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By LT NARA Date 10/23/04

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The Secretary's 8:00 a.m. Staff Meeting
Wednesday, April 30, 1975

PRESENT:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE - HENRY A. KISSINGER

P - Mr. Sisco
E - Mr. Robinson
T - Mr. Maw
M - Mr. Eagleburger, Acting

AF - Ambassador Davis
ARA - Mr. Rogers
EA - Mr. Habib
EUR - Mr. Hartman
NEA - Mr. Atherton

INR - Mr. Hyland
S/P - Mr. Lord
EB - Mr. Glitman
S/PRS - Ambassador Anderson
PM - Mr. Vest
IO - Ambassador Buffum
H - Ambassador McCloskey
L - Mr. Leigh
S/S - Mr. Springsteen
S - Mr. Bremer

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505
By NT NARA Date 10/23/04

7

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Indochina.]

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Phil?

MR. HABIB: Saigon surrendered, as you know.

I have a couple of subsidiary questions.

First of all, we will move to freeze their assets.

But I propose that we delay until about three o'clock this afternoon to let our friends in the Embassy here pay their debts, pay their employees. I have talked to the Ambassador who asked that we give them some time until this afternoon so they can pay their employees three months' pay and a few things like that. Unless you see some reason not to, we will move to freeze their assets and then --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I see no reason. How much does that involve?

MR. HABIB: I don't know. For one thing, there are obligations that Americans have to Vietnamese, that would be a transfer of funds. I was told it is up to \$106 million the other day. And things like that. What this

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
Authority MND 989505
By NT NARA Date 10/23/14
~~SECRET~~

8

will do is prevent that kind of payment until we decide how we want to do it -- until we decide what obligations they have to us.

It will be in effect a holding action until we sort it out.

We did the same thing in Cambodia.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We're getting pretty good at it.

MR. HABIB: We get practice. In each case we get better.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We can't afford to lose a war any more.

MR. HABIB: We have one more to go very soon, and there will be a third and fourth to follow. That will be within the next year.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, that is an elegant way of closing your bureau.

MR. EAGLEBURGER: We are going to make a recommendation that EA be transferred to NEA.

MR. HABIB: In any event, that is one problem.

The next one is I am scheduled to appear before the Kennedy committee this morning, Subcommittee on Refugees, which is going to raise the same old business. First of all,

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By RT NARA Date 10/23/19

~~SECRET~~

9

they are going to castigate me for not bringing Dean Brown along, but I can slough that off.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I didn't understand Dean Brown wasn't permitted to testify. Who thought that up?

MR. EAGLEBURGER: Your friend Scowcroft and I.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Why?

MR. EAGLEBURGER: I can explain it later. He's such a lousy witness. (Laughter)

MR. HABIB: In any event, one of the things we are up against is Kennedy keeps saying "Why don't you give some of this assistance through international agencies." And this is a kick with which he comes at me every time. In the past I have been able to handle it more or less easily. But we have a suggestion.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: What? We won't give any. So you start from that.

MR. HABIB: Let me make my suggestion. We have 50,000 tons of rice that belong to us in Saigon.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You tried to sell that to me on Cambodia.

MR. HABIB: No. We have 50,000 tons of rice in Saigon. It is in warehouses. And when people proposed it to me this morning, I accused them of hypocrisy. But

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By NT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

10

the more I thought about it -- we can turn that rice over to the United Nations and tell the United Nations to distribute it. It is captured. The North Vietnamese have it. Is trikes me as a little bit hypocritical. But nevertheless hypocrisy is not unknown in diplomacy.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I don't care about these gimmicks. If you say we have 50,000 tons in Saigon, and if the Communists want to turn it over to the UN --

MR. HABIB: It belongs to us. We own title.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, unless Graham Martin stayed at the last minute, there is no one there to keep them from seizing it. It is a minor league gimmick. If you want to --

MR. HABIB: That is what I feel also. But I felt impelled to raise it, because both AID --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have no objection to you saying there are 50,000 tons of rice in Saigon which we are delighted to turn over to the UN. But it is a sort of preposterous proposal. I would not make anything of it. Because obviously if there is a need, there is a need for more rice to come in, not for who distributes it.

MR. HABIB: No. As a matter of fact, they don't need much rice. That would be about enough to meet --

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505
By RT NARA Date 10/23/14

11

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Look -- if they don't need rice then -- it is a minor league problem. It is a sort of tawdry little maneuver. If you want to do it, I have no objection to it. But it doesn't take care of the Kennedy problem. Secondly, it was absolutely clear to me at the congressional leadership meeting yesterday that the overwhelming sentiment of the leaders that were at that meeting was against aid to Communist Vietnam. And in fact, a number of them said if they had any idea that it would pass, that we would do it, they would add a rider to the foreign aid bill prohibiting it. So we must not be confused by a small group of humanitarian inclined Senators about what the predominant trend at least of the leadership is that was at the meeting yesterday. Not even Phil Burton spoke out for humanitarian aid.

