

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 29, 1975

Notes of the Cabinet Meeting
April 29, 1975, 9:45 a.m.

The President convened the Cabinet at 9:50 a.m.

The President noted the difficulties of the last two weeks. He observed that although the evacuations thus far had been successful, we are not yet over the difficult period. Our objectives during this period, he observed, have been to prevent panic in South Vietnam which would endanger American evacuation, deter North Vietnamese activity, and stabilize the situation so that a successful evacuation could take place.

Secretary Kissinger described in detail the events leading up to the evacuation. He reported that at the moment 300-400 Americans remained at the Embassy. In the last two days 4650 people have been lifted out of Saigon and that approximately 45000 Vietnamese will ultimately be evacuated.

Secretary Schlesinger reported that only a small security force (700) remains at DAO (Defense Attache's Office) and that the priority has shifted to the evacuation of Embassy personnel.

The President stated that our original intention was to use C-130 aircraft for the evacuation, but that the shelling of the airport precluded that. Helicopters were substituted. Amb. Martin and Gen. Smith made a decision on site to include South Vietnamese with the American evacuees presumably in order to prevent panic.

Secretary Schlesinger indicated that some difficulties had been encountered. Only two helicopters at a time can be used for Embassy evacuation; there had been sniper fire; the weather had not been favorable; and there had been some North Vietnamese firing at evacuation aircraft. In one instance our aircraft returned the fire and observed secondary explosions.

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MR 90-942 NSC Mr. 10/12/90
By KSH NARA Date 12/17/90



The President asked if there were any questions.

Secretary Morton asked about the status of other foreign nationals.

Secretary Kissinger responded that all Embassies except the French had departed.

The President noted that more Americans (100-200) than previously estimated appeared for evacuation. He indicated that the next two hours would be extremely delicate but that thus far the panic problem had been generally kept in hand.

Secretary Kissinger pointed out that we had to publicly fight for aid so long as a governmental structure remained in Saigon. Otherwise he was sure that a serious panic would have resulted at an early stage in the evacuation.

Secretary Schlesinger indicated that panic at Tan Son Nhut had prevented the use of C-130's.

Acting Secretary Tabor inquired about the total number of evacuees.

Secretary Kissinger indicated that about 4650 have been taken out in the last two days, of which 500-600 were Americans. He also noted that although the President had directed that South Vietnamese were to be evacuated when it appeared that C-130's would be available, in the present circumstances the President's only direct order was to get the Americans out. The decision was made on the ground to include South Vietnamese.

The President reiterated that a total of 43-45000 South Vietnamese will have been evacuated.

Secretary Morton asked where would the South Vietnamese go.

The President responded that State was working on the problem, that three U. S. military bases had been set up here. He noted some Congressional objections. He indicated that we would have to motivate charitable organization to assist and asked the Cabinet officers for their help in doing so.



Secretary Kissinger indicated that other countries had been approached to take some of the refugees but that about 90% of them will come to the U.S.

Mr. Rumsfeld observed that the White House, DOD and State had been conducting Congressional liaison; that there would be a bipartisan meeting today and a press briefing.

The President stated that Secretary Kissinger would give the briefing and requested that no one speak out until then. He stressed the importance of speaking with a single voice.

Secretary Morton asked if most of the refugees were white collar.

Secretary Kissinger indicated that it was difficult to say, but that certainly many were.

Secretary Morton indicated that perhaps a substantial number (5000) might be resettled in the Pacific Trust Territories where their political skills might be used.

Secretary Kissinger stated that that seemed like a good idea.

The President agreed and told Secretary Morton to get hold of Ambassador Brown and discuss it.

Secretary Morton responded that he could explore the issue quickly.

Secretary Coleman observed that since so much of the President's Joint Session address on Foreign Policy had been aimed in large part toward ensuring stability during evacuation, would he now be ready to give another foreign policy speech.

The President indicated that there would be a follow-up at the appropriate time. He then adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

