

WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

January 25, 1974

Time and Place: 10:11 a.m. - 10:54 a.m., White House Situation Room

MORI PER 03233263

Subject: Indochina

Participants:

Chairman	Henry A. Kissinger	CIA	William Colby	
State	Kenneth Rush Monteagle Stearns	NSC	M/G Brent Scowcroft Charles C. Cooper William R. Smyser William Stearman Lt. Col. Donald Stukel James G. Barnum	25X1
DOD	William Clements V/A Raymond Peet			
JCS	Adm. Thomas H. Moorer V/A John P. Weinle			

JCS, OSD, DOS, NSA, &  
OSD review(s) completed.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

... CIA will prepare a paper on the current status of the Paracel and Spratly Islands and an assessment of Chinese intention in the area;

... Additional (60 to 80) TOW (anti-tank) missiles will be supplied South Vietnamese immediately;

... Defense will prepare an analysis of the military equipment list requested by South Vietnam, along with its recommendations of South Vietnam's equipment needs.

... Mr. Clements and Mr. Rush will approach Congress within the next week for a \$150 million supplemental appropriation for Cambodia and South Vietnam;

... A WSAG will be scheduled to take a look at the insurgency situation in Thailand.

*Attached to S. memo from Stearman/Stukel  
for HAK, 25 Jan. 1974*

Secretary Kissinger: Bill, (Mr. Colby), do you want to brief?

Mr. Colby briefed from the attached text.

Secretary Kissinger: Why don't they recruit them? (In reference to the statement in the briefing that the Cambodian Government needs another 10,000 troops in order to increase its manpower reserves). It seems to me that ten-thousand wouldn't be hard to get.

Mr. Colby: They're trying, but it's tough to get people to join up.

Secretary Kissinger: How are they trying to recruit? I mean, what methods do they use?

Mr. Clements: Actually, they have done quite well. They have a more energetic program going now than they have ever had.

Adm. Moorer: They do it the same way as the British got their troops in the 1800s-- they impress them. Except, now they "Phnom Penh 'em" instead of Shanghai 'em.

Secretary Kissinger: Where do they get them (the recruits)?

Adm. Moorer: Oh, everywhere, Kompong Som, Kompong Cham. Out of all the population centers.

Secretary Kissinger: It just seems to me that it wouldn't be hard to find 10,000 recruits.

Mr. Clements: They're doing it. Their effort today is much more ambitious than it was a few months ago.

Mr. Stearns: The Khmer Communists are having their problems recruiting, too.

Mr. Colby continued with his briefing.

Adm. Moorer: I would just add that within the last twenty-four hours, fifty-five rounds of artillery were fired into Phnom Penh. And, according to some recent intercepts, they plan to continue to harass Phnom Penh and the countryside around the capital. We don't think they can overrun the city in the immediate future.

(General Scowcroft was called out of the meeting at this point.)

Mr. Colby: Yes, we also think they (the government) can hold.

Adm. Moorer: The rice situation is in excellent shape too.

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Secretary Kissinger: It seems to me that if the government can hold on during this dry season then we have no reason to believe they can't in the next.

Mr. Colby: What gives the government its real advantage is the fickleness of the Khmer Communists. They (the KC) are really running their own railroad, generally ignoring the advice of Hanoi.

Adm. Moorer: They have a real problem in coordinating their forces. For example, they get instructions to do something, say like on 25 December, and then nothing happens.

Secretary Kissinger: That's because it's Christmas . Nobody does anything on Christmas!

Mr. Clements: Henry, I want to reiterate what you said before. I think it is absolutely essential that they (the Cambodians) be assured of our continuing support. Without it, they're dead ducks, no question about it.

Secretary Kissinger: Oh, I think that's clear. Nobody here disagrees with that, do they? We really don't have a choice, do we?

Mr. Clements: No, but the method to give them the support is a real problem. It's a miserable mess to straighten out.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, and now if we bring peace to the Middle East, we can't piggy-back our needs in Cambodia anymore.

Mr. Clements: We're still doing it. But, you're right, we won't have that piggy-back anymore.

Mr. Stearns: We have some left in the drawdown authority.

Mr. Clements: We ought to accomplish as much as we possibly can now, while conditions are favorable.

Secretary Kissinger: I have this thought that it might be easier to get something out of Congress now. The Democrats are becoming more hawkish. Maybe there is a better chance of getting something through.

Mr. Rush: We'll never know unless we try.

Secretary Kissinger: We must make them (Congress) more responsible. We have to put the responsibility (for continued peace in Indochina) on their back.

Mr. Clements: And early. Henry, we're almost out of soap. We're running out of money, and damn fast!

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(Gen. Scowcroft returned.)

Mr. Rush: What worries me is the psychological impact it would have in Cambodia if we weren't to support....

Secretary Kissinger: Think of the psychological impact throughout Southeast Asia. It would be disastrous. What have been the repercussions in South Vietnam to the Paracels (Islands) thing?

Adm. Moorer: We (the U.S.) have stayed far clear of the matter.

Secretary Kissinger: We have never supported their (South Vietnam's) claim?

Adm. Moorer: That whole area is a problem. The Spratly Islands and the others in that area all have the same kind of problem--it's disputed territory. We have given orders to stay clear of the area. That's our policy, right?

Secretary Kissinger: What are those, the Spratly's? (Pointing to the map.)

Adm. Moorer: No, the Spratly's are south of the Paracels.

Mr. Colby: The problem is that the Spratly's are claimed by everybody.

Secretary Kissinger: We have never taken a position on these islands?

Mr. Rush: Are they occupied?

Mr. Stearns: Yes, we think there is a garrison on them.

Mr. Rush: Who has troops?

Mr. Stearns: There is a Philippine garrison on them, I think.

Secretary Kissinger: How did the fight get started? Who started the fight over the Paracels?

Adm. Moorer: A South Vietnamese patrol in the area observed some Chinese ships headed for the islands, went in, and put about seventy-five men ashore at Duncan Island. That's one of the southern islands of the Crescent Group. They were engaged by two companies of Chinese troops. The South Vietnamese were forced to withdraw to the other nearby islands. Four South Vietnamese ships and some eleven Chinese ships then engaged in a battle at sea as the South Vietnamese troops withdrew. The place has been an area of tension for some time. The Chinese have been sending regular MIG patrols over almost every day.

Mr. Colby: The key to the whole area is the Paracels. There are two groups of islands, the Crescent Group in the south, and the Amphitrite Group in the north.

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Secretary Kissinger: What has North Vietnam's reaction been to all of this?

Mr. Colby: They've ignored it, said it's below the 17th Parallel and thus doesn't affect them. In general, they didn't take a position, didn't come out on either side.

Secretary Kissinger: They can't be very happy with the situation. They didn't say anything, but what do you think they feel? Dick (Mr. Smyser)?

Mr. Smyser: It put them in a delicate situation. They said nothing until after it was over, and then all they said was that they deplored the use of force.

Secretary Kissinger: I know what they said, but what do they really feel?

Adm. Moorer: I think they are worried.

Mr. Colby: North Vietnam might want to have that oil field.

Mr. Clements: Let's not get carried away on the possibility of oil in those islands. That is still a pie-in-the-sky. There is nothing there now, it's all in the future. Oil there is not realistic now. It's only a potential.

Adm. Moorer: The French held the islands in the 1930s until the Japanese took them over during the War. In 1955, the French renounced their claim to the islands, and Japan did the same thing in 1951. South Vietnam and Communist China have claimed them ever since. The Philippines have a weak claim, but only on paper.

Secretary Kissinger: Can we get a paper on the Spratly's, Bill? What's there, what's likely to happen?

Mr. Colby: Yes, we'll give you one on the whole area.

Adm. Moorer: My instructions have been to stay clear of the whole area. That's what you want, right?

Secretary Kissinger: Any disagreement to that?

Mr. Rush: Not a bit.

Secretary Kissinger: Now, on the situation in Vietnam. I think we ought to take advantage of this period of quiet and build up South Vietnam's capabilities as best we can. We want to observe the terms of Article 7 (of the Agreement), but don't want to put excessive restraints on ourselves. After all, they are violating the Agreement. If they stretch the Agreement, we ought to be prepared to stretch some too.

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Mr. Clements: Do you anticipate making a public announcement of this?

Secretary Kissinger: No, let them be the first to complain.

Adm. Peet: We already have some high-visibility items in there.

Secretary Kissinger: Like what?

Adm. Peet: TOW (anti-tank) missiles, for example.

Secretary Kissinger: I understand they need TOWs rather badly. Is there anything else? How many TOWs do they have, fifty?

Adm. Moorer: About 140.

Secretary Kissinger: Can we give them a substantial number more?

Adm. Moorer: Yes, we can go a few more, say 60 to 80. We're running close to the limit now, money-wise. We have only \$299 million left.

Mr. Clements: The money is our whole problem.

Adm. Peet: It would only cost \$5 or \$6 million for 60 to 80 TOWs.

Adm. Moorer: We're pushing up to that \$1.126 million limit now.

Secretary Kissinger: We're not spending that much money in Laos now, are we?

Mr. Rush: We can spend \$299 million more before we hit the legal limit?

Adm. Moorer: \$1.126 million is the legal limit.

Secretary Kissinger: How does giving them an additional 80 TOWs effect the \$300 million we have left?

Mr. Clements: The TOWs are no problem. We can handle that. But, money for the future is a problem. I see no way of responding to that list they (the South Vietnamese) gave us.

Secretary Kissinger: I thought you scrubbed down that list to \$250 million--somewhere in that ballpark.

Adm. Moorer: We've looked at it, scrubbed it down. We're recommending such things like forty radios, six LSTs (landing craft)....

Secretary Kissinger: Why do they need LSTs?

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Adm. Moorer: They use them for logistic support.

Mr. Colby: They have no need for them. They don't have the Paracels anymore.

Adm. Moorer: That's right, but we have 31 river boats and other items to give them. It's equipment they don't have, but can use. We have saturated them with equipment over the years. A lot of the stuff they can't even use. The equipment they have asked for wouldn't be of any benefit to them. They are saturated. We filled them up this time last year.

Secretary Kissinger: I thought they needed more TOWs.

Adm. Moorer: That is being taken care of.

Secretary Kissinger: How?

Adm. Moorer: We've started the training program....

Secretary Kissinger: Do they have the mines we talked about last time?

Adm. Moorer: We have some earmarked for them. We put these devices in bombs and then fly them down to them when they need them.

Secretary Kissinger: Are these the ones that play the National Anthem?

Adm. Moorer: It's a simple device they put in the bombs. I think it's the Mark 52....

Secretary Kissinger: I don't know what you call them, but they're the ones that get you so excited all the time.

Adm. Moorer: I still say that that was a real bargain for less than a million dollars (the mining of Haiphong Harbor).

Mr. Clements: How long does it take?

Adm. Moorer: What, to train people?

Mr. Clements: Yes.

Adm. Moorer: To train people on the Mark 52 takes time. What we plan to do is do the work--put the devices in there--at Subic Bay, then fly them to Vietnam whenever they want them.

Secretary Kissinger: You can't just dump them in the China Sea can you? Is some special skill required?

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Adm. Moorer: No, you can just dump them in. They sink to the bottom.

Secretary Kissinger: What do they do, walk around on the bottom and go off when you push a button or something?

Mr. Clements: How long will it take to train?

Mr. Stearns: By the end of February they should be ready.

Secretary Kissinger: What will the bombs accomplish? Will they seal off the whole port? What do they do?

Adm. Moorer: They're like mines. I'm not familiar with the details, but you make adjustments on them for what you want.

Mr. Rush: How long do they last?

Adm. Moorer: It depends on how you set them. Two weeks--depending on the temperature of the water--to a year, if you want.

Secretary Kissinger: If we do it, how long a time would we keep them there?

Adm. Moorer: I'd just let them sit there on the bottom indefinitely, until the batteries run out. A year or so.

