MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Elliot Richardson, Secretary of Defense
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Admiral Daniel J. Murphy, Military Assistant to Secretary Richardson

DATE AND TIME: Friday, March 16, 1973
7:45 a.m. (Breakfast)

PLACE: The Pentagon

SUBJECTS: Military Aid; Vietnam; SALT

Richardson: I met with State yesterday on aid. Should military assistance be moved from the aid bill into the defense budget?

Kissinger: That is where the President wants it.

Richardson: One must factor in where MASF goes.

Mahon has said Congress won't continue MASF in its present form, now that U.S. forces have withdrawn. If MASF has to move into the Foreign Assistance Act we will have an impossible problem. Rogers wants to try MASF one more year.

Bushardt has proposed a device. It would propose a delivery ceiling system, which would price things at their reduced value.

Kissinger: The key is Stennis and his agreeing to move aid to the defense appropriations bill.
Brent should check with Timmons and Lehman on the possibility.

Richardson: It's a delivery ceiling to the extent you make deliveries out of existing stocks; you don't involve procurement, and you can price at reduced values.

I will testify a week from Monday.

Kissinger: Can I have Part I of your testimony?

Richardson: Yes, I have a rough draft.

Laos infiltration. Our warnings are loud and clear.

Kissinger: Our thinking is: Military action, whatever it is, will not be decisive.

[Discussed North Vietnam's options.]

We can't permit a total flouting of the agreement within weeks. We will have lost all we won in the last four years.

The idea is to get a pause and get the thought into their head that the President is hair-trigger.

The President wants a strike next week, while they still have the POWs. A strike Thursday and Friday (Hanoi time) along the Trail right up to the passes.

Richardson: How about the ICCS?

Kissinger: They have only one legal checkpoint.

This is a high-risk strategy, but we can't let them get into a pattern where they can predict our reactions.

Murphy: How about the Soviet Union and the PRC?

Kissinger: We will send strong notes to both.
I have told Dobrynin that if there is a new offensive in Vietnam, it will have a serious impact on U.S.-Soviet relations. Because there is no excuse in terms of aid to a beleaguered fraternal country.

Dobrynin told me 240 tanks had been lost in China.

Richardson: South Vietnam ought to be able to handle anything North Vietnam can throw this year.

If we plan to hope to stop the Laos resupply routes, we need to think about insuring legal resupply for the North.

The RVN's resupply system is operating pretty well. We are resupplying everything, except the 16 tanks they lost.

So if we bomb the trail for 48 hours, it will do little good.

Kissinger: That is not the point. It's a psychological point we must make.

Richardson: The point is, what happens then? They won't stop resupply.

Kissinger: They must stop in four weeks anyway. The point is will they restart in November and start an offensive?

Richardson: After the strike, we must either paper it over in a way both sides can live with, or it will deteriorate further.

Kissinger: What can they do?

Richardson: They can say 'Screw you.'

Kissinger: We let them build up last spring and maybe we gave them a wrong signal.

Richardson: We think the Four-Party Commission should be extended.

Kissinger: Could you do an analysis of what the military situation will be like over the next year -- in the worst case, and what South Vietnam could do? By the end of next week?
Richardson: I am thinly staffed. Between my studies and the NSSMs, I am stretched thin and we have to establish priorities.

SALT

Kissinger: On SALT, The JCS is getting sloppy. You can’t use SALT to build up forces.

If we can get agreement on the theory of what we are trying to do, we can make progress. If we just throw positions at them, we will have no sense of direction and may end up with something ingenuous.

Richardson: Rush’s approach is to try to preserve the equivalence achieved in SALT I. Another approach is equal aggregates with the freedom to mix.

Kissinger: They can be blended.

Richardson: If you proposed an extension of status quo -- no MIRV’s of the SS-18, and we cease MIRVing at the present status -- how do you move into a long-term position? How do you make then progressive reductions?

The trouble with equal aggregates and throwweight at present levels is we won’t build up. If you could freeze so we could build up to equal aggregates, then we reduce symmetrically.

Kissinger: The President has not decided anything. We must have on-going strategic programs. We got a submarine agreement because I told Dobrynin that if we didn’t get a submarine limit, we would start a massive sub building program.

The modern dilemma is we might be getting into a first strike capability on both sides.

We don’t know the significance of Minuteman vulnerability. It may be an obsession which is not decisive. If it is not decisive, then the urgency of doing something on MIRVs is not pressing.

I don’t like a temporary test ban. They will just break when they are ready. It must be linked to a specific agreement.
I don't like phony tradeoffs. Using bomber payload in throwweight is bad unless we can transfer it into missiles. Bombers are second strike; missiles are first strike.

