

**National Security Advisor**  
**SAIGON EMBASSY FILES KEPT BY AMBASSADOR**  
**GRAHAM MARTIN: Copies Made for the NSC, 1963-1975 (1976)**

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

Copies 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.

**QUANTITY**

4.0 linear feet (ca. 8000 pages)

**DONOR**

Gerald R. Ford (accession number 82-73)

**ACCESS**

Open. The collection is administered under terms of the donor's deed of gift, a copy of which is available on request, and under National Archives and Records Administration general restrictions (36 CFR 1256).

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Prepared by Karen B. Holzhausen, November 1992; Revised March 2000

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[This finding aid, found at <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nsasaigon.asp>, was slightly adapted on pp. 6-7 by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in July 2018 to serve as a guide to the microfilm edition published by Primary Source Media.]

# VIETNAM WAR CHRONOLOGY

(Related to this collection)

August 21, 1963	Ngo Dinh Nhu's forces attack Buddhist temples.
August 22, 1963	Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge arrives in Saigon.
November 1, 1963	Coup against Ngo and Diem.
November 2, 1963	Ngo and Diem murdered.
June 2, 1964	Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, and others meet in Honolulu to discuss increased aid to South Vietnam.
1967	Ellsworth Bunker becomes U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam
July 25, 1969	"Nixon Doctrine" announced.
October 15, 1969	Massive anti-war demonstrations in Washington.
February 20, 1970	Secret talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho begin in Paris.
October 8, 1972	Kissinger and Le Duc Tho reach peace agreement. Thieu rejects it.
November 20, 1972	Kissinger presents Le Duc Tho sixty-nine amendments demanded by Thieu.
January 8, 1973	Nixon and Le Duc Tho resume talks.
January 23, 1973	Peace agreement initialed.
January 27, 1973	Cease-fire agreements formally signed in Paris.
March 29, 1973	Last American troops leave Vietnam.
May 1973	Ellsworth Bunker resigns post as U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam. Charles Whitehouse fills in until Graham Martin arrives.
July 20, 1973	Graham Martin, new U.S. ambassador, presents credentials to President Thieu.
January 1974	Thieu declares that war has begun again.
January 6, 1975	Communists capture Phuoc Long province, north of Saigon.
February 5, 1975	North Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung goes south to take command of Communist forces.
March 11, 1975	Communists capture Banmethuot.
March 15, 1975	Thieu orders northern provinces of South Vietnam abandoned.

March 20, 1975	Thieu reverses himself, orders Hue held at all costs.
March 25, 1975	Hue falls.
March 30, 1975	Danang falls to Communists.
April 17, 1975	Phnom Penh, Cambodia, falls to the Khmer Rouge.
April 21, 1975	Xuan Loc, last South Vietnamese defense line before Saigon, falls.
April 23, 1975	President Ford, speaking in New Orleans, calls the war "finished."
April 25, 1975	Thieu leaves Saigon for Taiwan.
April 28, 1975	Vice-President Tran Van Huong transfers chief of state authority to General Duong Van Minh.
April 29, 1975	Evacuation of last Americans from Saigon. Ambassador Martin leaves.
April 30, 1975	Communist forces capture Saigon.

## INTRODUCTION

The Saigon Embassy Files Kept by Ambassador Graham Martin is one of many subcollections that comprise the National Security Adviser Files.

In January 1978, the North Carolina State Police found a cache of classified documents in the trunk of a car that had been stolen from former U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam Graham A. Martin. They turned the documents over to the FBI. The documents were embassy files Martin had taken with him when he evacuated Saigon on April 29, 1975, just hours before the city fell to the Communists. The Justice Department, in considering prosecuting Martin for misuse of classified documents, sent copies of the files to the National Security Council for a damage assessment. The copies remained in NSC files until 1982, when the NSC determined that they should have been considered presidential papers and sent them to the Ford 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. With a few exceptions, the materials have been maintained in the "packets" that were designated by the FBI. 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.

**Related Materials** (March 2000)

The Ford Library holds a great deal of material related to the Vietnam War. Much of it concerns the MIA/POW issue and the treatment of refugees, but there is also substantive information about the fall of Saigon and the question of aid to South Vietnam. The various collections from the office of the National Security Adviser are a key source. In addition, the Congressional Relations Office files are particularly noteworthy, as are several categories of White House Central Files and the Presidential Handwriting File. The files of Richard Cheney, James Connor, Robert Wolthuis, Philip Buchen, John Marsh, William Baroody, and Ron Nessen also contain materials on Vietnam. The Milt Mitler files contain extensive files on MIA/POWs. The Theodore Marrs files contain extensive files on the refugee problem.

Several of the James Reichley interview transcripts relate to Vietnam, as does the Jerrold Schecter interview with President Ford, which is located in the Composite General Accessions.

## Reel List / Container List

### REEL 1 (Film R 2008.16-1)

#### **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)

### REEL 2 (Film R 2008.16-2)

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)

### REEL 3 (Film R 2008.16-3)

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

### REEL 4 (Film R 2008.16-4)

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

**REEL 5 (Film R 2008.16-5)**

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

**Box 7 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin**

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)

**Box 8 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin**

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)-(2)

**REEL 6 (Film R 2008.16-6)**

Henry Cabot Lodge, Including Diem Coup, 1963-65 (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

**Box 9 Copies of Files Removed by Ambassador Martin**

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

**REEL 7 (Film R 2008.16-7)**

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)