Secretary Kissinger: In my estimation, there is nothing horrible enough for them. They (the North Vietnamese) are the biggest s.o.b.s I've ever met, and I've met a few in my lifetime. They make the Syrians look like choir boys.

Adm. Moorer: I wouldn't risk running a ship through there.

Secretary Kissinger: Can you mine other ports other than Haiphong?

Adm. Moorer: We plan to mine everything from Haiphong south.

Secretary Kissinger: I think those mines would give the North Vietnamese massive problems.

Adm. Moorer: Right!

Mr. Colby: North Vietnam's been a little lonely lately. Nobody's paying them much attention.

Secretary Kissinger: They are getting strong discouragement from somewhere.

Mr. Colby: They must be worried about being moved off of center stage.



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Secretary Kissinger: I understand the Embassy scrubbed down the list and sent in another at about \$250 million. Is this list still too big?

Adm. Peet: We've scrubbed it down to about \$22 million.

Mr. Clements: I'd say put it at the \$22 million level, less the TOWs.

Secretary Kissinger: I have no judgement on that, but if we can create a situation where the possibility of an attack is less likely, then it is worth the money we have to spend.

Adm. Peet: We can even improve on these items....

Gen. Scowcroft: Are you talking about the appropriations limit or the ceiling on expenditures?

Adm. Peet: Both. The whole situation is a mess....

Secretary Kissinger: We always nit-pick when things are quiet, but when we are confronted with a crisis, we rush in asking for hundreds of millions of dollars. I'm more interested in seeing what we can do to prevent a situation from developing than jumping in after it has already happened.

Mr. Clements: We can move forward on the TOWs (60 to 80 more) with no problem.

Secretary Kissinger: Do it, but before the offensive has already started.

Mr. Clements: We can do it right away.

Secretary Kissinger: Can you (to Adm. Moorer and Mr. Clements) prepare a paper for us on what is in the \$200 million list so that we can compare it with what is needed?

Adm. Moorer: Sure, but I have it right here.

Secretary Kissinger: (to General Scowcroft) Have we seen the list?

Gen. Scowcroft: No.

Secretary Kissinger: Why are we rapidly running out of money if there is some \$300 million left to be spent?

Mr. Stearns: We already have expenditures on the books which will eat most of that up. The expenditures are already programmed.

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Adm. Peet: The South Vietnamese are spending to the tune of \$1.6 million a day. If they keep spending like that and we can't get more money, we've had it.

Secretary Kissinger: If I could just get a list of the items you think are needed.

Mr. Clements: Fine, we'll do that.

Secretary Kissinger: Our desire is to get in there with enough equipment to deter an attack. The anti-tank weapons (TOWs) look to me like they would be helpful.

Adm. Moorer: We have all these lists, but no money for them. If we spend all the money today, in five months there will be nothing left. What we need is some operating capital.

Col. Stukel: Is it a ceiling problem, or an authorization problem?

Adm. Peet: It's both.

Mr. Clements: We can't bet on Congress coming up with it, but if they don't, our tails will be in the cracks!

Adm. Peet: Could we get a supplemental of \$150 million just for the oil that we will need in the coming months?

Mr. Clements: Certainly. I think that's possible.

Secretary Kissinger: That would certainly help ease the situation.

Mr. Clements: It would help significantly. Whatever the mechanics, we have to get with Congress and get them to give us more. I think all three of us should work on them.

Secretary Kissinger: I agree, but you and Ken (Mr. Rush) should go first. I've already got too many sessions on the Hill coming up.

Mr. Rush: We also need an economic assistance supplemental.

Secretary Kissinger: In the next week, you (Mr. Clements) and Ken (Mr. Rush) start working on Congress. Wrap Cambodia and Vietnam together.

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Mr. Colby: We already have, up north. The Ambassador sent in an assessment recently that takes an overall look at the insurgency situation. He predicts an increase in insurgent activity of about ten to fifteen percent a year. I think that is a little high, but it does raise some questions. I think we ought to take a look at it.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. (to General Scowcroft) Schedule a WSAG on that soon.

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