

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR. SAIGON EMBASSY FILES KEPT BY AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN: COPIES MADE FOR THE NSC STAFF, 1963-75 (1976)

Collection Type

White House Office Files

Extent

4.0 linear feet (ca. 8,000 pages)

Record Type

Textual

Access

Open. The collection is administered under terms of the donor's deed of gift, a copy of which is available on request, and under National Archives and Records Administration general restrictions (36 CFR 1256).

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Provenance

[Provenance of the National Security Adviser Files](#)

Processed by

Karen B. Holzhausen, November 1992; Revised March 2000

Scope and Content Note

The Saigon Embassy Files Kept by Ambassador Graham Martin is one of many subcollections that comprise the National Security Adviser Files.

In January 1978, the North Carolina State Police found a cache of classified documents in the trunk of a car that had been stolen from former U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam Graham A. Martin. They turned the documents over to the FBI. The documents were embassy files Martin had taken with him when he evacuated Saigon on April 29, 1975, just hours before the city fell to the Communists. The Justice Department, in considering prosecuting Martin for misuse of classified documents, sent copies of the files to the National Security Council for a damage assessment. The copies remained in NSC files until 1982, when the NSC determined that they should have been considered presidential papers and sent them to the Ford Library.

Most of the more than 6000 pages are from the Nixon and Ford administrations, although a few documents originating in Lyndon Johnson's administration and one segment regarding the Diem coup from John F. Kennedy's administration are also present. With a few exceptions, the materials have been maintained in the "packets" that were designated by the FBI. In most cases, the reverse chronological order in which they were received has been changed to forward chronological order.

The bulk of the materials in this collection are "backchannel" cables between the U.S. ambassadors in Saigon (Henry Cabot Lodge, Ellsworth Bunker, and Graham Martin, successively) and the President's national security advisers (McGeorge Bundy, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft, successively) regarding the situation in South Vietnam or the peace negotiations. In addition, there are straight State

Department cables, usually between the Secretary of State and the U.S. ambassador in Saigon; talking points prepared for meetings between the ambassador and South Vietnamese officials, mainly President Nguyen Van Thieu; reports and memoranda of conversations of those meetings; drafts of speeches and proposed agreements prepared by both sides; military situation reports; and intelligence reports.

The largest segment of the collection consists of communications between Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger during the period of the Paris peace talks. They include: (1) Kissinger relaying to Bunker details of his secret talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris, and later the formal Paris peace negotiations, including drafts of proposed agreements and negotiations over signing procedures; (2) Bunker's prepared talking points for meetings with President Thieu of South Vietnam to relay that information, and his reporting to Kissinger of Thieu's reaction to the information; (3) "think pieces" by both Bunker and Kissinger on the situation in Vietnam and the strategy for handling President Thieu; and (4) post-ceasefire diplomatic maneuvering, implementation of the agreements, and handling of allegations of ceasefire violations. The ambassador also transmitted drafts of major Nixon speeches regarding the peace negotiations to Thieu and relayed Thieu's reaction.

Graham Martin became ambassador to South Vietnam in early May 1973. His communications with Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft deal primarily with implementation of the ceasefire, violations of the ceasefire, the question of aid to South Vietnam and congressional relations centered around that issue, contacts with South Vietnamese officials, and the deterioration of the "peace" and the eventual evacuation of South Vietnam by the Americans. Many of the cables relate to diplomatic relations with other countries regarding the situation in Vietnam, including the Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia, France, and the members of the International Commission of Control and Supervision in Vietnam. The cables range from topics as specific as arrangements for the evacuation of certain individuals to philosophical discourses by Martin on the history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and his role in it.

Some, but not all, letters between Presidents Nixon/Ford and President Thieu are present in these files.

The nearly 200 pages of material dating from the Henry Cabot Lodge's tenure as U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam under President John F. Kennedy relate primarily to events, beginning in August 1963, leading up to the November 1963 coup and assassination of President Diem of South Vietnam. They consist mainly of communications between Henry Cabot Lodge and Secretary of State Dean Rusk or McGeorge Bundy, national security adviser, regarding meetings with South Vietnamese officials, intelligence reports, evaluations of the situation, and instructions from Washington.

Also included is a collection of documents apparently drawn together by Graham Martin for use in his congressional testimony in 1976. Unlike the bulk of the collection, which consists almost exclusively of White House or State Department documents, this material includes many documents originated by the various U.S. military entities involved in the Vietnam War.

