

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~  
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

President Nguyen Van Thieu  
Mr. Huynh Phu Duc, Special Assistant to the  
President for Foreign Affairs  
Mr. Hoang Duc Nha, Press Assistant  
Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker  
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
John D. Negroponte, NSC Staff Member

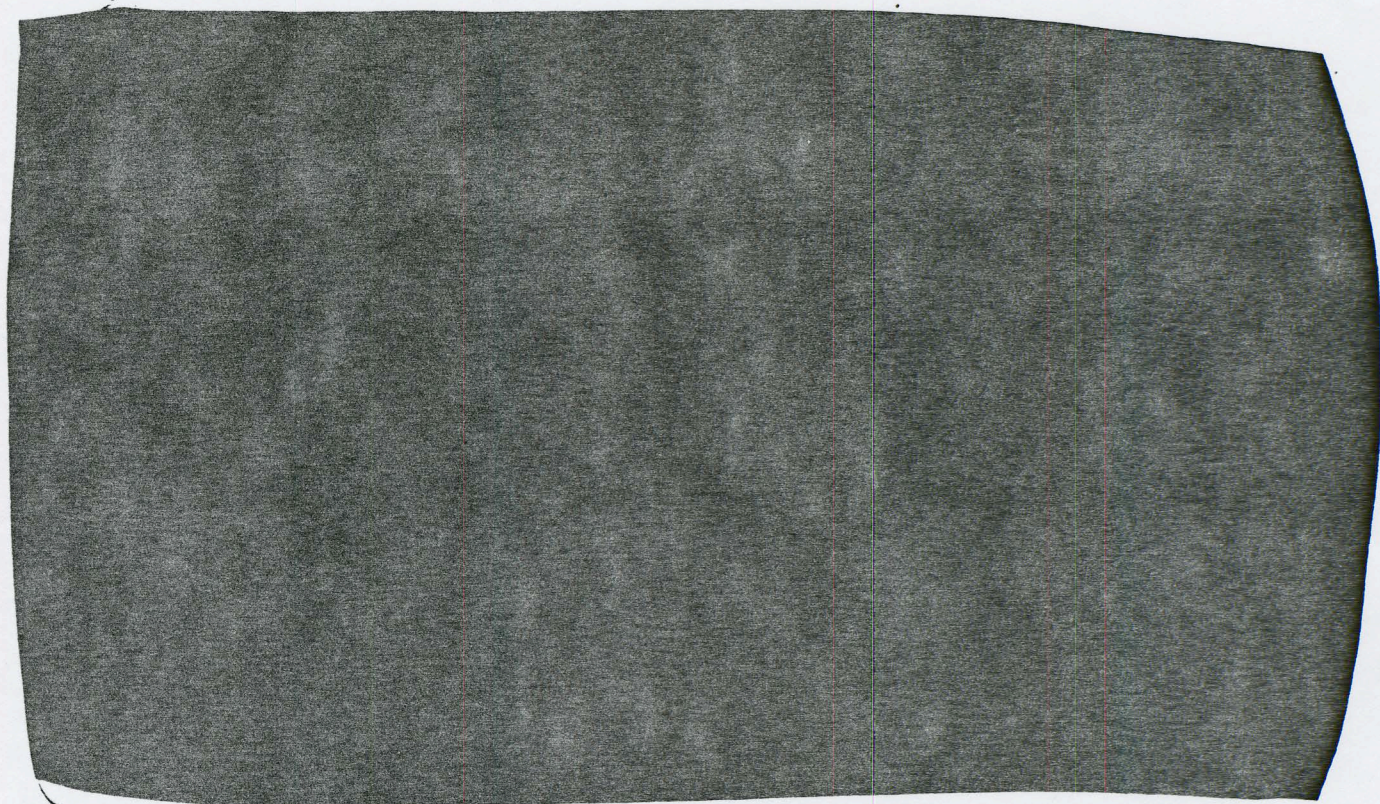
DATE & TIME:

Friday, August 18, 1972 10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

PLACE:

Presidential Palace, Saigon

NOT RELATED TO  
POW / MIA'S



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Sanitized

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12356, Sect. 3.4  
NSC, Van Tassel authority 9/15/92  
By ADL NARA, Date 9/15/92  
(SA 99)



