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TALKING POINTS - MIDDLE EAST

Opening Remarks

- 1. Before I ask Henry to give us a rundown on what has gone on, where we are, and some thoughts on where we might go from here, I would like to make a couple of points.
- 2. In my opinion, Israel has acted inflexibly and has created a genuine crisis of confidence. We have been telling them consistently for eight months what was required for movement in the Sinai. As you all know, we have been pouring in military equipment since November 1973 in response to their urgent requirements, to enable them to deal with the negotiations from a position of security and self-confidence. At no time did they tell us they simply could not go along with what we said was the irreducible minimum they would have to give.
- 3. As a consequence, we are now faced with a very difficult situation. Henry, why don't you explain how we got where we are, and what are some of the implications of the present situation.

Summing-Up Comments

- 4. In the past we have had a unique relationship with Israel. Our expectation has been that this special relationship would produce sufficient trust in the U.S. that Israel would respond positively on issues which were for us of overriding national and mutual interest, such as the second Sinai agreement. This expectation has proven unfounded.
- 5. We must try to get across to the Israelis that if we are expected to run the risk of war for them, they must be willing to run the risks of peace for us. We have no choice but to put ourselves in a position to protect our own interests.



6. What has happened, as Henry has said, is that the Israelis have blown up a Middle East policy conducted over 18 months. As you know, I have directed a reassessment of our entire policy and strategy in the Middle East, covering all aspects of our relationship with all countries in the area, as well as the impact of our Middle East policy on our relations with countries outside the area. The results should provide us with a basis for determining where we go from here.
7. At least until we have completed the overall policy review, I would like all Government agencies to adopt a new attitude in dealing with Israeli requests and officials: treat them in the same correct, courteous fashion and with the same priority accorded officials of other very friendly governments -- but no more than that. This should be done in such a way that each agency, on its own, and not as if in response to a directive from me, holds back so as to accord only standard friendly bureaucratic treatment to Israeli requests. I also do not want Israelis wandering about freely in your agencies. I want a single point of contact, or at most two, designated, through which Israeli embassy officials and others will deal. In the past, the Israelis have had too much freedom, almost as much as our own people.
8. An important, immediate issue is how we handle the pending Israeli request for \$1.5 billion in new arms and \$2.59 billion in financial assistance. I want these two requests to be very carefully examined by appropriate agencies in terms of their justification, just as if they were routine requests from another friendly country.
9. As for specific agencies, I want to see the following actions:  
State -- I want State to control and cut back on all contacts with the Israeli Embassy.



Defense -- You have the trickiest problem. Pending the outcome of our policy reappraisal, I would like you to delay on the several items which are of unusual sensitivity -- the F-15 team, the Lance missile, and the Laser-Guided Bomb. I also want to hold action on co-production agreements. You should cancel the planned visit to Washington by Israeli Defense Minister Peres. I also want a list of all the arms we have supplied Israel since November 1973; please compile also a list of major arms sales already approved for Arab countries. Again, all this should not look like orders from the White House.

Treasury -- Drag your feet on the meeting of the US-Israeli Economic Committee and the projects already approved; we don't want to pyramid more and more deals.

CIA and DIA -- Cut out intelligence exchanges with Israel except tactical intelligence that might prevent a surprise attack.

Each agency must take the responsibility on itself and not blame the White House. This has to be a team effort. The situation is very serious.

10. In order to ensure that we have properly coordinated policy and adequate centralized control over arms agreements and shipments, I want the sale and the delivery dates of arms deals over \$5 million with any Middle East country, whether Israel or an Arab country, to be approved in advance by the White House, using the procedures recently set up for all sales of over \$25 million.
11. Finally, I want to ask all of you to see to it that your staffs understand that we do not now consider ourselves in a crisis situation with respect to the Middle East. We are, however, faced with a new situation of potentially serious consequences. Therefore, we must review all aspects of our policies and planning relating to the Middle East and tighten up certain procedures right away in order to protect U.S. interests. The changes in procedures which I have asked be carried out should be described in that perspective. In response to press queries, you should stick to the usual practice of saying nothing about NSC meetings and holding as closely as possible any specifics about our review of policy or changes in procedures.



