

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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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

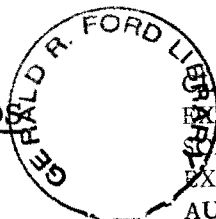
President: We had a difficult time in Indochina recently, beginning with the situation in Phnom Penh. We have managed in Vietnam to prevent a panic and to stabilize the military and diplomatic situation temporarily. This has enabled us to get virtually all the Americans out and many Vietnamese out. The 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

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines  
By cat, NARA, Date 1/24/02



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CLASSIFIED BY HENRY A. KISSINGER  
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5 (b) (1, 3)  
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON Imp. to det.

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?

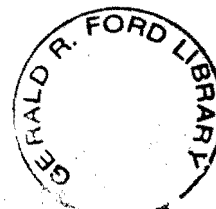
Schlesinger: Yes.

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?

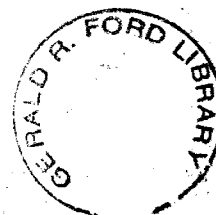
President: We have set up three U.S. refugee centers-- Camp Pendleton, Camp Chaffee and Eglin Air Force Base. There were some objections to this, but we must spread them out to the extent possible.

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.

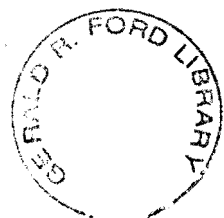


Cabinet Mtg

29 Apr 75

P We had diff time in Indonesia recently, by a P.P. We have managed in US to prevent a panic, stabilized a mid-clip in temporarily. This has enabled us to get virtually all US + many Korean out. Fact we have not panicked + have kept together has enabled us to ~~come~~ come out of a trap as well as possible.

K When I made 10 page speech, he etc. greatly stabilize it. That optimized our chances for whatever outcome. It prevented panic regarding a cross US, kept stability in govt, giving ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> chance to high risk course. The supplemental kept traps in a field + let us start work. Depart to etc. for a few days. Change in court in Saigon foreseeable it would move from per US to neutral. For Court + from helping to opposing us. Bet speech + yesterday, US reduced from 6000 to 950. Yesterday TSN could under attack. I called USC + did all I could day of fixed up ops if possible to get out 8000 men + this out US we located in 2 areas: TSN compound w/ about 4000 US; + Embassy w/ 4000 + 2000 hangers on. Aft closed by ~~move~~ <sup>move</sup> to ~~land~~ <sup>land</sup> held some. Airlift ordered at 10:00 + began in early hours. Our discussion was US + we that could be done in couple of hours, but US became mixed up/Korean + decision they couldn't be reverse w/o danger, so we have some wrong there. Oper is continuing + prob will 2-3 hrs. If we lucky + get them out, we will have achieved our objective to get



How many were there since that change in figure -

high with some out & we have used a transition  
to new Govt - still tense but at least controlled.

P Two killed yesterday were by hypostatic contact  
fire. We planned fixed wing, but they were worried off  
when runway blocked. ~~The~~ weather was then not  
to hold on. On a ground they decided to work from  
W/O & not have to let them fire judge on ground.

S There are about 200 Security force at TSN because  
priority now is at Ent. An unknown # of US  
& some still left. Only attacks were on a craft  
on which fire was returned & on boat from Com the  
Now have part of single fire & WY. We hope to  
complete by now.

Y Are we actually in process of getting security #  
out of TSN

S Yes.

K They can protect themselves better than other

Munster How about other units

K All have left but a few.

P One of the has been that a # of arms has been  
growing as we evac - coming out of unmarked  
The high part WY is very small. The fire is SON  
which illustrates a part we would have feared had we  
panicked a bit.

K And pushing for air helped keep sit stable.

S (Describes loss of control at TSN) which led to  
your decision to work at about 11:00 pm.

P We have advised Munster to get a few out but  
~~to~~ is judge of how to get them out best.



K You never ordered any kind of US in help byt. Including  
 Double was local decision, part to maintain base of US.

Winton When will a ~~refugee~~ go.

P We have set up 3 US refugee centers - Portland, Chicago,  
 & Elyria. Some objections to this - are most spread them  
 out to extent possible.

K We have approached a # of countries to take some.

P After establishing entry, K + Winton will brief - press. Tell them  
 who's say, working so we can speak w/ 1 voice.

Winton Maybe TPII could take 4-5 very skilled people. There  
 is a real shortage & we can exploit it.

Column Are you giving any thought now to anything what  
 our FP in this part of world from here out. Your 10  
 Apr speech was great picture but obviously a