NOT RELATED TO  
POW/MIA'S



Dr. Kissinger: It is also in our interest. I thought at first it would be best to have a ceasefire as soon as possible because of our election. But upon reflection I have decided that it is easier if we keep up the bombing through the elections, unless in your view your military situation requires a ceasefire. You see, our strategy is that we are prepared to step up the military pressure on the DRV immediately, drastically and brutally one or two weeks after our election. We want to be in a position that they have rejected our reasonable proposals. After that we will put everything on the prisoner of war question. They think they can use the prisoners of war to overthrow you. If we can move quickly after the elections, we can destroy so much that they will not be in a position to come back and harm you for a long time to come.

Mr. Duc: Are we clear that we are including agreement on supervision before a ceasefire?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, but I don't think there will be a ceasefire. In fact I prefer that they don't return the prisoners of war and that there is no ceasefire before the election. If Le Duc Tho returns on September 15 and proposes a ceasefire I will say in principle that I agree but that the details must be discussed at Avenue Kleber and then we can insist on international supervision before the ceasefire. Second, if their proposal with regard to the ceasefire does not involve a return of prisoners of war, then we will only stop the bombing and not remove the mines. We will not stop the mining until the prisoners of war are returned. Is that clear? It is important that in the next two months there be mutual confidence between us. We cannot control what others say and I do not know where Time Magazine got its story, but a certain amount of confusion may be desirable in any event. To sum up, we will insist that ceasefire modalities are discussed at Kleber and not separately between us and them.