TALKING POINTS - SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. The situation in South Vietnam has reached a critical stage. The entire northern half of the country could be lost if South Vietnamese forces are not soon able to mount an effective defense. There also could be up to a million refugees to be relocated from Danang and many more if Danang cannot be held. There are reports that the Communists may even be planning attacks against Saigon itself.
2. I have sent General Fred Weyand out to Vietnam for a first-hand personal assessment of the situation and of South Vietnam's immediate needs. We will know more when he returns with his report.
3. I am also concerned about developments in Cambodia, where the Communists appear to be stepping up their offensive again.
4. It is vitally important at this time to assure our friends of our solid support, and that we will do everything we can to get them what they need.
5. I, for my part, intend to do everything I can to help our friends to cope with this crisis and to stabilize this dangerous situation.
6. I count on all of you and on your agencies to help in every way you can.



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ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

Attendance at NSC Meeting  
Friday, March 28, 3:00 p.m.

The Vice President

State: Robert Ingersoll

Treasury: William Simon

Defense: James Schlesinger  
William Clements

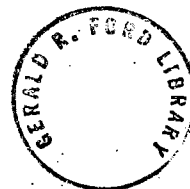
JCS: General George S. Brown

CLA: William Colby  
[REDACTED] -- Mideast Portion  
[REDACTED] -- Vietnam Portion (Stand-by)

WH: Donald Rumsfeld  
Henry A. Kissinger  
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft

NSC: Robert Oakley -- Mideast Portion

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

April 9, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: Jeanne W. Davis *JWD*

SUBJECT: Minutes of NSC Meeting,  
March 28, 1975

Herewith for your information are Bob Oakley's minutes of the March 28 NSC meeting on the Middle East, Vietnam and Cambodia.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Friday, March 28, 1975  
Time: 3:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.  
Place: Cabinet Room, The White House  
Subject: Middle East and Southeast Asia

Principals

The President  
The Vice President  
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger  
Secretary of the Treasury William Simon  
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown  
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll (only for  
Vietnam portion)  
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Joseph Sisco

Defense: Deputy Secretary William Clements

WH: Donald Rumsfeld

NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft  
Robert B. Oakley *RC*



XGDS - 3  
DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.  
BYAUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

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DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.4  
WHI POLITICALS DELETED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 2.3 (1) (4) (5)

NR 92-10, # 18 NSC Nr. 10/7/99

By KBH, MADA, 2002 2/6/95

President:

This is the first of the steps, and a very important step, which we must take following the extremely disappointing results of Henry Kissinger's long and arduous trip to the Middle East. I told Rabin that unless there was a settlement, we would have to reassess our policies toward the Middle East, including Israel. I don't know if they understood what I was saying but I think they do now. Since I have been in office, we have worked with Israel to try and get a settlement. We acted in good faith and I assume they did, also, but when the chips were down they showed a lack of flexibility which was needed for an agreement. What I said to the Hearst papers about more Israeli flexibility being in the best interests of peace is true. But there was no flexibility. I will catch flak for my position and Henry is already catching it. The time has come for a good hard look.

I will tell you briefly about my record in Congress where Israel is concerned. It was so close that I had a black reputation with the Arabs. I have always liked and respected the Israeli people. They are intelligent and dedicated to the causes in which they believe. They are dedicated to their religion, their country, their family and their high moral standards. I admire them and respect them. And I have never been so disappointed as to see people I respect unable to see that we are trying to do something for their interest as well as for our own. But in the final analysis our commitment is to the United States.

Vice President: Hear, hear.

President:

We could have been together but now I do not know. The reassessment will take place and we will see. We cannot afford to have our position in this country undercut but I must tell you what I think. We will be following a firm policy of reassessment. It will not be decided today. Everyone will take a close look first. But in the meantime, keep everyone at arm's length.



Henry, do you want to tell us about your mission and where we are now?

Kissinger:

Let me describe some of the issues which we will face in the reassessment of a Middle East policy. First, what have we been trying to achieve?