Related Materials (March 2000)

The Ford Library holds a great deal of material related to the Vietnam War. Much of it concerns the MIA/POW issue and the treatment of refugees, but there is also substantive information about the fall of Saigon and the question of aid to South Vietnam. The various collections from the office of the National Security Adviser are a key source. In addition, the Congressional Relations Office files are particularly noteworthy, as are several categories of White House Central Files and the Presidential Handwriting File. The files of Richard Cheney, James Connor, Robert Wolthuis, Philip Buchen, John Marsh, William Baroody, and Ron Nessen also contain materials on Vietnam. The Milt Mitler files contain extensive files on MIA/POWs. The Theodore Marrs files contain extensive files on the refugee problem.

Several of the James Reichley interview transcripts relate to Vietnam, as does the Jerrold Schecter interview with President Ford, which is located in the Composite General Accessions.

Last Modified Date

2024-05-31

Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin, 1963-76.

(Boxes 1-7, 4.0 linear feet)

Backchannel cables, regular State Department cables, correspondence between the U.S. president and U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, correspondence between the U.S. president and the president of South Vietnam, talking papers for meetings between ambassador and president of South Vietnam, memos of conversations, draft diplomatic agreements, draft speeches, military situation reports, and intelligence reports.

The integrity and inconsistent chronological arrangement of the FBI "packets" was maintained, although the documents within the packets were rearranged so that they are in straight, rather than reverse, chronological order for the convenience of researchers.

Box 1 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 12/15/69 to 12/16/71 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 12/15/69 to 12/16/71 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 1/3/72 to 1/28/72 (1)-(4)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 1/3/72 to 1/28/72
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 2/21/72 to 7/23/72 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 2/21/72 to 7/23/72 (1)-(2)

Box 2 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 7/25/72 to 9/13/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 7/25/72 to 9/13/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 9/16/72 to 10/17/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 9/16/72 to 10/17/72 (1)-(2)

Box 3 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 10/22/72 to 11/6/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 10/22/72 to 11/6/72 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 11/7/72 to 11/24/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 11/7/72 to 11/24/72 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 11/26/72 to 12/23/72 (1)-(3)

Status	Title
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 11/26/72 to 12/23/72 (1)-(2)

Box 4 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 12/27/72 to 1/15/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 12/27/72 to 1/15/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 1/18/73 to 1/23/73
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 1/18/73 to 1/23/73 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 1/24/73 to 2/26/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 1/24/73 to 2/26/73 (1)-(2)

Box 5 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 2/26/73 to 3/30/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 2/26/73 to 3/30/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 4/16/73 to 5/22/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 4/16/73 to 5/22/73 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 5/23/73 to 6/4/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 5/23/73 to 6/4/73 (1)-(2)

Box 6 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 6/5/73 to 6/11/73 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 6/5/73 to 6/11/73
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 6/11/73 to 7/12/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 6/11/73 to 7/12/73
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 7/23/73 to 8/27/73
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 7/23/73 to 8/27/73 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 9/4/73 to 1/10/74 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 9/4/73 to 1/10/74 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 7/25/73 to 12/31/73
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 1/12/74 to 11/21/74 (1)-(3)

Box 7 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
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OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 1/12/74 to 11/21/74 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 1/7/74 to 12/3/74 (1)-(4)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 1/7/74 to 12/3/74 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 1/5/75 to 4/1/75
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 1/5/75 to 4/1/75 (1)-(3)

Box 8 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75 (1)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75 (2)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75 (3)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75 (4)
OPEN	Saigon to Washington, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75 (5)
OPEN	Washington to Saigon, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75
OPEN	Henry Cabot Lodge, Including Diem Coup, 1963-65 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Ellsworth Bunker, Graham Martin, 1972-75, Miscellaneous (1)-(2)
OPEN	SECRET-NODIS, Bunker to Washington, 1968-69
OPEN	SECRET-NODIS to Ambassador, Saigon, 11/6/68 to 4/27/72

Box 9 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
OPEN	NODIS-CHEROKEE: TO SECSTATE, 9/15/70 TO 10/14/70 (1)-(2)
OPEN	NODIS-CHEROKEE: From SECSTATE, 9/13/70 TO 12/16/70 (1)-(2)
OPEN	Memos, speeches, correspondence, draft agreements, 1/25/72 to 9/26/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Memos, speeches, correspondence, draft agreements, 9/26/72 to 11/11/72 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Draft Agreement, 10/15/72
OPEN	Bunker and Weyand to Kissinger - Ceasefire, 11/4/72 to 11/19/72

Box 10 - Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Status	Title
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OPEN To American Ambassador - Saigon, 11/4/72 to 12/15/72
(1)-(2)

OPEN Troop strengths, end of 1972

OPEN Talking Papers for Ambassador Bunker, March 1973 (1)-(2)

OPEN Memcon - Singapore, 8/4/73

OPEN Travel of Vice President Huong, October-November 1973

OPEN Charge Lehmann, January-February 1975

OPEN Weyand Report, 4/4/75

OPEN American Embassy - Manila