some expectation of finding oil. The Delta, of course, is their rice bowl and very valuable. The rest of the area, south of the present line, contains lumber and a lot of population.

I told Thieu this plan was sound but a linear defense was not appropriate to the type of situation that they face. They should find enemy divisions and destroy them wherever they are, and not just try to hold the line that it is not identifiable by some geographic feature. The big question is whether they now have time to get organized.

The issues they face are as follows:

First, to reconstitute their forces and to create four more divisions in order to defend against the larger North Vietnamese army.

Second, to upgrade their territorial forces to 27 regiments (which would have been done a long time ago if they had though that they would face this kind of military challenge).

Third, to upgrade their ranger groups.

If they could do all that, they would be in pretty good shape. There is a limit to what the North Vietnamese can send down. The South Vietnamese could mass, and with the very strong air support that they have they could do a good job for a time.

We all agree that the long-range prospects are just impossible for them. The issue is: can we get the stuff to them in time and will the enemy give them time?

I have not tried to be too optimistic. However, there have been reports from some of the places where I testified that I said the GVN could win. They can, locally, but I do not believe they can push the North Vietnamese army back.

I have said that the South Vietnamese could and would fight. I have said this in part in order to help keep the South Vietnamese together. But their leadership is very doubtful. I have talked to Thieu. If he does what he says, it can go pretty well. As for the will to fight, I have said that in March, 1972, there were 16 North Vietnamese divisions down there. And they were defeated, though with American help. General Vogt and I concluded that they had the will to fight. But they had our support.

Last year they had 600 people a week killed and many wounded. So I think they have the will to fight. I do not think one should regard this panic as a sign that they have no such will. I have seen such panic in Korea in 1950 as well as in Burma. It is not pleasant, but it is not unprecedented. The 18th and the 25th divisions have been doing well. The question is the will of the people to resist or to accept a form of government that they consider alien.

The other question is the support of the American people. I assume they would support more assistance, having stuck with it this long. That is the way I dealt with it in my report. I have found support on our determination not to let force prevail over the will of the people.

I have recently seen some talk about secret commitments. In a visit last year to Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, I spoke of continuing American support. It is clear that they all expected American support, although Thieu was worried about threats in the Congress. Thieu clearly believes you have done all you could. He understands the Congress.

One thing that I had in the back of my mind as I wrote my recommendations was that we owe it to them to help them or at least we should not deny them the help if they need it. If I did not believe it, I would not be here. Neither, I guess, would the rest of you.

The question is whether the American people would accept the burden. As I have watched the orphan program and the refugee movement, I have concluded that the American people desperately want to help the South Vietnamese. Whether this sentiment translates into military

assistance it is hard to say, but I believe it exists.

The price that I think it requires is $722 million which would build four more divisions and upgrade other units. This amount subsumes the $300 million that is now in the supplemental.

I also had recommendations on refugee assistance and on evacuation policy. You are aware of these.

President: Thank you, Fred. I read your report and I talked to you about it in California. I am impressed with its solid factual analysis.

Henry, may I have the options as you see them?

Secretary Kissinger: If I may wear my hat as Secretary of State for a time, I want to take issue with the estimate of the Director of Central Intelligence regarding the impact on our worldwide position of a collapse in Vietnam. It was his judgment that the world reaction would be negligible, based on the fact that everybody had been anticipating what would happen.

Let me say that, whatever their long run expectations, no country expected so rapid a collapse. I believe their reaction would also be affected if they did not even see an effort made.

We have reports that the Japanese, the Indonesians, and other Asian nations are watching closely, and they are forming judgments. It is not in their interests to say this publicly.

Especially in Asia, this rapid collapse and our impotent reaction will not go unnoticed. I believe that we will see the consequences although they may not come quickly or in any predictable manner.

So I cannot share the judgment expressed by the Director of Central Intelligence. I believe that, even in Western Europe, this will have a fall-out.

Let me now come to the options.

