MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense
Republican Congressional Leadership
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: April 22, 1975 - Tuesday
8:00 a.m.

PLACE: Roosevelt Room
The White House

The President: I have three subjects I would like to discuss this morning: Vietnam, energy and the budget.

Kissinger: Jim [Schlesinger] will update the military situation, but it is clearly hopeless. The North Vietnamese have the capability to force a military solution. Our objective is to achieve the most controlled situation possible for evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese. This requires the cooperation of many - the Congress has to understand the shoals between which we are trying to navigate. We have had a steady reduction in the American presence. We have tried not to leave so many that we couldn't get them out, and we have avoided pulling them out so fast that we create a panic. We will be down to one lift by tonight: one batch will leave from Ton Son Nhut by C-130 and one from Saigon by helicopter. We are evacuating the high-risk Vietnamese by trickles.

The diplomatic situation is delicate and we can't say too much. Hanoi has continued to say that Thieu is the only obstacle. I never believed it. They will probably start trying to unravel the government, although they may want to project an air of responsibility by negotiating for Saigon. We are in touch with several countries. Unless there are controlled conditions, it won't be possible to get out large numbers of Vietnamese. The evacuation from Saigon will be much trickier than the one from Phnom Penh.
Penh. We are trying not to trigger a panic, but also not to jeopardize Americans. We could have the refugees from Vung Tau but our purpose is not to be indiscriminate but to rescue those who would suffer the most if we left them. The trouble in the ports would be to sort out the high-risk people from the mass of refugees. Any substantial evacuation of South Vietnamese would therefore depend on negotiations.

There is no question North Vietnam could take over Saigon and unravel the government by keeping to make demands for further change. The only glue holding the country together is the military. They have the only viable administrative structure. Huong will probably be replaced soon and his replacement soon after.

Some of the terms of the debate on aid are no longer relevant. The thought that aid is an open commitment is no longer relevant, as is the argument that it would prolong the fighting. What it does now is give North Vietnam some incentive to say in a negotiation they have stopped our aid, and to give the government some confidence to keep things under control. We think it is important to vote some part of the aid package to give us some control over these tragic events.

The President's objective from the outset was to achieve a controlled situation, and these events, while happening rapidly, were somewhat predictable. It is important we get out with the maximum dignity and unity.

Rhodes: What sort of government will it be? Will the Viet Cong be allowed to run it?

Kissinger: It is not clear yet. Sometime over the next two-three years North Vietnam will absorb it, but whether they will go through an interim PRG Government or move quickly to absorb it is not clear. The occupied areas are being administered by cadres from the North because there are no PRG cadre. My guess is they will move rapidly. The ones most unhappy over these developments will be the Chinese.

Scott: Right.

Kissinger: I can't imagine the Chinese wanting a large military power on its border, so the Chinese could be expected to want to support some sort of PRG government.
Rhodes: How about Cambodia?

Kissinger: The last months of the war were being fought against Sihanouk, not the government. Sihanouk has known for a long time that we would support his return. The obstacle to his return was the Khmer Rouge, not us. The Khmer Rouge wanted to prevent Sihanouk from coming back as anything but a tool. That is why they refused even a ceasefire and that is why they are exterminating every vestige of leadership. It may be even worse than what will happen in Vietnam. Cambodia will be a total Communist-controlled state. The question is who will be in control -- Hanoi or Peking? Peking has long supported Sihanouk as a counterweight. They are aided by the hatred between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese.

Over the years it is obvious that there will be a conflict between the large Communist countries and the only hope for Laos and Cambodia will be to balance between them. North Vietnam will take over as much control of Laos as they wish; that is probably true of Cambodia also. The Hanoi leaders have done nothing but fight all their lives.

Cederberg: We have a tactical problem over the next few days. Yesterday I could see more military than economic aid would be a problem, so I recommended equal amounts. But I still think we will have trouble on the Floor, and I see no way to get it to the Floor before next week.

Case: We have a bill on the floor now. One hundred million dollars could be used for anything at all. It would be a while to see what is needed. We might get it raised to $200 million.

The President: I still believe we need some humanitarian aid and some military aid.

Schlesinger: The situation is crumbling. The East is being pulled back. Bien Hoa will be under attack within two-three days. The Hanoi propaganda line has always been that the PRG is doing the battle, so that they may not want to assault Saigon. We have five carrier groups in the area. We can lift 1,700 and have about 2,000 now. Any evacuation from Saigon will be risky and could be interrupted or terminated by brute force. It will be a hairy exercise.

The President: The Ambassador is under orders to get down by the end of the day. We are getting the Americans and dependents down to the barest minimum.
It is my judgment we should try to get something through the Congress to help stabilize the military situation.

Tower: I have a bill in my pocket to add $200 million in military aid.

