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MEMORANDUM

1974

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 14, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: JERRY JONES

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT 


Thank you for your note of March 29 reporting the President's comments on Senator Griffin's speech.

You will have noticed, I am sure, that the President's speech contained several ideas also voiced by Senator Griffin, although expressed, of course, in the President's own words.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

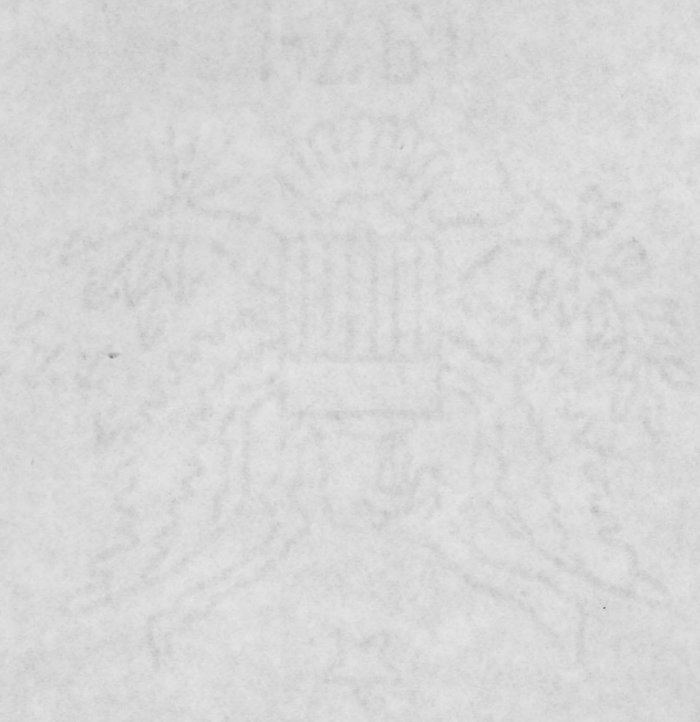
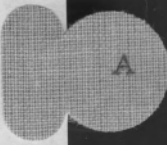
April 14, 1975

TO: DONALD RUMSFELD

FROM: JERRY JONES 

For your information.

DR. HAS SEEN



1974

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 29, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR:

BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM:

JERRY JONES



The attached remarks by Senator Griffin have been returned in the President's outbox with the following notation to you:

-- A really great speech. Can we use some thoughts for mine?

Please follow up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Mr. Sewerft

A really great
speech.

Can we use good
thoughts for mind?

FOR RELEASE: PM'S
MARCH 26, 1975

Remarks by

U. S. SENATOR ROBERT P. GRIFFIN

for delivery in
The United States Senate
March 26, 1975

DROPPING THE TORCH ?

Mr. President: In 1961, when John F. Kennedy took the oath as President, he stirred the hearts of freedom-loving people around the world with these words:

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans -- born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage -- and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to ~~which~~ this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

"Let every Nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." (Emphasis supplied)

Our country has been a major factor in holding the world together in modern times because other Nations, friend and foe alike, have believed that the United States means what it says.

Every American President in the last 35 years -- and there have been seven of them -- has been called upon to recognize the dangers of unchecked international aggression.

Each of those Presidents -- from Franklin Roosevelt to Gerald Ford -- has taken the position that America's interests are served by helping other free Nations to defend themselves against aggression.

Indeed, that resolve on the part of the United States was so meaningful that beginning on March 19, 1965 -- ten years ago this month -- the United States even sent its own troops to fight beside the South Vietnamese.

By 1968, there were 500 thousand Americans in Southeast Asia, and United States expenditures to support the effort there exceeded \$80 million a day.

By comparison, the \$300 million requested now by President Ford for Vietnam is roughly equivalent to 4 days of expenditure support at 1968 levels.

It appears obvious now that Congress will take off for an Easter recess without according the White House even the courtesy of a vote on its urgent request for emergency assistance to Cambodia and South Vietnam.

By default -- and through caucus decisions of the majority party -- it has become painfully obvious to all who watch -- in the United States and around the world -- that Congress is turning its back on allies in Indochina who are struggling to defend themselves.

Such an abandonment by Congress -- not only of allies but of a huge investment that includes 50,000 American lives -- should at least be a conscious and deliberate decision made by the Senate as a whole -- for it is a decision that carries with it into history consequences and responsibility of enormous proportions.

Perhaps it is possible that Congress -- by doing nothing or by taking a vote -- will turn hollow the ring of John Kennedy's inspiring words and will forsake basic principles upon which Presidents of both parties have stood so firmly through the years. But I cannot allow this to happen without at least speaking out.

I know that the people of America are tired of Vietnam. No member of this Senate needs to be reminded of that. Americans are tired of reading about Vietnam, of hearing about Vietnam, of watching Vietnam on television; and they are tired of paying for Vietnam.

I realize also that the dictates of political expediency -- and perhaps of political survival -- press hard for outright termination of all U. S. assistance, once and for all.

I am familiar with the opinion polls. Yet, I cannot help but recall the admonition of Winston Churchill during the last World War:

"Nothing is more dangerous in wartime than to live in the temperamental atmosphere of a Gallup Poll, always feeling one's pulse and taking one's temperature."

Were the task of a Senator nothing more than studying public opinion and casting each vote with the majority, I might more efficiently return home and leave my responsibilities in the care of a computer.

But surely our responsibilities here in the Senate reach beyond the mechanical task of echoing public opinion. That point was made by Edmund Burke in 1774 when he told his constituents:

"Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion."

In our understandable frustration with Vietnam, it is tempting to assume that if we just cut off all aid to South Vietnam, the people of that area will settle their own problems and the rest of the world can live in peace again.

As the Washington Star recently observed, some people take the view that:

" . . . cutting off aid to our allies is something like cutting off oxygen to a dying patient, to spare

these long-suffering people more agony. We have talked ourselves into the idea that, in supplying Vietnam and Cambodia with the means of defending themselves, it is we who have instigated and perpetuated the war and it is our obligation to end it."

Unfortunately, it is not that simple.

There are in South Vietnam today several million people who, in one way or another, have openly opposed the Communists. Many of them took their position after we convinced them that the United States would stand by them. Statements by Vietnamese Communist leaders, as well as the lessons of history, give no assurance that these individuals will not be killed or imprisoned following a North Vietnamese victory.

- In 1946, the Secretary General of the Indochinese Communist Party ominously asserted:

"For a newborn revolutionary power to be lenient with counter-revolutionaries is tantamount to committing suicide."

- When Ho Chi Minh took over North Vietnam in 1954, a massive purge resulted in an estimated 50,000 executions and, indirectly, in the deaths of several hundred thousand more -- and this was after nearly a million potential victims had fled to the South.
- In the 1968 Tet offensive, hundreds of bodies were found in mass graves outside Hue -- and great numbers of others still are not accounted for.
- And public statements by North Vietnamese leaders give a foretaste of events to come. Three years ago, North Vietnam's Minister of Public Security laid down this official policy for dealing with dissidents:

"In our dealings with counter-revolutionary elements in the recent past, we have still . . . not properly used violence."

In and out of Congress, many have salved their consciences with the assumption that South Vietnamese people really prefer Communism anyway. For those Americans, it should be interesting -- and disturbing -- to see on television that the hundreds of thousands of refugees, who flee for their lives from the recently abandoned provinces, are moving South on the clogged highways -- not North.

On the face of the record, it is just unrealistic to suggest that an end to United States aid will end the killing in Vietnam.

The consequences of such a decision would be felt in our own country too. Earlier this month I met with an Ann Arbor constituent, James H. Warner, who for over five years was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. Like other young men who were held captive, Warner received considerable abuse because he did not "cooperate" with his Communist hosts.

In the course of our conversation, Warner expressed great concern about the fate in Congress of President Ford's request for continued aid to Vietnam and Cambodia. There was deep emotion in his voice as he wondered aloud about the possibility that Congress might deny the request. Why, he wondered, had he endured so much to keep faith with his country -- if America's leaders were going to respond now by abandoning the cause for which he fought.

(more)

If Congress takes the "easy" course, Warner's case is only illustrative of the bitterness that will be felt by thousands of veterans who fought in Vietnam.

Many who advocate ending all U. S. aid to Vietnam assume that Communist North Vietnam would become a peaceful member of the international community once it gained control of Saigon. Unfortunately, that is not likely to be the case.