In November 1973 all the Western Europeans, the Japanese and the USSR were solidly united on an immediate Israeli return to the 1967 lines. If the situation had been allowed to continue, given the economic problem in the West, all the pressures would have been on us. And at Geneva everyone would have been united against Israel with the US acting as Israel's lawyer. Our policy helped abort this sort of Geneva Conference, even though we went along with the idea in order to keep the Russians calmed down. We had the willingness of Sadat to play a constructive, cooperative role and the active encouragement of Feisal for the step-by-step approach. This held off the radicals and enabled us to create a situation in which all the Arabs were turning to us, while Israel had a situation which it could handle politically since it had to deal with only a small piece at a time. We also neutralized the Western Europeans and Japanese who are anxious to replace us in the Middle East. Objectively, there is little to distinguish the effect of their policies from those of the Soviets. This process which we instituted proceeded well and met Israel's interests as well as our own. The two were compatible in the step-by-step approach.

So the big issue with Israel during my last trip was not lines on maps. By the way, the leaked maps in the New York Times and elsewhere are inaccurate. They only showed us a map after the negotiations were over. But lines are trivial compared to whether or not the moderate Arab leaders are able to say the US has delivered something. And this is



fully in line with the survival of Israel, really the best way to ensure Israel's survival. The USSR was completely out of the game and on this last trip Feisal came to the point where he told me he trusted me to proceed as I judged best even though he would have preferred another approach. And Asad told me he wanted separate negotiations with Israel rather than Geneva.

So our disappointment is that Israel did not understand. They could have been shielded and their only friend, literally their only friend in the world, was in control of the process, dealing with the Arabs singly and keeping the USSR out. Even Iraq was beginning to move out of the Kurdish orbit. I do not approve of the brutal way in which Iran and Iraq disposed of the fate of the Kurds, but it created a situation whereby the Iraqis no longer had such need for the Soviets. I was hoping that in such a situation with all the Arabs turning to us and away from the USSR, someone in the Kremlin would have gotten discouraged and said, "Let's stop pouring so much money and effort down a rat hole." That was the situation we had one week ago.

On the whole, in the negotiations, I think Egypt went further and Israel not as far as I had expected. But our role and the whole strategy we had followed for eighteen months, putting us in the key position, has been disrupted. Now that the parties are face to face with it, they are not so eager for Geneva.

A unilateral US effort now would be a mistake, would make it look as if we were more anxious than the parties. If they came to us, we could think about doing something but there can not be any more shuttles. The pressure on the Arabs is likely to be against cooperating with us. Sadat will have to move toward the other Arabs in order to protect himself and also a bit toward the Soviets and Western Europeans and Geneva. Moreover, tensions in the area will



build up. UNEF is due for renewal on April 26 and UNDOF a month later. Sadat told me he would renew UNEF for three months, not six. I would expect UNDOF to be renewed for two months. Both would thus expire simultaneously by the end of July and by August we could have a flash point on both fronts.

Schlesinger: Will the Soviets veto a renewal?

Kissinger: Not if the parties are for it. I expect we will have some violations of the agreement soon. The Egyptians already have some SAM sites across the Canal and there will probably be more. Syria and the PLO will get back in the game, perhaps with guerilla raids from Lebanon. The Secretary General is already in the game, trying to arrange Geneva. I am trying to slow him down a little. If Geneva meets, things will happen. Israel will have to deal with all of its neighbors and all of the final issues at the same time. Up to the present, thanks to our strategy, we and Israel were able to avoid this.

President: When would Geneva meet?

Kissinger: Let's not rush into it. We must act as if we were ready to go all-out to head for Geneva but not actually set a date. That will have a good effect on the parties. I think we can wait until June but we can not appear to stall or hang back. Even though the Soviets are now in a good tactical position, we still have the chips because everyone is still counting on us to move Israel. We can get the benefit of this basic situation if we can deliver. This is true bilaterally or at Geneva. If we do not deliver, the Arabs will conclude that only force can get anything from Israel. For the moment Egypt and Saudi Arabia still have some confidence in the US, judging from what was said to the Vice President.

Vice President: And also affection for the US and for Henry.