On military assistance, the first option would be to ask for no military aid but to follow the predominant mood in the Congress and do nothing. You could say that your predecessors have put in $150 billion and that it has not worked, and that no amount foreseeable is going to work. You could say that you are concentrating on the economic and humanitarian side. You would have the advantage that you could be the first President since 1947 who will have had nothing to do with Vietnam.

President: Not as President perhaps, but as a member of Congress I have.

Secretary Kissinger: The negative aspect of such an option is that it would trigger an immediate collapse in Saigon and that this collapse would be caused by the United States.

It would give Saigon the least opportunity to negotiate. It would imperil 6,000 Americans, and it would make it impossible to evacuate any Vietnamese. The international implications would compound those that I have described. But, it would provoke the least dissension in this country.

Between that and the $722 million that Fred has mentioned, you can about pick your own figure.

You can go for $300 million saying that this is all that is immediately available. You can say that you will either try to get some more later, or you can say that you will specifically try for the $422 million later.

President: This would be easiest to get but, as Fred told me in California, it could not be justified in terms of additional forces.

Secretary Kissinger: That is correct. The $300 million is designed to bring supply stocks up to the 60-day level.

Schlesinger: You should know that Mahan is marking up the $300 million tomorrow. I told him he may want to wait until after the speech. You may want to send him a signal.

Secretary Kissinger: The problem with $300 million is that it will be hard to defend. It is important to get the debate behind us and not to go on for months. So a case can be made that you either go for close to nothing or that you go for Fred's recommendation, since $300 million is not enough.

If you say $300 million and more later, you are simply bringing about months of Vietnam debate. But you could do it that way. It is possible that South Vietnam may collapse, and then you may not need to ask for the $22 million. It is, of course, also probable that if you go for $722 million, there will still be a collapse.

The advantages of the $722 million are: First, that it's militarily defensible; second, that it would strengthen the South Vietnamese position for inevitable negotiations -- as Fred says, South Vietnam can then negotiate with North Vietnam; and, third, that it would put us in the best position to negotiate our extraction, with South Vietnam, North Vietnam, or both.

So I see three viable options:

-- First, to ask for nothing or next to nothing;

-- Second, to ask for $300 million and indicate that there might be more to come;

-- Third, to ask for the whole amount.

Next, we must deal with the options regarding economic assistance.

President: If we ask for $722 million, can we say that this is all we ask?

Weyand: We think that the amount for 1976 that we have requested, which is $1.3 billion, would be enough to carry us from there on.

President: Then, if the $722 million is granted, and if it is effective, we would expect that about $1.3 billion would do it.

Secretary Kissinger: As I understand it, the $722 million would have to be followed by $1.3 billion in order to have a chance for success.

There is also the question of economic assistance. It is also related to the military option. AID wants to stay within the limit of its original authorization, so they do not want to ask for more than $167 million. This was our appraisal as being what we needed before the attack, but it would appear unbalanced in comparison to the great increase in our request for military aid.

President: Does this figure include economic and humanitarian aid?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Our Embassy has asked for $450 million which has a lot of money for economic development that makes very little sense right now.

I am inclined to think that anything between $170 million and $450 million might make sense. We can say that anything around $250 million or in that area would make sense, but there is no hard basis for any of these figures.

There is a hard basis for the Embassy figure, but we cannot defend it on the Hill under present circumstances.

Since we are talking of emergency assistance, it should be more than in the past. Certainly, anything between $170 million and $300 million can be put to use.

We need also to determine our stance on a Congressional resolution that some of our aid should go to support people living in Communist areas.

We have several options: We can oppose, we can be neutral, or we can be favorable toward such a resolution.

The major problem is that we would be supporting the rear area of a country that is attacking an ally. A case can be made for the argument that they have the Soviet Union and China to help them.

As Secretary of State, I think that this kind of idea presents an image of a sappy America getting creamed and at the same time helping those who are attacking it.

Schlesinger: What is your opinion as National Security Advisor?

Secretary Kissinger: As National Security Advisor, I have to be impartial, but that is a hard one. I will risk the recommendation that we should oppose such legislation.

President: I gather that Senator Kennedy tends to advocate it, wanting to administer the funds through the United Nations.

