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AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN AND THE SAIGON EMBASSY'S BACK CHANNEL COMMUNICATION FILES, 1963-1975



Consists of State Department telegrams and White House backchannel messages between U.S. ambassadors in Saigon and White House national security advisers, talking points for meetings with South Vietnamese officials, intelligence reports, drafts of peace agreements, and military status reports. Subjects include the Diem coup, the Paris peace negotiations, the fall of South Vietnam, and other U.S./South Vietnam relations topics, 1963 to 1975.

Date Range: 1963-1975

Content: 6,445 images

Source Library: Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library

Detailed Description:

The *Saigon Embassy Files Kept by Ambassador Graham Martin* is one of many sub-collections that comprise the National Security Adviser Files at the Ford Presidential Library.

Most of the more than 6000 pages are from the Nixon and Ford administrations, although a few documents originating in Lyndon Johnson's administration and one segment regarding the Diem coup from John F. Kennedy's administration are also present. In most cases, the reverse chronological order in which they were received has been changed to forward chronological order.

The bulk of the materials in this collection are "backchannel" cables between the U.S. ambassadors in Saigon (Henry Cabot Lodge, Ellsworth Bunker, and Graham Martin, successively) and the President's national security advisers (McGeorge Bundy, Henry Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft, successively) regarding the situation in South Vietnam or the peace negotiations. In addition, there are straight State Department cables, usually between the Secretary of State and the U.S. ambassador in Saigon; talking points prepared for meetings between the ambassador and South Vietnamese officials, mainly President Nguyen Van Thieu; reports and memoranda of conversations of those meetings; drafts of speeches and proposed agreements prepared by both sides; military situation reports; and intelligence reports.

The largest segment of the collection consists of communications between Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger during the period of the Paris Peace Talks. They include: (1) Kissinger relaying to Bunker details of his secret talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris, and later the formal Paris peace negotiations, including drafts of proposed agreements and negotiations over signing procedures; (2) Bunker's prepared talking points for meetings with President Thieu of South Vietnam to relay that information, and his reporting to Kissinger of Thieu's reaction to the information; (3) "think pieces" by both Bunker and Kissinger on the situation in Vietnam and the strategy for handling President Thieu; and (4) post-ceasefire diplomatic maneuvering, implementation of the agreements, and handling of allegations of ceasefire violations. The ambassador also transmitted drafts of major Nixon speeches regarding the peace negotiations to Thieu and relayed Thieu's reaction.

Graham Martin became ambassador to South Vietnam in early May 1973. His communications with Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft deal primarily with implementation of the ceasefire, violations of the ceasefire, the question of aid to South Vietnam and congressional relations centered around that issue, contacts with South Vietnamese officials, and the deterioration of the "peace" and the eventual evacuation of South Vietnam by the Americans. Many of the cables relate to diplomatic relations with other countries regarding the situation in Vietnam, including the Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia, France, and the members of the International Commission of Control and Supervision in Vietnam. The cables range from topics as specific as arrangements for the evacuation of certain individuals to philosophical discourses by Martin on the history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and his role in it. Some, but not all, letters between Presidents Nixon/Ford and President Thieu are present in these files.

The nearly 200 pages of material dating from the Henry Cabot Lodge's tenure as U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam under President John F. Kennedy relate primarily to events, beginning in August 1963, leading up to the November 1963 coup and assassination of President Diem of South Vietnam. They consist mainly of communications between Henry Cabot Lodge and Secretary of State Dean Rusk or McGeorge Bundy, national security adviser, regarding meetings with South Vietnamese officials, intelligence reports, evaluations of the situation, and instructions from Washington.

Also included is a collection of documents apparently drawn together by Graham Martin for use in his congressional testimony in 1976. Unlike the bulk of the collection, which consists almost exclusively of White House or State Department documents, this material includes many documents originated by the various U.S. military entities involved in the Vietnam War.