Kissinger:

There will now be a more active Soviet role and if the Arabs do not think they can get enough progress they will ask that the UK and France participate at Geneva. We have an interest in the survival of Israel but we also have broader interests with the Western Europeans and Japan and the Arabs. If there is another war we run the risk of antagonizing the Arabs definitively and of pushing them into the arms of the Soviets. We will also risk a direct confrontation with the Soviets. At Geneva we will confront the basic issues of final frontiers and Palestine and guarantees and demilitarization. We may have to draw up a comprehensive US plan for the Middle East so as not to be empty-handed.

A big question is to what degree we will want to coordinate with or dissociate ourselves from Israel. What kind of economic and military aid should we provide and what should the timing be? What kind of military supply policy should we have for the Arabs? As I see it, the only remaining Soviet influence in Egypt is the latter's need for spare parts and other military items from the USSR. What about our energy policy and the Joint Committees? What about the PLO?

Even if we decide to do nothing we must have a policy. We need a diplomatic strategy for Geneva and a strategy for bilateral relations, with the Arab states and Israel, economically and militarily. There are also some tactical questions concerning Geneva: Should we go for a stalemate with a subsequent resumption of our bilateral efforts, or go to Geneva with a US plan and force a settlement? We need a carefully worked-out strategy for another war. The last time we came out very well without an advance strategy but the next time we can not improvise. Another war will produce very heavy casualties--I think Bill Colby's estimate is for 7000 Israeli dead--with more Arab countries joining in and a greater risk of Soviet involvement!



The Soviets will be a much bigger threat than in the past. In 1967 and again in 1973 they stood aside while their Arab allies were humiliated. The cumulative resentment is building up and is likely to push them to be less cautious this time in showing their power. This is all the more true since they see the US as weak and unwilling to stand up for its commitments anywhere in the world.

That is why we need a total reassessment. Joe Sisco will be in charge of a special working group to consider all of these questions. It should take about three weeks.

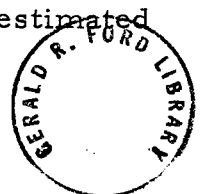
We need to keep the immediate situation under control and then recapture control of the long-term situation. We can do this since the Arabs know they still need to come to us to get progress. But we must be absolutely certain that we can deliver progress the next time.

President: Thank you, Henry, what do the others have to say?

Schlesinger: I think Henry's presentation was very accurate. Our position could be one of dignified aloofness. We are in the cat-bird seat. We can go to Geneva, point out we have already done our best but did not succeed, so we will just sit and wait to see what develops.

Vice President: Do you mean aloofness from Israel?

Schlesinger: Yes, I do. There should not be full policy coordination with Israel as in the past. We should look forward, not to the past. United States policy has been frustrated to the extent we hope to be successful in the years ahead. We can not allow Israel to continue its relationship with us as if there were no problems. We can not let them conclude that they can upset the U.S. applecart but the Administration can do nothing about it. The military balance from the Israeli standpoint is much better than the last time we met (in the NSC) to discuss this problem. We overestimated



badly the amount of Soviet arms which Egypt had received. So the balance for Israel is reasonably favorable and we need not be concerned over our aloofness.

Simon: What about the Joint Economic Commissions?

President: This is a crucial question. Joe Sisco is coordinating our reassessment. It is not aimed at tilting toward or against Israel or toward or against Arabs. It is aimed at the best interests of the U.S. Jim (Schlesinger) used a good word, "aloof," and I think this is the posture we should adopt at least during the period of our policy reassessment. As an example of this, it would be better if Peres did not come on his visit as originally planned. And as for the F-15, I think we should hold up the visit by the Israeli team which was coming to make an assessment. Bill (Simon), you should be aloof with the Joint Committee.

Simon: We have Joint Commissions with several countries, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. How shall we handle this?

President: The Iranians and Saudis are in a different category. They were not involved in the negotiations.

Simon: What about Egypt?

President: What are we doing there?

Simon: We have several projects, particularly helping them rebuild the area along the Suez Canal.

President: As I recall, we were slow in getting started with Egypt so we can afford to be more forthcoming than with the Israelis. ....  
..... There is no pique on our part but we are reassessing so we will be restrained.



