MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: The President's Meeting with the Cabinet on Indochina

DATE: Tuesday, April 29, 1975
9:45 a.m.

PLACE: The Cabinet Room

President: We had a difficult time in Indochina recently, beginning with the situation in Phnom Penh. We have managed in Vietnam to prevent a panic and to stabilize the military and diplomatic situation temporarily. This has enabled us to get virtually all the Americans out and many Vietnamese out. The fact that we have not panicked and have kept together has enabled us to come out of a tragic situation as well as possible.

Kissinger: When the President made his April 10th speech to the Congress, he set the goal of stabilization of the situation. That optimized our chances for whatever the outcome would be. It prevented a panic and the jeopardizing of 6,000 Americans; it kept stability in government, and it gave some chance to the high-risk Vietnamese. The supplemental kept troops in the field and let us start the evacuation. Defacto there was a ceasefire for a few days.

If there is a change in government in Saigon, it is foreseeable it would move from pro-American to neutral to pro-Communist and from helping us to opposing us.

Between the speech and yesterday, the number of Americans was reduced from 6,000 to 950. Yesterday, Tan Son Nhut came under attack. The President called an NSC meeting and decided on one more day of fixed-wing operations if possible to get out 8,000 Vietnamese and thin out the Americans. We located them in two areas: the Tan Son Nhut compound with about 400 Americans and the Embassy with 400 Americans.
and 200 hangers-on. The airport was closed by incoming fire so the President ordered a helicopter evacuation. The airlift was ordered at 1050 and began in the early hours. Our orders were to evacuate the Americans, and we thought that could be done in a couple of hours, but the Americans became mixed with Vietnamese and the decision was they couldn't be evacuated without danger, so we have evacuated many Vietnamese. The operation is continuing and probably will continue for two or three more hours. If we are lucky and get them out, we will have accomplished our objective to get the high-risk Vietnamese out, and we have eased the transition to the new government. It is still tragic but at least it is controlled.

President: The two Marines who were killed yesterday were killed by happenstance rocket fire. We planned a fixed-wing evacuation, but they were warned off when the runway was blocked. We then went to a helicopter evacuation. On the ground they decided to evacuate Vietnamese with Americans and we have to let them be the judge on the ground.

Schlesinger: There are about 200 men in a security force at Tan Son Nhut because the priority now is at the Embassy. There are an unknown number of Americans and Vietnamese still left. The only attacks were on aircraft on which fire was returned and on the boat from Can Tho. Now we have the problem of sniper fire. We hope to complete the operation by noon.

President: Are we actually in the process of getting the security force out of Tan Son Nhut?

Schlesinger: Yes.

Kissinger: They can protect themselves better than others.

Morton: How about other nationals?

Kissinger: All have left but the French.

President: One of the problems has been that the number of Americans has been growing as we evacuate -- they are coming out of the woodwork. The rifle fire is worrisome. The fire is South Vietnamese, which illustrates the problem we would have faced had we panicked the situation.
Kissinger: And pushing for aid helped keep the situation stable.

Schlesinger: [Describes the loss of control at Tan Son Nhut] which led to your decision to evacuate at about 11:00 p.m.

President: We have ordered Martin to get the Americans out but he is the judge of how to get them out best.

Kissinger: You never ordered any but Americans out in the helicopter lift. Including Vietnamese was a local decision, probably to insure the evacuation of American citizens.

Morton: Where will the refugees go?

President: We have set up three U.S. refugee centers--Camp Pendleton, Camp Chaffee and Eglin Air Force Base. There were some objections to this, but we must spread them out to the extent possible.

Kissinger: We have approached a number of countries to take some.

President: After the leadership meeting, Henry and Ron Nessen will brief the press. Tell them. Let's say nothing so we can speak with one voice.

Morton: Maybe the TTPI can take 4-5,000 skilled people. There is a real shortage and we can explore it.

Coleman: Are you giving any thought now to outlining what our foreign policy will be in this part of the world from here out? Your April 10th speech was great for the time but obviously, the situation has changed now.
Robert Hey
29 Apr 75

P. S. I had dinner in Jerusalem recently, by co
P. S. We have many in US to present a posi
tional wide clip of the position. They have
arrived so far at least all US way known
and East area have not permitted & have kept to
this limited set of a current set
As noted earlier.

Kelson people hope greatly for the position of Turkey
with Iran. One of Iran's main sources for weapons
is Turkey. It provides arms and training arms
US, kept stability in part, gaining back only
& high with Kosovo. The supplemented kept
loose in a form of part in that area. Departa
1 to 2 years for Iran. China is smart in certain
fashion as it would know from US to mediate
for China + China helping to pay war. But much
in yesterday, as Turkey good,NBC, FSN, yesterday
FSN and other US channels called SCS + warned
same day of finding pros + poses. I knew it concerns
+ claiming US. We located in Tumso: FSN
empared/what US & Entestry. W/4000.000
shipped on Dept ship by port to Earland
2nd. shore. A lift control at first stage in only
home, once heauisment now US + we did not like
in couple of hours, but US known to get/have
+ clearance Anglo to land or to land or leave, so
we have some many hours. Open is continue
+ you will 2-3 hrs. If we don't get them
out, we will have among our expected to st
high with lineout & we harassed terminus
the main gate still taken but not under control

P: this I believed especially since they answered

S: FDR, we planned fixed up, but they were unwilling
when morning broke. The weather went
to heavy snow. Oo & our 3rd & 50th & 20th & 21st
were in tanks but then a single tank
was sent in to search & we judged our good

S: there are about 100 security force at 7:30
because

P: enemy front is 7:30. Our movement of US
+ Enemy still left. Only attacks were on right

S: our front has shifted & on front from Con. the
next hour front of enemy front + very, we judge in
total control

P: our men actually in process of lifting security

S: yes

R: They can protect themselves better than ours.

"Wut" Hornament other words

R: All have left but a few

P: Conjectures been true that # of Rhyme has been

S: growing as we move - coming out from

R: the right side is very poor. The fire is 7:30

P: which illustrates again we would have fixed but we

R: would proceed & helped keep it stable.

S: (division list of wanted) which led to

R: our division to move at about 00:00

P: we have ordered them to go west & north

S: "Pilch's" in judge & come & get them out now
IT/I

We have set up a US refugee center in Exile, England.

K

We have opposed a # of vacant US sites.

P

After leadership exit, 60 workers will have jobs. Tell us what we can do with our deficit funds.

Column

We are planning a trip to everything else.