Container List

Box 1 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Saigon to Washington, 12/15/69 to 12/16/71 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 12/15/69 to 12/16/71 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 1/3/72 to 1/28/72 (1)-(4)

Washington to Saigon, 1/3/72 to 1/28/72

Saigon to Washington, 2/21/72 to 7/23/72 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 2/21/72 to 7/23/72 (1)-(2)

Box 2 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Saigon to Washington, 7/25/72 to 9/13/72 (1)-(3)

Washington to Saigon, 7/25/72 to 9/13/72 (1)-(3)

Saigon to Washington, 9/16/72 to 10/17/72 (1)-(3)

Washington to Saigon, 9/16/72 to 10/17/72 (1)-(2)

Box 3 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Saigon to Washington, 10/22/72 to 11/6/72 (1)-(3)

Washington to Saigon, 10/22/72 to 11/6/72 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 11/7/72 to 11/24/72 (1)-(3)

Washington to Saigon, 11/7/72 to 11/24/72 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 11/26/72 to 12/23/72 (1)-(3)

Washington to Saigon, 11/26/72 to 12/23/72 (1)-(2)

Box 4 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Saigon to Washington, 12/27/72 to 1/15/73 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 12/27/72 to 1/15/73 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 1/18/73 to 1/23/73

Washington to Saigon, 1/18/73 to 1/23/73 (1)-(3)

Saigon to Washington, 1/24/73 to 2/26/73 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 1/24/73 to 2/26/73 (1)-(2)

Box 5 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Saigon to Washington, 2/26/73 to 3/30/73 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 2/26/73 to 3/30/73 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 4/16/73 to 5/22/73 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 4/16/73 to 5/22/73 (1)-(3)

Saigon to Washington, 5/23/73 to 6/4/73 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 5/23/73 to 6/4/73 (1)-(2)

Box 6 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

Saigon to Washington, 6/5/73 to 6/11/73 (1)-(3)

Washington to Saigon, 6/5/73 to 6/11/73

Saigon to Washington, 6/11/73 to 7/12/73 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 6/11/73 to 7/12/73

Saigon to Washington, 7/23/73 to 8/27/73

Washington to Saigon, 7/23/73 to 8/27/73 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 9/4/73 to 1/10/74 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 9/4/73 to 1/10/74 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 7/25/73 to 12/31/73

Saigon to Washington, 1/12/74 to 11/21/74 (1)-(3)

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Washington to Saigon, 1/12/74 to 11/21/74 (1)-(2)

Saigon to Washington, 1/7/74 to 12/3/74 (1)-(4)

Washington to Saigon, 1/7/74 to 12/3/74 (1)-(2)

Washington to Saigon, 1/5/75 to 4/1/75

Saigon to Washington, 1/5/75 to 4/1/75 (1)-(3)

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Saigon to Washington, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75 (1)-(5)

Washington to Saigon, 4/9/75 to 4/28/75

Henry Cabot Lodge, Including Diem Coup, 1963-65 (1)-(3)

Ellsworth Bunker, Graham Martin, 1972-75, Miscellaneous (1)-(2)

SECRET-NODIS, Bunker to Washington, 1968-69

SECRET-NODIS to Ambassador, Saigon, 11/6/68 to 4/27/72

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NODIS-CHEROKEE: TO SECSTATE, 9/15/70 TO 10/14/70 (1)-(2)

NODIS-CHEROKEE: From SECSTATE, 9/13/70 TO 12/16/70 (1)-(2)

Memos, speeches, correspondence, draft agreements, 1/25/72 to 9/26/72 (1)-(3)

Memos, speeches, correspondence, draft agreements, 9/26/72 to 11/11/72 (1)-(3)

Draft Agreement, 10/15/72

Bunker and Weyand to Kissinger - Ceasefire, 11/4/72 to 11/19/72

Box 10 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin

To American Ambassador - Saigon, 11/4/72 to 12/15/72 (1)-(2)

Troop strengths, end of 1972

Talking Papers for Ambassador Bunker, March 1973 (1)-(2)

Memcon - Singapore, 8/4/73

Travel of Vice President Huong, October-November 1973

Charge Lehmann, January-February 1975

Weyand Report, 4/4/75

American Embassy - Manila

Martin Testimony - Support Materials, 5/75 to 1/76 (1)-(5)