Colby: .....

President: As I recall my own experiences as a Congressman, the Israeli representatives float very freely on Capitol Hill. Now we can't do anything about that with Congress. But I have the impression the Israeli representatives are almost as free in many Departments as they are with Congress. You must try to control that.

Schlesinger: We have ..... Israeli representatives. It is very difficult to handle.

President: Try to do ..... Channelize the relationships with Israeli representatives. The proper relationship should be business-like but arms-length and aloof. Jim, what did we do about that Israeli shopping list last fall?

Kissinger: The NSC recommended that we give them two out of eight slices but we ended up by giving them four out of eight.

President: I decided to include the Lance and the LGB because I thought they needed it. In retrospect, bearing in mind what I believed we were going to do together and what has actually happened, we were probably too generous. Jim, hold off on delivering those high priority items if there is a way to do it.

Schlesinger: We have a commitment to deliver the Lance.

Vice President: I thought they had a commitment, too, on negotiations.

Clements: We can prolong the Lance training in order to delay delivery.

President: Stay within the guidelines. How you implement it is your business. When we have reassessed, then we can proceed. For the moment, I would like to look at the four slices of arms we gave them and what we have delivered already.



Schlesinger: Haig was here last week complaining about the drawdowns on NATO stocks in Europe. I told him he knew all about it.

President: I would like to see those four slices. Did we go so far as to increase their offensive capability, not only improve their defensive capability? I want to see everything that has been delivered to Israel. I want to be able to show Congress just how much we have done militarily for Israel. Also, I would like to see what we have delivered to the Arabs in the way of military hardware.

General Brown: There is the question of when the stocks we have drawn down for Israel will be replaced for our own forces. You can use this with Congress.

President: That would be useful. Get me a list of what we have done since I have been President. If challenged, I want the record.

Kissinger: It would also be valuable to know what we have delivered since November 1973 when our major re-equipment program began.

President: That will be useful for background but the stress should be on what has happened since I came to office, so show where the cut-off is. We have drawn down our own capability.

Clements: We have even drawn out of our own stocks.

President: I want to look at the facts. Bill (Colby), do you want to talk?

Colby: A major factor is the increased chance of war. We put out a Special National Intelligence Estimate yesterday. The armies of Egypt, Syria and Israel are all in a state of alert and there is a substantial chance of hostilities breaking out either deliberately or by accident at any time in the next few weeks. If it does not happen quickly, then there will be negotiations



at Geneva and if there is no progress there by early summer there are high odds that Egypt and Syria will launch a coordinated attack and even higher odds that Israel will attack first. Israel probably sees war as inevitable and may decide to hit now. Comparatively, they are well off. They can probably beat Egypt and Syria both in 7-10 days.

Kissinger: We told Asad this was our estimate of how the war would develop, not Israel's estimate but our own. Asad told me we did not understand: "We learned in 1973 that Israel can not stand pain. We will lose a lot but we will not give up and we will use the strategy of inflicting casualties and fighting an extended war. We will lose territory and men but bleed Israel and draw the Soviets in. "

Schlesinger: If Israel strikes first, they will not behave rationally. They are likely to strike through Lebanon.

Kissinger: They may be able to hit quickly but the Syrians are determined to hold out.

Colby: We project 7,000 Israeli killed, three times as many as in October 1973. But we believe they can punch through.

Sisco: The Arabs will not stick their necks out. This is a very critical judgment. It can determine the outcome of the war. The Arabs will fight on the defensive and drag it out as long as possible.

Kissinger: The Arabs think of prolonged war and an early oil embargo.

Schlesinger: Before the US resupplies? That would be crazy. We won't stand for it.

Kissinger: We must think of it. Also, our contingency planning needs to assume higher risk-taking by the Soviets.

President: Did the Soviets go further in 1973 than before?