MR. HABIB: The bill does state that you cannot give it -- isn't that right -- the bill states that you cannot give it to Communist --

MR. MONROE: Section 11.

MR. HABIB: But it doesn't say you cannot give it to international agencies who can give it to Communists. We can interpret it that way.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Up to now AID has taken the

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505
By RT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

12

position that if one request is refused they come in with another one. I saw Parker yesterday. Every day they come in with some other formula in the hope of getting it past us. The answer is that the President does not wish to do it. I do not wish to have any more requests from AID until we make a decision. Now, damn it, I want somebody who is in charge of AID to implement this. It is not a question of which island gets it. Nobody gets it until the President makes a decision. We are going to say we want to see what political developments are in South Vietnam, and just say if there is a blood bath, as there is going on in Cambodia, we absolutely will not do it. That gives you an opportunity to say -- if at some later time they can identify specific hardship areas where we can do something under international supervision, we are willing to look at it.

MR. BUFFUM: In fact, Mr. Secretary, if we make this offer of the rice, doesn't that already breach the principle? Then the question is what else are you going to do through the UN.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not in favor of the rice.

MR. HABIB: Neither am I, because I think it is hypocritical.

MR. BUFFUM: It already breaches the principle.

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By RT NARA Date 10/23/10

~~SECRET~~

13

Either we are going to be prepared to contribute through international agencies to South Vietnam or we are not. If we are not going to --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not saying we absolutely may not contribute a small amount at some point if the political evolution -- I see no reason to do anything in Cambodia, given the behavior of the Cambodian government. Of course there is no one there to distribute it any way, so it doesn't make any difference.

MR. HABIB: The ICRC is still in Cambodia.

MR. LORD: Do we know what is going on in Cambodia?

MR. HABIB: We have some indications of what is going on.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: If even Sihanouk and his Prime Minister think a blood bath is going on in Cambodia, you have to think it is going on. We have reached a point where if people run extermination camps, unless you have international inspection it is not recognized by the liberal community. When you have intercepts and other overwhelming evidence -- I mean I don't know what is going on in Viet Nam. There we have no conclusive evidence. But in Cambodia we have evidence that I consider conclusive. What do you think, Bill?

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 989505

By RT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

14

MR. HYLAND: We had one yesterday -- 90 senior officers and their families killed.

MR. LORD: Is this in the public consciousness?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No - because you can't get people to print it.

MR. HABIB: We say it, tell it to people, but they don't write it.

MR. HYLAND: We should just publish those messages. It wouldn't be all that sensitive.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Why don't we do that. And why don't you give this in answer to questions of humanitarian aid. Just say that in situations like that, if it is a situation like Cambodia -- "I want you to know this is going on in Cambodia." In South Vietnam, we have no conclusive evidence. Isn't that right?

MR. HYLAND: That is right. But of course they just took over yesterday.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I mean in the occupied part.

MR. HYLAND: We have some evidence in the northern part.

MR. HABIB: They have shot people, taken them away, they have them in concentration camps, they are indoctrinating them. There is no doubt something is going on up there.

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By nt NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

15

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That is clear. The question is as to mass executions. In Cambodia, it is obvious that they are killing thousands. Why are they throwing all foreigners out of Cambodia, including those who were friendly to them?

MR. HABIB: You mean what reason do they give or why?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think they are doing it to settle accounts. And then they will let them back in.

MR. HYLAND: They are also being fairly bloody minded about the foreigners. They had an offer to bring in French planes and let them fly out and they refused, made them go out in a convoy, which is very hard on these people. It is going to take them five days, by truck, to go out of Phnom Penh to Thailand.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Where are they staying overnight?

MR. HYLAND: They are going to stay along the road.

MR. HABIB: They want to parade them through the country like cattle.

MR. HYLAND: Most of them are French. There are some Americans.

MR. HABIB: They want to parade them through the country.

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By RT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

16

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, it couldn't happen to nicer people -- when you think of the abject way by which the French recognized them.

MR. HABIB: One other thing that I think will come up. Whitlam is in real trouble over the publication of some cables that he sent to his embassies in Saigon and Hanoi, in which he obviously tilted in favor of Hanoi and his opposition is really after him.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: How did they get published?