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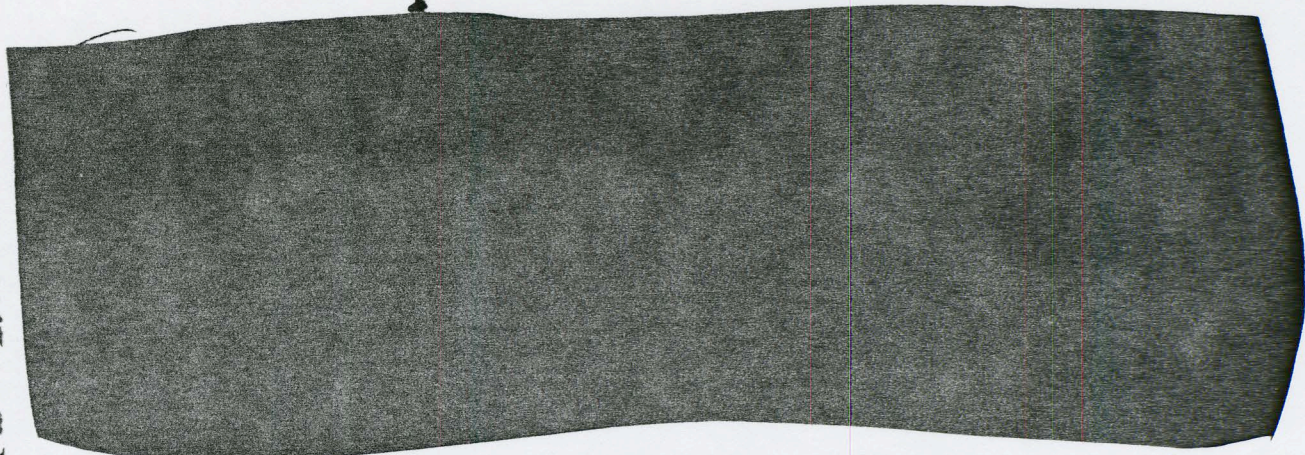
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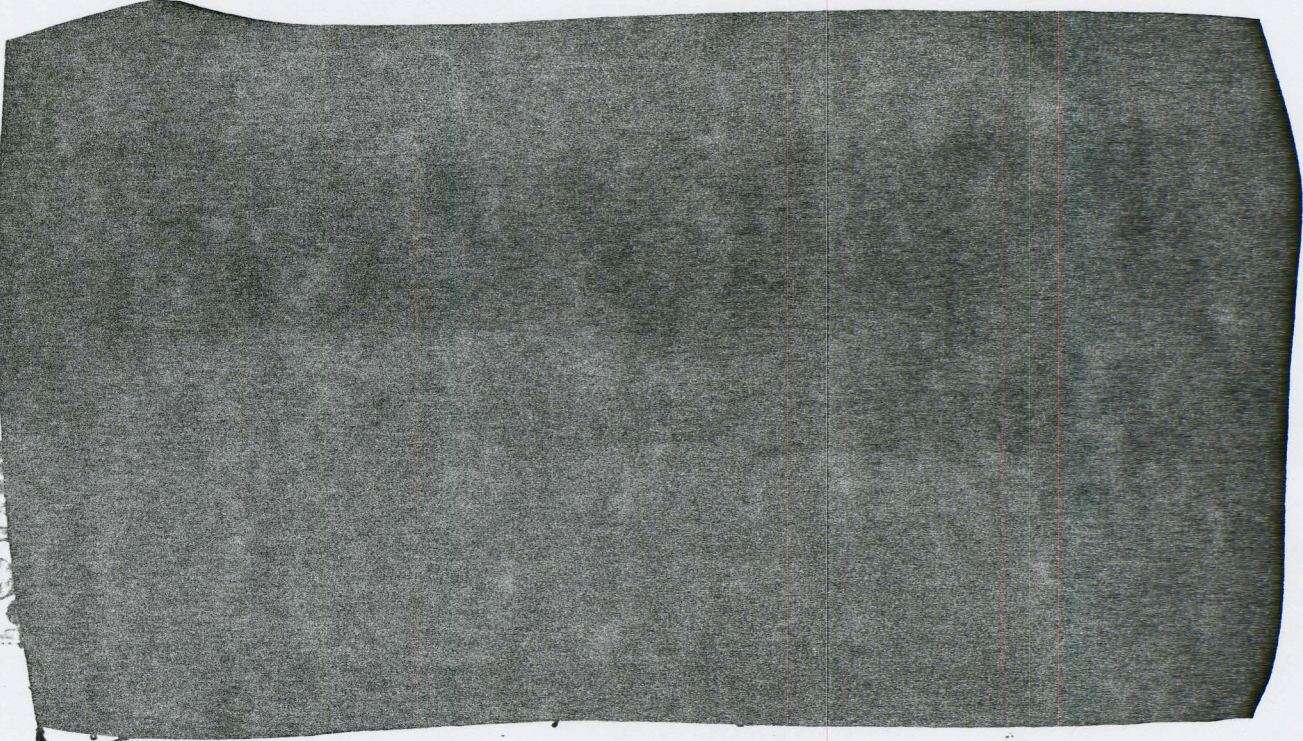


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Mr. Nha: You stick to the idea of a ceasefire and [cessation of] mining against prisoners of war?

Dr. Kissinger: In his proposal Tho mentioned a ceasefire. I therefore proposed to discuss the technical modalities of a ceasefire and so forth at Kleber. My idea was just to discuss what a ceasefire would look like. He refused. On the other nine points he has a good idea of our views from our January 25 proposal. He knows our general ideas from the eight points in January. As for point 4, he has no idea whatsoever on our thinking.