- Schlesinger: They threatened the British and French in 1956 with nuclear attack.
- Kissinger: Only after we had dissociated ourselves from our allies and told them to pull back.
- Schlesinger: The Soviets were all bluster.
- Clements: The priority problem is that Israel may decide their position will worsen so they will preempt. They already had before April 1st enough to preempt and as their situation worsens, they could decide to go now. Also, as we became more aloof, this could aggravate the situation. It could push them to this kind of decision.
- Kissinger: We must weigh many factors. I agree with Bill that if there is no progress by summer, there will be war within one year or maybe this year. We have six months to produce something. For Israel to go to war at the known displeasure of the U.S. would be a monumental decision. We must keep the Arabs from becoming too upset but show Israel they can not ignore us. The next time we must be in a position to get results from Israel.
- Schlesinger: Maybe the word aloof is not a good one. We can say to the Israelis that we have made an honest effort and our well is temporarily dry. Whether it will be temporary or permanent depends on you. We are here.
- President: Rocky, what about your talks with Sadat and the Saudis?
- Vice President: Mr. President, your thought of sending someone to the funeral of King Feisal and your letters made a deep impression and I believe really helped the Saudis get through a very difficult period. Saudi Arabia wants to follow the policy of cooperation of King Feisal, judging from my talks with Khalid and Fahd. I told



Fahd we want his advice. He said that Feisal had stood up to Nasser on radicalism in the Arab world when it appeared that Saudi Arabia was all alone but by the time of his death Egypt had come around to seeing that Feisal was right. Fahd said, however, that unless there is a "just, equitable and lasting peace within one year"--and those are his exact words--the Soviets will move back in, the radicals will be reinvigorated and rearmed by the Soviets while the moderates will move away from the US and establish a close relationship with Western Europe. The Europeans have arms they want to sell, we have the money to buy and we can learn to fly the planes and drive the tanks. The Arabs will keep building their military strength as long as it takes from the USSR and Western Europe and in time we will crush Israel. That is what Fahd said to me. He is right about the Western Europeans. The French sent their Defense Minister to the funeral with a list of items for sale and models of aircraft and tanks. This offended the Saudis.

Simon:

Israel might strike first. Is Egypt fully resupplied? I gather they are not and Israel is militarily superior. They won't allow the Arabs to fight a war of attrition. Also, if there is too much uncertainty about our support, it could lead Israel to conclude it must hit first.

Kissinger:

Our problem would be the same if Israel hits soon or later on. Even if Israel destroys the Arab armies, we will face the same problems in our relations with the Arabs, Western Europeans and Soviets. We would be obliged to step in, tell Israel that is enough and impose or try to impose a settlement along the 1967 line. There is a physical limit to what three million people can occupy and sooner or later we will have to stop this process.

President:

Exactly. How many miles of territory and how many cities can Israel occupy?





- Kissinger: And would the Soviets stand by while that happened?
- Colby: We think the Soviets are freer to support the Arabs than they have been before. It would take them only a very few days to fly in defensive support such as SAMs and aircraft. Their airborne troops could probably be beaten by the Israelis because they would only be lightly armed, but they could reinforce the air defense around Cairo and Damascus and other cities.
- Kissinger: I am not sure Israel would directly attack Soviet troops.
- Brown: When I was reading the Special National Intelligence Estimate, I had the impression of hearing an old record over again. We made a mistake about the Arabs in October 1973. What Sisco had to say is very important. We must keep our minds open.
- Schlesinger: Israel will certainly win another round.
- Brown: Israel's army is very good. We know that. But don't count out the Arabs.
- Vice President: Think what another war would mean for us. The OPEC countries would stick together in an oil embargo, particularly since the Latin Americans are already unhappy with us. This could cause paralysis of the East Coast of the United States.
- President: I told Morton to put together a contingency plan on what would be likely to happen if there were another oil embargo, what measures we can take, and what the probable result would be. We need to follow up on this.



Simon: I don't believe Venezuela will shut off exports to the U.S.

Vice President: Venezuela is leading the movement of Latin American solidarity in standing up to the U.S. on economic matters. Would you like to take the risk if you were Governor of New Jersey?

Clements: I agree with Nelson.

Colby: We would have two or three months of grace due to our stockpiles.

Clements: There is the geographical dislocation problem. We are just not set up to transfer our production and stocks rapidly enough from one part of the country to another.