MR. HABIB: Somebody gave them to the Herald to be published. I thought you would be intrigued by that story.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I want to say that Phil and Dean did a really supe-human job under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, and so did everyone in EA who worked with them. There will be a four-hour moratorium on abuse of EA.

MR. HABIB: I wanted to remind you -- we got out only four hours before the VC tanks came down the road.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I agreed with you. I felt I had to check --

MR. HABIB: There was no doubt it was time to get out.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Do you think the North

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 989505

By NT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

17

Vietnamese changed signals? Why did they say at first they wanted to implement the Paris Accords? I mean at first, very late in the game, say as late as Wednesday or Thursday, there was talk of negotiation. Why did they then shift?

MR. HABIB: I am going to take the most critical attitude towards it. I think they intended to do this all along; that they positioned themselves, that they deliberately wanted to break down the structure so as to make it even easier than it would otherwise have been. It was a very carefully conceived approach to the whole thing.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: In order to get a surrender?

MR. HABIB: A surrender, under the easiest and most complete circumstances possible. They first got Thieu down, then they said Huong was no good, then they make certain demands.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I heard this morning they arrested Minh.

MR. HABIB: They took him away. Whether they arrest him or not --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: What do you think?

MR. HYLAND: Well, I think they were indecisive almost until the day Minh came in and made his speech. I

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 989505

By NT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

18

think his speech convinced them there was no sense of playing around. He was still talking about a cease-fire and sending people to Paris. They were almost ready to go militarily, so they just let it rip.

MR. HABIB: That is the nicest interpretation for that. I am not so sure it wasn't preconceived in this way.

MR. HYLAND: We have a lot of evidence that weeks ago they said "Take Saigon." They sent our directives that negotiations are a farce, "We won't make the mistake the Chinese made in 1948. We want a military victory," which they called the Danang solution.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: What mistake did the Chinese make in '48?

MR. HYLAND: In letting the Nationalists get away to Taiwan and not forcing a total surrender.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Could they have done that in '48?

MR. HYLAND: Well, they could have taken Taiwan. But still -- you had an obvious pause. And they used the pause to improve their military position.

MR. BROWN: And their psychological position.

MR. HARTMAN: Is the PRG established now?

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By RT NARA Date 6/13/14

~~SECRET~~

19

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I doubt under those conditions that they will establish a PRG.

MR. HABIB: It is now Ho Chi Minh City. Saigon has been renamed.

MR. HYLAND: Mrs. Binh is already talking about unification and how they need an interval. But they intend to proceed step by step to unification.

MR. LORD: They clearly made a decision to let 50,000 South Vietnamese get away, it seems to me. They could have done more to try to avoid that.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I was always convinced they were going to proceed to a Communist take-over. But I thought they would set up a tripartite government in accordance with the Paris Accords --

MR. HABIB: They still will. My guess is they will set up a government in which they will deliberately try to include what they will characterize as a third force and a nationalist element.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I wouldn't be so sure.

MR. HABIB: They have done that with the revolutionary committees in Danang and places like that when they set them up. They deliberately do that as a part of --

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By NT NARA Date 10/23/14

~~SECRET~~

20

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes. But it makes a lot of difference whether they set it up or whether it comes about through a negotiation.

MR. HABIB: I think they will set one up like this -- something that they will characterize as such. It will be a complete phoney.

MR. HYLAND: There is a big problem for the north, whether to allow a semi-non-communist government to be set up and recognized.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Semi-non-communist -- they will certainly not set that up. The question is whether they will set up a Communist government which has five percent non-Communists in it. But even that is going to be a big problem, whether they should permit that to exist with international recognition. Because the Chinese and some others may be sorely tempted to play it up and then unification may become extremely difficult.

MR. HABIB: But it exists already with international recognition. And the first one to try to move to recognize them since the takeover has been Sweden. The Swedes have announced their desire to recognize them.

MR. BUFFUM: On recognition, we will probably have this come up very quickly now in the UN specialized

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 989505

By RT NARA Date 6/23/16

~~SECRET~~

21

agencies admitting them as full members, probably without objection, unless we choose to object, which really would only serve the purpose of making a record statement.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Can we wait a few days?

MR. BUFFUM: It might come up as early as Friday from the WMC.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We can abstain, can't we?

MR. BUFFUM: Yes, if there is a vote. But I suspect the president of the conference will say unless there is objection, given the changed circumstances in Vietnam --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think on Friday we should object on the ground that the circumstances are not clear, without making a judgment on the government -- if it is as early as Friday. By next week we can then take a formal position.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Indochina.]

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