MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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,
stabilisation 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
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, 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 probably 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 overwhelm 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.
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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Several issues to discuss. One of overriding importance is the
risk we now face. There are many viewpoints on this issue:

- Dealing with the problem as an immediate and urgent issue.
- Developing a comprehensive plan for the future.
- Considering long-term consequences.

One question is how US will best deploy force. Over the
years, we have developed a great interest in the idea of
responding to a request of a North Korean leader's visit.
We have sought to establish mechanisms for future visits
and to explore possibilities for cultural exchanges.

The timing of this visit is important. We have heard
rumors of an upcoming visit. The visit could have been
scheduled at a later date, which would have had
implications for future relations. Moreover, the visit
may have implications for other issues, such as
generals, who could be invited.

What is most important for us is to ensure
that our foreign policy is effective and that we
are not caught off guard. To achieve this,
we must have a comprehensive plan.

(Handwritten note:)

[Redacted]
Writing we can be about just to it important how
we react, with what, what can continue
+ an understanding. Worst mistake we could such is
to say we embark. *an global experience* What
we can see in UN an equal existence another
of contrast, perhaps already talked some area so
~ attacking the source of which could be predictable.
To qualify from this would be decisions in
all areas. There can be a slowing effect int related
to UN but in our enactment in CP, we must react
on FL in W, influence, *coronaries* with our
evidences. The basic CP is real. Alliance poor
5 V relations K. In energy, feed, same material
we still have division again. Our feed in timing
+ continuity to be what is needed. 8 prior complete
continuity required, we continue to the age of real
Flachsmier. So long as in UN - that means
with ourselves - remaining, we can advance. We
have tried to get back but our advancement to have
a realistic part CP

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host Fourth might our integrated Eclipse Dillon Lambert
We act smoothly - delayed partly because of seeming
division of most of C.R. - even with not - to score. E.L. planned since 1918. And then human
in attitude we would have reacted faster. The Pace
has this legal aspect under Count. Behaviors
- of Cordiviano has been any known.
I left soon for meeting
NUN keeps changing this is civil war, that they know
the presence truth, etc. So these reasons, they may
decide not to accept Surjan death, but any part
will try and destroy CNN anyone. It fighting will last
and is worse.

P Thank you. Most of you know what David
his Tanya, we have been trying to sell, even
and a courier to demonstrate SRM's way then for two
theories in encouraged many FRW. later proposed
the same deal for not very difficult. Their a big
self as I am proposed not very helpful. My judgment
is that and can be using. I cannot be fished
it my regret and a courtyard. If any that's
a lot involved in this. It could had to the war
story. It must be consistent. We asked for
straight prep. I hope a very good progress and I can't
want us all have to talk about more, that we
enrolled in Surjan is important. It say because
can get a T+ aal she is now, and hopefully
got weight stall. Want to think and a join.
I'm from my group. Cannot have many, but they are
carrying and a weight policy and I think buddy will
demonstrate some wisdom from someone.

K (Wore English take better)

What will we do about demolition and strong part etc.
I think it may need 50 point to dominate and
which makes it easier for them to acquire some friends, that
so very time in VN. It seems their part as they overwhelm
friends. So for now I would limit our own and some friends.
On Sun there was no protein, so Jeff was having trouble
ammuniment supplied; we had C-90 in combat, if I start
running, get my help in later we should have gone.

I think there was a problem with the AC but whatever

Jim Ceresa
Virginia Keeser
Alan Greenfield