I may visit SAC on my way back from California.

We don't have a rationale for SALT II.

I think the Soviet system is such they are incapable of making a proposal. Their Defense Minister can't make a political judgment; their Foreign Minister can't make military judgments.

Richardson: The only long-term agreement which makes sense is one of simple elements -- aggregates, throwweight, and reductions.

Kissinger: Where does this get you?

Richardson: It limits investment. The question is how each would use the freedom to mix.

Kissinger: Reductions don't necessarily enhance stability. It depends on what the goal is -- reduced investment or a better strategic balance.

Richardson: I worry over an agreement which stresses limitation of qualitative moves. We would lose in that because of our technical edge.

Kissinger: An agreement can have equal aggregates and technical limits. Technical restraint makes sense only in areas they don't now possess -- like MIRV's. Something short-lived works for them.
MILITARY AIDS

R - But by all means, put aid:

K: Shall and substantial in moral form

R: And still into aid budget.

K: But it will what about it?

R: One must state it in aid.

K: Censor

R: The plan has made and must continue

K: Of the present form, now that

R: The forces have withdrawn.

K: If we must rise to rates with this aid:

R: And how an impossible part.

K: Rogers wants to try this one more year

R: Being worth the present decline.

K: Would improve a shooting defense, and

R: Nothing which would prove this at

K: Key is stemming to take action to

R: Shore and to try appeal bill.
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

If agreement is in weeks, we will

Shah's last call. We must save 

desired to get a formal change

that would have taken, with

they want to strike now, yet,

while they still have POW's.

Shah's absence Friday (mime)

agree to ask him for a peace

K. Now about ICDS?

K. They have only 1 day of back

point.

This is big with strategy, but

we can't let them into a position

where they can get our

satisfaction.

Mr. Howard, say to P.R.

K. We will hand over early next week.
K - I have told B that if a new offensive in VN it will have serious impact on US-Sov relations, long as special air bases in N. & the bilateral operational training.

B told me 24 B tanks had been lost in PRC.

K - SVN cannot to die with & handle all the SVN cannot this year. We plan to keep it stop long enough which needed to think about increasing allied strength for North. SVN supply system is
The White House
Washington

Operating pretty well. We have made and in every thing, there to cut the J. A.
R. So we know the trend is for the,
it will do a little good.
R. That is not point. It is pretty
point in about nine.

R. Point is what happen then?
They went step- by-step.
R. They must step in a while
anyway, and we will get
'must and in Nov. and
an election.
R. After that, and want within
people remain a way back.
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

K: What can they do?
R: They can do a lot more.

K: We have a lot more to do.
R: Perhaps we should get it done. I think they are ready.

K: We think they are ready.

R: Can we do an analysis of what should be done in the next year or so?

K: We should do that.

R: I am sure they will.

K: I am sure they will.
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

...bled them & we have to establish priorities.

K.

...t in just a day, some can't read, salt to bread for free.

...can get a damn on the order of what we are trying to do, not even metaphorically.

...will have a sense of direction and momentum, or something...
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

R - Rush approach try to preserve the operation as led in SAIT.
    Pull approach - special approach w/ field on top.
R - They can be blinded.
R - If your proposal is found in
    any manner (no MIIR 1959),
    and coded MIIR, at present status,
then do you mean which-
    line form position? then
    move them progressive
    submission?

Tramline/actual aggregates
+ I'm at present unsure how
we would build up. If you
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WASHINGTON

[Text is not legible due to handwriting and ink smudging.]
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WASHINGTON

1st Study Capability on both sides.

We don't know the significance of the increased production of T-45 except that it may be a sign of a decision which is not desired. It is true that China is hoping to buy something, but I doubt if it is true, as I think we have not put a price on.

I doubt that the efforts of the Chinese will produce anything. They will not break when they are ready. It must be decided on a specific agreement.

I don't like my hostages.

Many bounds pay less in the
in dog breeds, it can transform it into wrinkles; the
Bourbonnais red fella, marker
1st strike.
K - I may want SP on
any drive from Calif.
K - We don't have a statute
for SRA II
I think SRA system is
such they are imaginary.
I'm making a proposal. I'd
hunt make potential plaintiff,
for him can't make statutory
judgments.
R - Any long-term agreement which makes sense is one of single illiquidity - aggregate, etc.

K - What does this get you?

R - Just think it through, the question is how much would we put forth now?

K - Rubenets doesn't necessarily understand liquidity. Depends on what's good is - perhaps investment or letter strategic balance.

R - I worry over on against which stresses limitation on questrative approach.
We would like that because our technical teams.

If event will come that you spend applications will, just.

Tech transport another care
only one nice against compound (M180)

something that did work.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON