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WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister-Designate of Singapore (U)

PARTICIPANTS: Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Richard Solomon, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Robert D. Orr, Ambassador to Singapore
Karl D. Jackson, Senior Director for Asian Affairs, NSC (Notetaker)

Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister-Designate
George Yeo Yong Boon, Minister of State for Finance and Foreign Affairs
Tommy Koh Thong Bee, Ambassador to the U.S.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 16, 1990, 11:00 - 11:30am EST
Brent Scowcroft's Office

General Scowcroft met for thirty minutes with Prime Minister-Designate Goh in his office.

PM-Designate Goh: Good to be here in Washington to reestablish contacts. (U)

This is especially important in terms of two upcoming matters: the U.S. presence in Asia and Cambodia policy. (Ø)

I want to reiterate the importance of maintaining U.S. presence in the region. Two developments may affect this: first, Eastern Europe and your rapprochement with the Soviet Union and second, your budget deficit. These two factors will combine to reduce your presence in the Western Pacific. (Ø)

We think this would be a mistake -- either to reduce drastically or to withdraw entirely. You have invested years in that part of the world, building up Japan and other Asian countries. A reduced presence would lead to reduced influence. When Britain pulled out in 1973, it lost influence in Asia. Likewise, the British pulled out from the Persian Gulf area and left it to the Iranians. (Ø)

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Regarding your presence in the Philippines, I reiterate the importance of maintaining U.S. presence. Do not pull out unless you are forced to do so. Reduce your presence if you must, but don't pull out. If you are forced out of the Philippines, you should consider Brunei. (The Sultan was receptive when this matter was raised by Lee Kuan Yew). Thailand is a second possibility. In extremis Singapore would put aside one of its outlying islands for use by the United States. If necessary, we are prepared to put aside an island for you. (S)

General Scowcroft: I appreciate your comments with which I agree. We are a Pacific power and think it is important to retain our presence. The world is changing rapidly as are the Soviets. In the midst of this change, the U.S. presence is a stabilizing factor. One thing that will change is the extent to which we are insistent on maintaining a U.S. presence in the face of local resistance. When cold war was hot, we insisted that these positions were critical. Now we would be more reluctant to do so when the host country shows significant resistance to U.S. presence. We have every intent of staying in the Philippines, but only if this accords with the interests of countries in the region. I know that discussions are going on with Singapore and we hope to reach an amicable agreement. (S)

In the Philippines, if they do not think we are forcing ourselves upon them, they will come to their own conclusions based on their own perception of their national interests. (S)

PM-Designate Goh: I met with Ramos recently in Singapore. He sees America staying on until at least 1998 and after that the bases might go on from there. He understands the implications of a near-term America withdrawal. (S)

General Scowcroft: With the current pace of change, 1998 is a long time off. International politics in the Pacific is different because the Soviet role is changing much more gradually. Therefore, we need to be more cautious. (S)

PM-Designate Goh: Any change in balance of power in Asia would let loose forces that would be very threatening to us in the region. If the U.S. withdrew, China would become much more powerful and the Soviets still maintain a big presence. Events are not following Eastern European model. (S)

Furthermore, Asia and the Pacific will become a big market for American investment and for the sale of American products. (S)

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We are alarmed at the talk of Americans suffering from Cambodian fatigue. These are people who want quick solutions. It would be a mistake to show the world that you lack the will to see the situation through to a solution. The UN-supervised solution is the preferred scenario. There is a fair chance that the NCR, under Sihanouk, will win the election. (S)

If this cannot be maneuvered, the war will become a contest between the KR and PRK, neither of which is favorable to our interests. We do not think there will be a military solution. The stalemate must be maintained; this will lead people to make the compromises necessary to bring about an election. We understand that your public is apprehensive about the NCR-KR link. The problem is that we do not think the NCR has a chance on the battlefield and this is why we must move toward elections. I would like to impress upon you the need for resolve. We are entering the end game. When victory is quite near, we would be stupid to hand it to the KR or the PRK. (S)

General Scowcroft: End game? Are we really in one? (S)

PM-Designate Goh: Yes. In one or two more years there will be a conclusion. (S)

General Scowcroft: Is it essential for elections that the Hun Sen regime withdraw from governing the country? Results from Nicaragua show that notwithstanding Ortega's control of the government and the Army, he got beaten. Why wouldn't this be possible in Cambodia? (S)

PM-Designate Goh: The situation in Cambodia is much more complex and it is different. If Hun Sen organizes the elections, this amounts to recognition of Hun Sen's government. (S)

General Scowcroft: Why not bring the UN into Cambodia but do so without tampering with Hun Sen's government. (S)

Ambassador Koh: I think what Brent is saying, is why not follow the Ortega model? (S)

Following the Nicaragua model just won't work. Neither KR nor PRC would agree to participate in such an election because it would recognize PRK legitimacy. Without KR and PRC agreement a free election cannot take place. We need a compromise like decapitating the regime (inserting UN authority over the critical ministries but leaving the ordinary personnel in place). (S)

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General Scowcroft: We have never had a UN operation such as the one you are describing. (S)

Ambassador Koh: That's not a good reason not to try. The Perm Five process is working relatively well. The PRK, in principle, has accepted the idea of a UN interim role in administering Cambodia. (S)

General Scowcroft: There is a growing lack of enthusiasm in Congress. This is very important. I think that many of them are just listening to their own fears. Also, the Thai are becoming ambivalent about staying the course in Cambodia. (S)

PM-Designate Goh: This is why I am seeing as many Congressmen as possible during my stay here. (S)

We need to convince them to see this through to the end. The NCR must be given the best possible chance. (S)

General Scowcroft: What is your sense of where Vietnam is going? (S)

Ambassador Goh: Vietnam is hardening its position because it can sense ambivalence in Thailand and in the West. We must try to disabuse them of this impression. (S)

General Yeo: The Vietnamese are patient but the Chinese are even more patient. (S)

General Scowcroft: Our journalists tend to overlook the KR roots of PRK. I think of PRK and the KR as two branches of the same tree. You should disabuse the journalists of this tendency to depict the PRK as wholly innocent. (S)

Ambassador Koh: Some of our Khmer friends have written op ed pieces in Washington which have the PRK just as guilty as Pol Pot. The leaders of the PRK ran the eastern region of Cambodia under Pol Pot. (S)

General Scowcroft: The perception is damaging because it brings forth the idea that the only thing we need to do is to prevent the KR from returning to power. (S)

Ambassador Goh: Patience is the key word. (U)

Ambassador Koh: Patience is in short supply. Solarz has stayed the course. Robb has held back Cranston in the Senate. I will be bringing my ministers to see Foley, Mitchell, Broomfield, Solarz, and Leach. (S)

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General Scowcroft: I really appreciate your hard work. We need some help. (C)

Regarding the Philippines, the budget aspect will weigh heavily with Congress. They would like to think that all military problems are a thing of the past. (C)

-- End of Conversation --

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