Griffin: I would vote for it but I think it would be defeated. About half the Republicans would vote against it. I think the Democrats are on the hook now. If we were to add military assistance and get it defeated one would get the Democrats off the hook because a lot of Republicans would vote against it.

[There was much discussion -- all negative. The President read a number of reports about foreign leaders' doubts about American constancy. He asked them not to use the quotes.]

Cederberg: What has happened to bipartisanship? The Democrats give us nothing. It is not like when you were minority leader.

The President: There is no leadership there at all.

Griffin: Mr. President: You have to keep pushing for aid, but you should know what the realities are on the hill.

[Secretary Lynn and Mr. Zarb each gave a short report on the economy and energy situations respectively.]
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R. Leadership Briefing

4/27/75

[Handwritten text]

Join with Wild and act fast; it is already too late.

We have to be in a good situation. Our objective is to achieve a sound central and precise posture

of U.S. forces. This requires very careful planning and constant

monitoring and coordination.

We have had a fairly substantial gain in these phases.

We have tried to deal with some important points

and a few others that are still in the works. We have

been able to lift some of the pressure from the

town and from Sagona by the end. We are doing Fine

with some by French.

Day by day, we continue to work on the main

part of the operation. We are proceeding slowly, but

we have a good plan to proceed with the operation.

This way, we can put pressure on one area, by tying

the enemy for Sagona. We intend to use several

resources, French controlled conditions it would be

possible to put out larger of losses. Even from Sagona

will be more difficult than P.P. We try not to

pressure a building but set the pressure down.

We would have pressure from U.S. forces on certain areas

and not be indiscriminate but to military who

would pressure. The U.S. heads in parts would be to

put out large scale pressure from the offshore.

Any substantial gain of Sagona would to a considerable

extent.

We are interested in the future and take some Sagona to maintain

a great deal by keeping watchful elements for change.
Only plan building county together in neither. They
have about 80 ridiculous points. We try will get
be replaced soon & this replacement soon after.
Some features be listed on one are less seen and
the rest not even seen once longer illustrated.
This text and any given content are longer illustrated
so that it would find any question. About it less
more is good. On some conditions it require a sight
the power have stepped can now de give a good
way to keep things under control. We think it
important to keep some part friend package to good
in some control near these longer counts. I'd get
from a test was to achieve a controlled with a still
write, while developing quickly in somewhat
published. Long. We get out not more dignify +

What sort of great will we then observe & learn it?

Not clear yet. Some time even went 2 & 3 CM
will check, but whether they will put things interim
planning or more quickly to absent it is not clear.

Occasional ones are doing criminal by lasting from birth
because they are no POC other. Very rare is they
will never support. What enojg go are these elegant
with in POC

Scott Right

I cannot imagine POC wanting a large with power on
its hands, so POC could be appointed to read to support
some sector/area and

Rhonda Howard Robinson

K kept wanting previously were against SAbank, vote cut
Subcommit has been for long and would support this return. His duties would not use. Ke seemed to prevent Subcommit from doing anything but a task. That why they refused the money, and in determining accept role of leadership may become more than will happen in US. Cambodian will be on least controlled state. Question is one will control.

Hanoi & Peking. Peking has long supported Hanoi as constant. They are held by Hanoi but Com                                        t. Vietnam. But they forces at Hanoi than in a conflict that large cannot execute & each stage for how & Cambodia will be in balance but then. NVA will take men to much./ have control on trying. This past time of Cambodia could, Hanoi lacked how close. Running but fight all their lives.

Catholic

We have a Central post over next few days. Yesterday I could see some much time post said would be better as I was seen/ agreed to it. But I still think 7/10/100 not have to come to floor, it seems our way & get it to floor before next week.

Case can have a bill on floor now/ was unable to work for anything at all. It would be a shame to what is needed can with out get it again.
P (Said still need some amount / some aid)

Sentry sit immediately. East being pushed back. About 300 men attack. Stay 3 days. Russian propaganda has been decreased that PRC is doing a battle to that thing may not want to assault Saigon. We have 5 cannon pumps. We can lift 12000 & have about 20000 mar
Carry and keep your part of the loaf along.

Keep your part of the loaf along.

Any one from Sugar will be nice it will
be interrupted in time to your place and place it
will be a busy season.

Come in and take a little to get over by analogy
take one getting a new dependent house & start
winter.

Stay put together & get together then

From there we would not expect to add 200 & still

We can see what it means but I think it would be better
about half to & I would not vote against it. To get
us from trouble. I think we are one and wish.

If we were to do it and assist why it would
not get a chance off a face because a lot of people
world not against it.

(Much discussion - all neg.)

P. (Speak softly about American custom)

Crispin: What has happened to bipartisanship. The Democrats
are working. Not like you or minority leader.

P: I have no leadership them at all.

Crispin: Then you have to keep justifying friend, but you
should know what conclusions are one think.

Hymn on America

Zachary Taylor

[Signature]