Secretary Kissinger: It amounts to the same thing: it relieves Communist resources and personnel. If the U.N. wants to do it without U.S. participation, that is its business. But for the United States to do this, while a war is going on, would be hard to explain to the American people and to foreign countries.

President: Have all the refugees come to the South Vietnamese area, or are they still in areas controlled by the North Vietnamese?

Colby: Some have come to the South Vietnamese area, but many are still in the North Vietnamese area.

Weyand: We are now talking of a refugee figure of about 400,000 in areas under South Vietnamese control as opposed to 1 million earlier.

President: Do we still hold Cam Ranh?

Colby: No.

Secretary Kissinger: It is a terrible tragedy. Nobody can deny the ineptitude of the South Vietnamese. But for the United States to send relief to Communist areas and to help them devote resources to the war seems very questionable.

President: In effect, we would be financing both sides.

Kissinger: You have these three choices. You can oppose the proposal for providing aid to refugees in Communist areas, or you can give the Congress the facts and let them decide, or you can support it. It is not a disgraceful argument.

With regard to evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese, there are three things that affect a decision. First, the number of people who might need to be evacuated; second, the political conditions under which they might need to be evacuated; third, the question of how to organize such an effort.

I have a list of potential evacuees. The maximum total of those included in this list is 1,700,000. They fall into eight different categories:

1. American citizens and their relatives;

2. The diplomatic corps;

3. The ICCS;

4. Third country nationals under contract to us;

5. The employees of the United States and their dependents. This latter category is estimated at about 164,000 people.

The total included in those five categories comes close to 200,000.

President: Of which, I understand, 6,000 are Americans.

Kissinger: There are about 5,400 and 500 dependents.

We would then have the other categories.

6. The Vietnamese relatives of American citizens.

7. Senior GVN and military officials and their dependents.

The total for this category is given as 600,000, which seems high.

8. Former Vietnamese employees of the United States intelligence and other agencies as well as their dependents.

One problem is that, even if you accept the level of 200,000 on the list, Graham Martin refuses to carry out the order to evacuate them.

Clements: Why don't you fire him?

Kissinger: Graham Martin's major problem is that he does not want to trigger panic by beginning any evacuation process.

Schlesinger: Conditions will get worse.

Kissinger: Once we get a Presidential decision, I shall see to it that Graham Martin carries it out. But we have not had a clear-cut decision.

It depends a great deal on what the President recommends for aid to South Vietnam. If the President recommends nothing, then panic could create an immediate problem. If the President recommends support and asks for money, we can then tell Thieu that we are going to have to take out some Americans and it should not create the same result.

As for the Vietnamese, there are some problems. For one thing, they are scattered all over the place. We would have to get them to the aircraft. If we gave the order to evacuate, it might well be impossible to carry it out.

Schlesinger: We have to have the cooperation and the acquiescence of the Vietnamese.

Kissinger: This is the next point: We have to decide how to organize such an effort. This will require immediate

consultation with Thieu, once we decide, or with whatever successor government there might be. But, whoever is in power in Saigon, we will need to coordinate. Your speech will have some effect on this.

We have looked, with the Department of Defense, at all available assets. It is clear that, with the numbers involved, this cannot be a one day operation like Eagle Pull in Cambodia.

By commercial aircraft, we could take out 600 a day. By military aircraft, we could take out 15,000 in a day. By ship, we could take out anywhere from 26,000 to 125,000 a day. Of course, ships have a longer turn around time of four to five days. So you have an evacuation that will take a week if you go to 240,000.

Schlesinger: It also depends on the cooperation of the North Vietnames They have anti-aircraft weapons. If those weapons are brought near Tan Son Nhut, they can make it very difficult.

Kissinger: So the issue depends first on your decisions, second on identifying the persons to evacuate, third on the cooperation of the GVN, and fourth on the cooperation of the North Vietnamese. I should add that this is one area where I believe the Soviet Union and the Chinese could be helpful.

