

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

January 9, 1973

Mr. President:

Dr. Kissinger has asked that I pass the attached report of his second day's meeting to you. He urged that you read the entire message.


Richard T. Kennedy

Attachment

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sect. 3.4
NSC 5/31/90 F90-462, 9001340
By ADH NARA, Date 7-9-90
(MR NLN 90-22)

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E.O. 12356, Sect. 3.4 (MR NLN 90-22)
NSC 5/31/90 F90-462, 9001340
By ADH NARA, Date 7-2-90

We celebrated the President's birthday today by making a major breakthrough in the negotiations. In sum, we settled all the outstanding questions in the text of the agreement, made major progress on the method of signing the agreement, and made a constructive beginning on the associated understandings.

With respect to the DMZ, we settled this question very satisfactorily, essentially on our terms. With respect to the signing procedure, they made a big step toward us which greatly lessens the problem of implied recognition for the PRG, and we now have to figure out a way to get Saigon aboard. We also resolved the few other less significant questions in the text, with some give on both sides but in a completely satisfactory way that protects our positions.

We had a preliminary runthrough on the understandings associated with the agreement which was business-like and constructive. There are a few questions remaining, but unless the North Vietnamese completely change signals tomorrow, we should complete these understandings in tomorrow's session.

This would only leave the protocols on which the experts are continuing to meet today. Le Duc Tho and I will deal with these documents Thursday and probably Friday, concentrating on the principles while the experts continue to conform the texts.

The Vietnamese have broken our heart several times before, and we just cannot assume success until everything is pinned down, but the mood and the business-like approach was as close to October as we have seen since October.

I cannot overemphasize the absolute necessity that this information be confined to the President alone. There must not be the slightest hint of the present status to the bureaucracy, Cabinet members, the Congress, or anyone else. If a wave of euphoria begins in Washington, the North Vietnamese are apt to revert to their natural beastliness, and the South Vietnamese will do their best to sabotage our progress. Furthermore, we cannot afford to raise expectations before everything is firmly in concrete. A great deal of work remains on the protocols. We must keep in mind how often Hanoi has pulled back from agreements before. And we in any event still face a massive problem in Saigon. Therefore it is certainly premature to celebrate even privately.

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What has brought us to this point is the President's firmness and the North Vietnamese belief that he will not be affected by either Congressional or public pressures. Le Duc Tho has repeatedly made these points to me. So it is essential that we keep our fierce posture during the coming days. The slightest hint of eagerness could prove suicidal.