President: I told FEA and others to get some contingency plans ready. I have decided that when Congress comes back on the 9th or 10th, I am going to speak to a Joint Session on foreign policy. I am going to lay it on the line, Far East, Middle East, National Security and Defense, and other topics. The President has to speak out strongly and positively. Send your suggestions to Brent for incorporation in the speech. We will announce it tomorrow and I will spend a lot of time in California on this. Henry will come out and help. By the time I get back on the 7th we will be in shape for the speech. The American people want to know where they are and Congress needs to know what to do. The State of the Union message had nothing on foreign policy so it has been a long time since a major address on this subject.

(At this point the discussion turned to Southeast Asia; Deputy Secretary Ingersoll joined the meeting.)



President: Bill, what is the situation on the ground in Vietnam?

Colby: The Vietnamese Government has enough to control the area around Saigon and the Delta for this dry season but they are likely to be defeated in 1976. Thieu tried to extract his troupes from the highlands in time but his ploy failed. He was so afraid of leaks to the Communists that he told no one in advance, not even his own commanders who were caught by surprise. There was really only one battle. Thieu was aware of the superior comparative strength of the North Vietnamese in the highlands so he wanted to pull out of Pleiku and Kontum. He wanted to fight at Ban Me Thuot, but he could not do it. Among other problems, his C-130s were sidelined. So the move to the coast became a route instead of an orderly withdrawal. Then they were attacked in Quang Tri and Thieu was indecisive about Hue, first he was not going to fight and then he was and then he finally decided not to. This caused the commander of I Corps to become confused and angry. And now the airborne, their best troops, are being taken out of Danang to Nha Trang and Saigon. Thieu also wants to bring the Marine Division out of the perimeter around Danang. If so, Danang will surely fall. Originally, Thieu wanted to defend the enclaves, like General Gavin.

Kissinger: Colby's estimate indicates that Thieu's pullback was designed to put him into a position to cut his losses and stagger through until 1976. He decided to do this because he was not getting enough support from the U.S. It was due to a lack of spare parts and ammunition. The idea of pulling back was not bad but when the move began, the refugees clogged the road and the troops did not know how to move anyway. Thieu was trying to get ready. His estimate and ours was the same; an all-out attack next year would finish him unless he got more support. So he wanted to stagger through this year and hope for a change.



Clements: He did not tell us anything at all and did not tell his own commanders.

Kissinger: The move could only have been carried out by surprise.

Colby: The refugee figures have fluctuated up and down, with the highest point coming after the Tet offensive. Now we are back up to over one million refugees.

President: Can the Vietnamese be economically self-sufficient in the smaller area?

Colby: Yes, the Delta is the big rice area. This would have been the first year of economic self-sufficiency had it not been for the suddenly deteriorating situation. The refugees are placing a big burden on the government but it is interesting to note that they are all fleeing toward the government. That shows clearly how they really feel about the Communists.

Clements: But the army may leave some \$200 million in arms and military equipment in Danang alone.

Colby: And there is some grumbling about Thieu in the army as well as in political circles. We may hear more about this.

President: You are not optimistic about Danang being held?

Colby: It should fall within two weeks even if the Marine Division stays instead of being pulled back to protect Saigon.

President: What about the evacuation of civilians?

Colby: There have been terrible mob scenes, both at the airport where they stormed loading aircraft and at the port where they jammed aboard ships. Some of the military have even shot their way on to the ships. A small number has been loaded but law and order has broken down completely and it is almost impossible.



Ingersoll:               Reportedly 6,000 refugees got off on one ship this morning and another one is loading now.

President:               What are these rumors about Ky coming back?

Kissinger:              Ky is a boy scout, a flamboyant pop-off; he can not do the job.

Colby:                    Chief of Staff Vien and Prime Minister Khiem are possible candidates to replace Thieu.

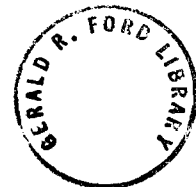
Kissinger:              Thieu has shown himself far and away the most capable of all the Vietnamese leaders I have known since 1965. No one else could do as well. He holds things together. He made a mistake in ordering the withdrawal from the highlands but he had no good choice. We were unable to give him the support he needed.