In your decision you would have to deal with evacuation, with what to say to the GVN, with what you want the Department of Defense to do, and with what diplomatic efforts you would want the State Department to make vis-a-vis these countries and others. I agree with the Secretary of Defense that it will be hairy.

President: To put into effect an evacuation proposal for our own people and for 200,000 others, would that not require violation of the law or the agreement of Congress if we need to use force.

Kissinger: My own personal view is that you would have to ask Congressional authority to take forces in. It is not like Cambodia. It will last longer. Even if we have the consent of the GVN, we will have to fight Vietnamese. If that is your decision, this will require U.S. forces.

First we have to decide what to go for. Then we can talk to Thieu. Then we can get the Embassy to thin out our personnel, removing those who were assigned to I Corps and II Corps as well as dependents and the like.

President: Do you have any observations on this, Jim?

Schlesinger: You have the innate power to protect Americans. I think the Foreign Relations Committee is anxious to cooperate and would not object to our use of force. Moose and Meissner, who have been out there, have been cabling back favorable recommendations on this issue.

Kissinger: The problem is not under the War Powers Act, as I see it. It is under the Indochina Restrictions, where the issue becomes more difficult. Elsewhere, it would appear to be easy to use U.S. forces for this purpose.

President: Which of these was approved last?

Kissinger: We went through that at the time of this legislation and determined that the War Powers legislation superseded the other. But the Administration of your predecessor took the position at the time that it would not claim this.

However, despite this kind of issue, the question is whether it would be politically acceptable for us to do this. I question whether we should rely on Moose or Meissner.

President: It is great for people to say this, as they have in Turkey and Greece, to the effect that we can go ahead. But, of course, if it does not work it is we who are in trouble.

Schlesinger: On Turkey, the General Accounting Office says that it is all right.

President: If Congress wants us to do it, let them pass a Sense of the Congress Resolution.

Kissinger: Another problem is that in Vietnam it is not just a matter of evacuating American citizens but also of evacuating Vietnamese.

Clements: If we go to the Congress, we should have one package and go for it.

President: I think we should ask for a change in the law that we can use certain resources that we need for evacuation. Somebody should be preparing it so that we can send it up by Friday. We should not just be limited to one division, or one other type of unit, or just to our personnel.

If we have a disaster, Congress will evade the responsibility. Let us get some language. I am sick and tired of their asking us to ignore the law or to enforce it, depending on whether or not it is to their advantage.

Brown: When this legislation came up, Admiral Moorer spoke specifically of this problem. He was told that the U.S. of course had the power to protect Americans.

President: Let's get that testimony.

Does anybody wish to comment on the general issues?

Schlesinger: I think we have a number of problems. The first one is Vietnam itself. We must recognize that it is gone. It is going now and it will go quickly depending on the North Vietnamese. With any aid we give them

we are buying time, partly to get out the Americans.

We must try to see what it will look like in 90 days. It is desirable to avoid fragmentation of the people and an argument with Congress. We must state clearly in closed rooms that hope is slim, and that we are moving on a strategy of 60 days to 6 months. We should say that we are doing this to save the Americans and to protect the Vietnamese.

I think in your speech you should push for $300 million and say that we will ask for more later. We will use the time to get the Americans out. Fred says we just have a chance and that it depends on the North Vietnamese. So far, the South Vietnamese have not been able even to regroup the unruly people of the Second division. We may be faced with a situation that will last only 30 days.

The important thing is for you to establish leadership and to give a call to the people. You could talk along the lines of Churchill's blood, sweat and tears. You could say that U.S. foreign policy is in the most difficult period since 1939. I would tick off Portugal and say that we insist on a free election. We should tell the Europeans we expect them to do more in their own defense. Also, we should speak of Turkey and of what must be done there.

I think that if you have a fighting speech, you will have a positive impact on the Congress. I think there are two kinds of people on the Hill: Those who want to get out of Vietnam and those who are just waiting for an inspirational message.

