

April 28, 1975

**From the Journal of A.F. Dobrynin, 'Memorandum of
the Conversation with Secretary of State of the
United States, H. Kissinger, 28 April 1975'**

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Summary:

On April 28, 1975, Kissinger urgently informed the Soviet Union that North Vietnamese forces had begun shelling Saigon's airport and the U.S. Embassy complex, killing two Marines and disrupting the evacuation, which he claimed violated an assumed two-week timeframe and risked forcing American military intervention. Ambassador Dobrynin dismissed Kissinger's insinuations of Soviet involvement.

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MEMORANDUM OF THE CONVERSATION
with the Secretary of State of the United States,
H. Kissinger
28 April 1975

Kissinger delivered the following urgent message and requested it to be immediately relayed to Moscow.

Today, artillery and rocket bombardment has commenced on the Saigon airport, as well as on the American complex of buildings around their embassy in Saigon. Two American marines who were providing security have been killed. The runways at the airport have sustained damage. Washington is presently awaiting updates from Saigon to assess the full extent of the damages caused.

President Ford, continued Kissinger, is surprised – “not to use stronger terms” – by the actions of the North Vietnamese. On the one hand, they provided a positive response through Moscow regarding the peaceful conclusion of the American evacuation. However, on the other hand, without waiting for its completion, they initiated shelling, greatly complicating the situation surrounding the evacuation.

These actions have presented President Ford with a challenging question about the next steps, as the behavior of the North Vietnamese leaves the only remaining option at the forefront – utilizing American armed forces to finish the evacuation.

Such a turn of events cannot help but impact – “willingly or unwillingly” – the relationship between our two countries, Kissinger continued, particularly since the aforementioned response from the North Vietnamese was received through Moscow.

Hanoi's actions, despite its statements to the contrary, are a deliberate and calculated blow to the prestige of the administration and the President personally. These actions aim to create the impression that the Americans are leaving under direct pressure from the North Vietnamese. As previously explained, this situation could lead to unnecessary complications.

Kissinger also mentioned that they planned the evacuation based on the two-week timeframe they had asked for, which Hanoi did not effectively oppose. The administration operated on the assumption that by the end of this period, the evacuation would have been fully completed. However, Hanoi has now disrupted the completion of this evacuation, thereby creating a situation fraught with complications.

Kissinger reiterated this idea of the two-week timeframe several times, emphasizing that within this period, they undoubtedly could have met the deadline and completed the evacuation.

All of this was conveyed by Kissinger in somewhat elevated tones, in a quite irritated manner.

I calmly rebutted Kissinger's insinuations about potential repercussions on our relations with the USA. I stressed that the Soviet side acted with goodwill and that there are no legitimate reasons for the U.S. government to believe otherwise, unless it is actively seeking unsubstantiated speculations about Soviet involvement in recent events. There was no such involvement, and I, as an ambassador, confidently affirm this fact.

I also brought to Kissinger's attention to the criticism unfolding in the U.S. Congress and the press regarding the delayed execution of the operation to evacuate Americans from Saigon. It is a general opinion that what could have been done for the completion of the evacuation literally within two or three days, was prolonged for an extended period for unclear reasons. It is a fact that the number of Americans in Saigon has remained at approximately the same level over the past few days - about a thousand people, even though evacuating this small number of individuals would have taken no more than one or two days at maximum. However, the ongoing unexplained delay in evacuating the remaining Americans in Saigon whether voluntarily or involuntarily, heightens the risk of entangling the United States in the events surrounding Saigon. "Why does the Administration need this if, as we are told, it wants to disengage the U.S. from these events, and we hope that is the Administration's genuine objective?", I asked the Secretary of State.

Kissinger provided no convincing arguments in response, simply repeating that their actions were based on a two-week deadline, which was "grossly violated by the North Vietnamese."

In conclusion, citing a directive, he reiterated the request to urgently convey to Moscow what he had said.

The American media is currently reporting almost continuously in their characteristic sensationalist style about the artillery and missile attack on the airfield in Saigon.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR TO THE USA
(A. DOBRYNIN)

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