Colby:                    I agree with Henry. No one else is up to Thieu. Khiem would probably be the next best bet but he is some way from being up to Thieu.

General Brown:        I agree with Colby's estimate about Danang. It will be hard to hold 10 days. We have gotten all the Americans out. A second ship is loading. There are two airfields, the main one at Marble Mountain and a small one. There is an ARVN battalion protecting the small one from the mobs and some C-47 flights are getting off. The mobs took the main field and may take the second one.

Colby:                    There is little fighting in the Delta and around Saigon. Unless the North Vietnamese move their reserve divisions into the Delta from the North, Saigon and the Delta can probably be held militarily but the big problem will come when the stories about Danang start to circulate in Saigon.

Concerning Cambodia, Lon Nol is going to leave for Indonesia on April first. But there is no hope of talks with the Communists. They will see Lon Nol's departure as weakness and will push harder. The



new Communist proposal for a government would leave Sihanouk with no base at all, even if he was ostensibly the President.

Kissinger: The war is now being conducted against Sihanouk. If it were a question of Lon Nol leaving and then our dealing with Sihanouk, it would be easy. But the Khmer Rouge want to erase all possible political base for Sihanouk and bring him back only as a front for themselves. The French told us at Martinique that Sihanouk wanted to negotiate but was unable due to the Khmer Rouge.

Colby: The Cambodian airlift is suspended. The Communists could make the airfield unusable. The Government is losing ground east of the capital and also down along the river. The wet season starts in late May but the river will not come up until late July and by then it will probably be too late.

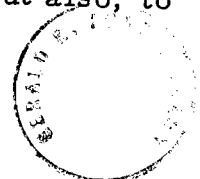
Schlesinger: We are getting the first reports that the Cambodian troops are beginning to lose their drive. They are worried about U.S. support and losing their commanders. With adequate resupply they would have lasted through the dry season. But the morale is no good. The debate in Congress has hurt them badly. It is likely to collapse in two weeks.

Kissinger: We have to make an evacuation decision. Ideally, from the political viewpoint, we should hold on until after your speech and after Congress makes a decision on our aid request. But if we wait it could collapse all at once before we can get our people out. But if we pull out, we will surely provoke a collapse. There are about 1100 people of all nationalities to be evacuated. We may need to decide next week.

General Brown: The situation has changed. The outlook is bleaker. We need to decide now to take them out or we could have a major problem. There is one brigade of Marines in the Pacific. We could use U.S. forces to take out the residents and try to beat the mob out with helicopters.



- President: How long will it take to get them out?
- General Brown: If we have to use helicopters downtown, it would take one day to get 1200 out. If we have the airfield, it would take less time. They can get there on their own. This is a very difficult operation.
- Vice President: The Marines might have to shoot civilians and that would create a huge uproar.
- General Brown: The mob will be hard to control. We might have to shoot refugees in front of the press.
- President: If you decide to use the airport, will you need to clear out the enemy?
- General Brown: We may need air cover. If there is any firing on our people on the ground at the airport, we will attack. We will have aircraft in the air.
- Clements: We can't tell whether or not the Khmer Rouge will fight us.
- Kissinger: We need a joint estimate about the unravelling in Cambodia. If they can't hold, you need a chance to look at the situation. We need an estimate as to how long it can hold so we can decide on whether or not to order fixed wing aircraft in for evacuation.
- Vice President: There is also the symbolism of Lon Nol leaving. This will have a bad effect on morale.
- Kissinger: The Khmer Rouge will negotiate only unconditional surrender. They could get a negotiated settlement anytime but they refuse it. When Lon Nol leaves, it will demoralize the country. Long Boret will try to carry on but will fail.
- Schlesinger: How long do we keep the Americans there after Lon Nol leaves?
- Kissinger: We are pressing them to get out. Lon Nol wanted to stay but we had to press him to get out also, to calm the situation.



General Brown: We need a decision now on improving our intelligence capability. We can not wait for the Forty Committee, Mr. President. Will you authorize us to preposition intelligence collection aircraft now for us over North VietNam if we need it?

President: Yes, that is okay.

[Meeting ended at 1715.]