Let us not talk of detente or of past achievements. I am concerned for the country and for you. We need to challenge the Soviet Union. We should say that detente is not consistent with revolutionary actions in Portugal and with what they have been doing in Southeast Asia. We want to preserve detente but it cannot be

a one way street. The speech should also have a tone of admonition to the Chinese, who have supported North Vietnam and the Cambodian Communists. We need a Churchillian speech that would establish a fighting leadership, even if we have to postpone it for a few more days. When the speech was originally scheduled, we thought the situation was more manageable, but the situation has changed to the point where we need this kind of address. As for Vietnam, the situation is now hopeless.

Clements: I want to endorse what Jim says. I think the time has come to be candid. The people want the President to get out in front and to give us leadership.

The American people do not like what has happened. We should say that Vietnam is bad and has been for twelve years. Americans have been divided. Now let us look ahead and not get into acrimonious debates over the past.

We should not get into recriminations. We have to move forward. You can say that you are the man who will take them forward. We should not promise anything that we cannot do. In my judgment, there is very little we can do. All options are bad. It takes a strong leader to be able to cut your losses. But more important things lie ahead. I agree with the humanitarian side. But we should not get out in front on an idle threat or on some bluff that we cannot support.

Colby: If I may take advantage of the precedent set by the National Security Advisor, and if I may state my views on policy, it would be that you should put your stress on the Vietnamese people.

In 1954, 900,000 Vietnamese went to South Vietnam from North Vietnam. It will be important to speak of the free choice of the Vietnamese. We should ask Congress to commit money to carry out the

pledge to let the Vietnamese, perhaps one to two million, leave, and to provide diplomatic support. Also, the forces could leave. This would give those forces something to fight for.

Americans could respond to their feelings. We would accept the fact that Vietnam has been a defeat, but go on to our concern with the people.

Brown: I would like to support what Jim Schlesinger says. I have been on a trip, to Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan and other countries. In Pakistan, I was approached on whether we would let the Vietnamese fall. I cited the record.

There is great interest. People wonder if we will turn our backs on Asia. The main question is what we will do about Asia. I think $722 million, even with Fred Weyand's objectives, would be wasted. We would have no hope. Perhaps $300 million would maintain some effort on behalf of the Vietnamese and would say we are not turning our back on Asia.

The large sum would also have an impact on the equipment of our own units. We would have to send material that our own forces should use.

Clements: In any case, we cannot get the material there in time.

President: Bob, do you have anything you want to add?

Ingersoll: If you say what Jim suggests, you will have chaos in Saigon.

Schlesinger: You would not say it publicly. You would say it privately to the Congressional leaders.

Kissinger: It will certainly get out.

President: I am not going to tell the Congressional leaders that sort of thing. I will tell them my decision. We have an executive and legislative branch. I still think we have to make our own decision within the executive branch. We solicit their views, but I have to make the decisions. I do intend to make a strong speech. It will be looked upon as a strong speech.

I believe my speech has to be consistent. I cannot make a strong speech on certain areas of the world, and then, as I look at it, ask for $300 million. No military estimate can justify it. If we are going to be blunt and say we will do nothing, that is one thing, but we have to use figures that are justifiable. Maybe Congress will not give it to us, but at least, on the record, we have to say what will do it.

Marsh: Congressman Don Fraser has just made a speech calling for Vietnam aid.

President: I will ask for $722 million because we can justify it. At least the record will be clear. I will ask that it be done by a date certain, perhaps May 1, though we still have to decide that.

I will ask for humanitarian aid but not through the United Nations. Third, I will ask for authority, which I think is needed, to evacuate the Americans and others to whom we have an obligation.

I do not rule out at some point letting the North Vietnamese know that any interference with our humanitarian efforts will be met with strong measures. That is why I want flexibility.

It will be a strong speech in my own way, not perhaps in Churchill's. It will not be a phony.

I gather, Jim, that you have reservations. But this is the decision. This will be the only group that knows

it. I have spent a lot of time on this, now and even earlier, going back to 1952. I think our policy, going back to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, was the right policy. We did not always implement it well, and we may have made many mistakes. But it was the right policy.

But to go to Congress and ask for nothing, that is dubious. It is our best hope, if we can get it.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.