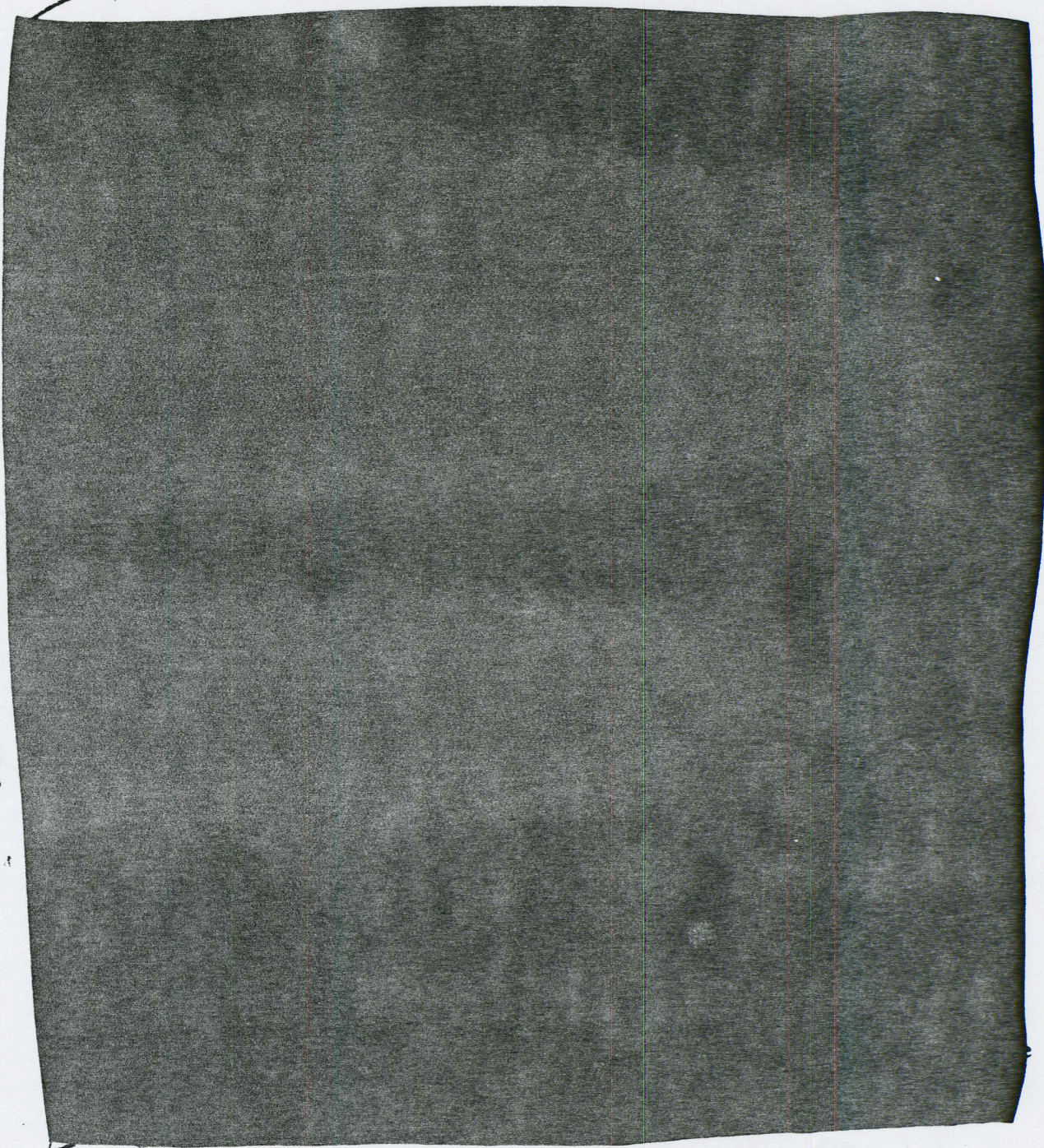
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President Thieu: How about the return of prisoners of war?

Dr. Kissinger: They may not return the prisoners, or perhaps they will return them when they are convinced we don't care any more. We will make one tremendous effort to get back the prisoners and in this effort I can assure you we will stop at very little. It is out of the question that we will make any additional concessions after the election.

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President Thieu: They cannot accept and they will continue to fight but I still believe that after the election they will have to revise their policy. They will have to negotiate a temporary peace or continue protracted warfare. If they continue protracted warfare, we may have the prisoner of war issue if you exert pressure on them. Do you foresee any possibility that they will ask for a settlement which involves only prisoners of war? What kind of offer would you think they might make for a prisoner of war solution?

Dr. Kissinger: At some point we may have to accept the prisoners of war for an end of the bombing. But if so, it will be at a point when we have severely weakened them. At some point we may have to stop the bombing for this. Maybe in the second half of next year. But what they want is for us to also stop military and economic aid. If we agreed to stop such aid we could settle now, but we will not do this. We have to get to a point where you can continue to fight with a minimum of direct U.S. involvement, but with continued military and economic assistance. We can also try to influence their allies not to arm them in such a way that they are capable of repeating military activities on the scale of the past few months.



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