



TELECON

The President/Mr. Kissinger

4:06 p.m., April 24, 1970

P: Where did I find you?

K: In my office -- I am going into one of those WSAG meetings shortly. I have talked to Senator Stennis -- in fact, he is sitting here now. I would like to report to you his conclusions in his presence. I presented the general problem of the situation.

P: You told him I asked you to talk to him?

K: Yes; that this was at your special request. I was very open with him. I explained the consequences of a collapse of Cambodia, the large aid request (which has grown larger), your reluctance to get involved in a war in Cambodia, and your conviction that the aid program, as such, is going to not be effective for about a year or so, and would get us into a situation analagous to others. I showed him the map of these base areas which are really part of the war in Vietnam -- the forces there are operating against our forces.

P: The Senator knows about Menu.

K: Yes; I summed up those Menu results again -- the enormous stores there. And the Senator then came to this conclusion. I asked him to sit here while I reported it. He said, of course his first preference is air action. Second, wherever possible, his preference is South Vietnamese ground forces. If necessary and if helpful to the war effort in South Vietnam, he could see the utility of a raid of several weeks' duration that included American ground forces, as long as it sped up the end of the war in South Vietnam. [Mr. Kissinger turned to the Senator and asked if that had been a fair statement of his conclusions. ]

P: I will talk to the Senator in a minute, but first, let me tell you one thing. First, I am concerned about one thing. Get hold of Helms and have him get in touch with Saigon and have a couple of his guys fly into Phnom Penh to install that signal equipment. There is no need for that guy to wait 45 minutes. Tell him we want that signal -- we are at a critical time where we need the back-channel immediately. Don't you think so.

K: That is an excellent idea.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, as amended, Sect 3.5

NLN 07-209 Per Ltr. April 21, 2008

By P.H. Date 5-11-09

[A 1063]



The President/Mr. Kissinger  
4:06 p.m., April 24, 1970

- 2

P: Not uniformed, military men, but Helms' men to install the equipment. This will help on our consideration. You might explain to the Senator about that equipment. Another thing I would like to know on COSVN is: If we thought we would have to hit COSVN in event they took Phnom Penh -- whether or not they take Phnom Penh 30 days from now, will the rains be too great?

K: Almost certainly I know the answer. Westmoreland said it can't be done in any effective way.

P: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ If we take COSVN, we have to do it now?

K: Yes, but without air support if it is done now. [In response to the President's query], the rain situation changes in October.

P: Not till then? Check that further. I want a clear answer to how long our option lasts -- whether it lasts one month, one week or something else. I am basing it on the assumption that it lasts two weeks.

K: The rainy season lasts for three months after it starts.

P: As I understand it, we have only three weeks to exercise this option. Assuming we are trying to find a way to take the shorter road, I think we have to recognize we may not find another opportunity.

K: That is right.

P: These guys have been talking about a protracted war. That is why last night, I had come to the conclusion you have to seize the opportunity when it is there, considering the weather, etc.

P: I will talk to the Senator.

K: It may take an hour to get an answer to those two things.

P: You don't have to call me back -- anytime after two hours. I am going out for an hour.

-----

Stennis: Mr. President.

P: I want to thank you for talking to Henry. I will sum up what my views are: (1) I don't want us to get into a quagmire of military aid to

[NLN07-20/4 P 2063]



The President/Mr. Kissinger [and Senator Stennis]  
4:06 p.m., April 24, 1970

3

Cambodia. Or else we will get into another situation. On that request, we are not going to give a lot -- a few rifles doesn't bother you does it? You tell your colleagues we are not going to get into a big aid program for Cambodia. We will provide minimum rifles because they did opt for us. With regard to these areas (1) as far as American activity is concerned, the first choice is air action including the B-52's which only you and Senator Russell know about. It's the best-kept secret of the war. (2) we will also consider the possibility of tactical air to follow. But that is all air action on the borders -- not inside. It's within the 2-5 mile area. As far as any ground action: there will be no ground action with relation to Cambodia. They have to save themselves. Any ground action will relate only to our troops in South Vietnam and our Vietnamization program. If ground action takes place, we will have the South Vietnamese do it -- we trained that army. (3) Our other option, we will not exercise unless we have to -- that of having Americans helping South Vietnamese only if we consider that that will, in the long run, help reduce our casualties in Vietnam. How does that sound to you?

S: It sounds good -- I will be with you on the nailhead.

P: We are not going to get involved in a war in Cambodia. We are not going to occupy Cambodia. We do want basically to win in South Vietnam.

S: We have to.

P: In order to do that, we have to hit those sanctuaries in Cambodia.

S: This is part of your necessary steps in handling the war in South Vietnam.

P: As you remember, in my speech Monday I warned that if their actions in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam endangered our troops in South Vietnam, we are not going to sit and take it.

S: I am with you all the way. I did express some concern. I didn't think you were planning it -- I had to see.

P: We are not going to fly anybody in to save Phnom Penh -- or Cambodia. We are going to do what is necessary to help save our men in South Vietnam. They can't have those sanctuaries there.

S: I will be with you -- I comment you for what you are doing.

lds

[NLN 07 20/9: P 3063]