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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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WHS-2239
April 7, 1972 25X1

BACK CHANNEL (BUNKER CHANNEL)

TO: AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *Hay fo*

REF: Saigon 0049 and Previous

1. Since we last informed you about private exchanges with the North Vietnamese there has been some jockeying back and forth on a possible secret meeting on April 24, 1972 but nothing has been fixed. Nevertheless, we want to bring you and Thieu up to date in view of enemy's current offensive and possibility they might surface these messages for propaganda reasons. Following is the essence of these exchanges. You should immediately inform Thieu of them, emphasizing as always their confidentiality.

2. You will recall the North Vietnamese arbitrarily postponed On the March 20 meeting with Michael and Yul to April 15./ March 13 we rejected their pretexts for postponement and said that April 24 was only date I could go secretly to Paris because of Presidential travels and other demands. We warned that their postponement tactics jeopardized the channel and that the purpose of these meetings required that neither side exert pressure through military escalation.

3. On March 27 a North Vietnamese message lectured us on a variety of sins including divulging private meetings, aerial attacks,

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and suspension of the Paris Conference public talks. They then said that if we resumed the public talks they would meet on April 24 at 11:00.

4. On April 1 we sent a message, delivered on April 2, which completely rejected North Vietnamese allegations, including the reason for the suspension of the Paris Conference. We said that nevertheless Ambassador Porter would propose a plenary session on April 13 and on this basis we agreed to a secret meeting on April 24 at 10:00 a.m. We pointed out that the North Vietnamese offensive was inconsistent with the purpose of these meetings; we had been showing great restraint in order to give negotiations a chance; we could not remain indifferent if the step-up of military operations continued; and that such attacks would jeopardize the holding of the meeting. We asked for a prompt response to our message. Comment: By this time the North Vietnamese/ escalation was, of course, clear and our main purpose was to write an impeccable record of reasonableness.

5. On April 4 we sent another message but the other side postponed receiving it until April 6, undoubtedly to give themselves time to write another one of their own. We noted that despite our previous message they had gravely escalated military activity and flagrantly violated the Geneva Accords and 1968 understandings and therefore Porter would not repeat not propose an April 13 plenary session. We added that a decision about

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an April 20 plenary session would quote depend on the circumstances existing at that time unquote. We deliberately avoided mentioning the secret meeting. Their April 6 message, replying to our April 2 message, said that they would attend the April 13 public session and subsequent sessions to be held each Thursday and would attend the April 24 secret meeting. They warned that the private meeting could be affected if we continued our air attacks and interruption of the work of the Paris Conference.

6. We do not repeat not consider the April 24 meeting as fixed since we have now refused to meet their precondition of resuming the Paris Conference. We consider the next move to be up to the other side. In any event we plan no further proposals at this time.

7. We are sending in a double sealed envelope with General Vogt, who arrives Saigon April 9, the full texts of all exchanges with the North Vietnamese since the President's January 25 speech.

8. We will keep you fully informed.

9. Warm regards.