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Vietnamese and American leaders sign a peace agreement in Paris, prompting a ceasefire after nearly a decade of fighting.

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Transcript

Ceasefire Signed in Paris Outlining American Withdrawal from Vietnam

EDWIN NEWMAN, anchor:

The cease fire that went into affect a few minutes ago did not come about easily. After more than a decade of fighting, and years of negotiation, public and private, the agreement to stop the fighting finally was signed in Paris this morning. NBC News correspondent Garrick Utley was there.

GARRICK UTLEY reporting:

The signing was as complicated as the peace negotiating had been. It was done in two sessions with slightly altered peace documents, a diplomatic hocus pocus designed to satisfy South Vietnam’s refusal to recognize the Vietcong as a government.

It all happened in the ornate conference room of the old Majestic Hotel. That is where the peace talks began almost five years old and that is where they ended today. There were several hundred pro-Communist Vietnamese and French across from the Hotel Majestic this morning when the signing ceremonies began. They waved North Vietnamese and Vietcong flags. They chanted slogans claiming their side had won in the peace agreement.

Inside, four delegations met to sign the peace accords. Nguyen Duy Trinh, foreign minister, signed for North Vietnam. Each delegation had five persons seated at the table, and 20 more behind them. Secretary of State Rogers signed for the United States. This morning the diplomats signed the peace agreement and three supplementary protocols describing the details of the ceasefire, supervision of ceasefire, and release of prisoners of war. Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam signed for South Vietnam. And on a different page, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh signed for the Vietcong or provisional revolutionary government. The Saigon government refused to puts it signature on the same page as the Vietcong, fearing that would amount to political recognition of the Vietcong as a government. In fact, this morning’s peace document did not mention any of the four signing parties by name. The entire signing ceremony this morning was unemotional and brief, just 18 minutes.