As we know, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the deposed Cambodian head of state, is in exile in Peking. In one of the last public statements he made before being ousted in 1970 by a unanimous vote of his National Assembly, he wrote in a Japanese foreign affairs quarterly, Pacific Community, about the importance of the United States maintaining a presence and providing assistance to the victims of Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. He did not expect the Americans -- for whom he had (and has) little affection -- to remain in Asia for altruistic reasons -- but he believed the United States should remain in its own self-interest. He concluded:

" /T/he Communization of Cambodia would be the prelude to a Communization of all Southeast Asia and, finally, (although in a longer run) of Asia. Thus it is permitted to hope that, to defend its world interests (and indeed not for our sake), the United States will not disentangle itself too quickly from our area -- in any case not before having established a more coherent policy which will enable our populations to face the Communist drive with some chance of success."

Already Sihanouk's concerns of 1970 are being borne out in the wake of our apparent abandonment of South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Thailand, for example -- a close ally for decades -- has shown signs of a moving away from its relationship with the United States and toward the Communist powers.

Earlier this month, a respected journalist, Keyes Beech, wrote:

"One by one, the small Nations of Southeast Asia are moving closer to Peking -- not in terms of ideology but on practical grounds.

"Within the past few days, both the Philippines and Singapore have taken conciliatory steps toward their giant Asian neighbor."

A compelling case can be made that these political changes in Southeast Asia are the direct consequence of a decline in American credibility in the area. Small Nations which in years past have relied on the word of the United States are now concluding that, in the long run, America's word is no longer credible. Under such circumstances, it would hardly be healthy for them to resist the expansion of Chinese or North Vietnamese influence in the region.

American abandonment of Indochina would almost certainly have consequences in other parts of the world as well.

In the Middle East, our ability to assist in the search for peace depends largely on our credibility with participants in the dispute. Recent reports from Jerusalem have noted a growing concern about the reliability of the United States -- a concern related by some to the apparent U. S. abandonment of its allies in Indochina. As John Goshko of the Washington Post Foreign Service reported March 12:

"Many Israelis, drawing a comparison between their own situation and events in Southeast Asia, say openly that they fear that the same thing may happen here."

(more)

And Marilyn Berger, also of the Washington Post, reported from the Middle East on March 20:

"The imminent fall of Cambodia and even South Vietnam . . . are said to be raising new obstacles in the current negotiations.

"Israelis are questioning the value of assurances . . . Arabs are said to be questioning the need to make concessions when American aid to Israel might soon be diminished, just as it has been in Cambodia and South Vietnam."

These are deeply disturbing developments. They pose tough, hard questions which deserve answers before we pull the rug from under our allies in Indochina.

Mr. President, if and when the Senate moves toward a vote on supplemental aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam, each member will have to wrestle with his own conscience in deciding whether a vote against it will best serve American interests and the cause of world peace.

For one, I do not believe that such a move would serve those high purposes. Furthermore, it would signal a new turn toward isolationism -- and the world of 1975 is too small, too interdependent for that.

A great statesman of the past from my State, Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, appreciated the role we must play in the world, when on July 6, 1949, he said:

"Much as we might crave the easier way of lesser responsibility, we are denied this privilege. We cannot sail by the old and easier charts. That has been determined for us by the march of events. We have no choice as to whether we shall play a great part in the world. We have to play it in sheer defense of our own self-interest. All that we can decide is whether we shall play it well or ill."

America will play a decisive role in world affairs -- whatever we do -- whether we stick to our word and maintain our credibility -- or whether we turn our back on friends and betray their hope for freedom. What we do will have consequences, for good or ill -- consequences which we dare not ignore.

Although the hour is late -- very late -- the question of U.S. aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam is still open.

Our action -- or inaction -- will send a message, loud and clear, to the rest of the world -- a message to friend and foe alike that will ring through history as resoundingly as did President John Kennedy's stirring words of January 20, 1961.

Shall the word go forth, from this time and place -- that the torch has been dropped?

Or, shall the message from this Congress be that America -- sadder, perhaps -- but wiser, we hope -- and tempered with a clearer sense of the limits of our power -- still stands proud and true to herself, to her friends, and to the cause of liberty!

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