In 1972, Henry Kissinger, the chief adviser on foreign policy to President Richard Nixon, holds secret peace talks in Paris with his North Vietnamese counterpart, Le Duc Tho. After the meetings, Kissinger travels to Saigon to brief South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu on the meetings. The flurry of diplomatic activity leads to speculation about a potential end to the Vietnam War, even as this report details increased hostilities in Quang Tri province.

**Keywords**

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Transcript
Kissinger Briefs Thieu on Secret Paris Peace Talks

JOHN CHANCELLOR, anchor:
In Saigon today, Henry Kissinger, the President’s foreign affairs advisor, spent over two hours with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu. There was no indication at all of what the two men discussed. They will meet again before Kissinger leaves Saigon for Tokyo and Washington. Here’s a satellite report on Kissinger.

ARTHUR LORD reporting:
Dr. Kissinger spent a good part of the day inside the U.S. military command headquarters in Saigon. Meeting with the top generals from the Army and the Air Force. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker also sat in on the session, which was described as a general review of the political and military situation. The American embassy in Saigon tried to squash speculation that Kissinger had arrived here from the secret talks in Paris armed with a new proposal to end the war. The embassy said Kissinger’s visit had been under consideration for several weeks. They called his scheduled meeting with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu strictly routine.

It is generally believed that Dr. Kissinger’s visit here is far from routine. One reason is that Le Duc Tho, his counterpart at the secret Paris talks, is making a similar trip to Hanoi. Considering Kissinger’s track record in pulling off diplomatic spectacles, that’s just too much of a coincidence to ignore.

The South Vietnamese press, which thrives on the cloak-and-dagger, has already printed what many Vietnamese consider to be the inside story. The key phase of the visit, they believe, is the meeting between Kissinger and President Thieu. They see it as a direct confrontation, with Kissinger suggesting...
concessions to the communists to achieve a ceasefire, and Thieu refusing to budge, believing that the proposed concessions are a sellout. If Kissinger’s mission here is to convince Thieu to change his hardline stance on dealing with the communists, then he has a tough assignment. Thieu has never been stronger politically. In the face of the North Vietnamese offensive, the military has rallied behind him and he now rules by decree under martial law. The meeting, when it came, took place inside the heavily guarded Independence Palace and, at least for the photo session, looked like anything but a confrontation. Any concessions to the communists would weaken Thieu’s position. This makes Thieu a major stumbling block in the peace talks. But the American government has supported Thieu so well and for so long, that now there is nobody else to take his place. He is now the strong man in South Vietnam and the Americans are stuck with him. And Thieu, being a smart politician, knows it. Arthur Lord, NBC News, Saigon.

CHANCELLOR: The American command in Saigon said today that bombing raids in North Vietnam in the last twenty-four hours were the heaviest since the resumption of bombing was ordered in April, somewhere between 350 and 400 strikes in one day. The weekly casualty figures were released. Last week four Americans were killed in combat in Vietnam and 28 were wounded. South Vietnamese killed numbered almost 800, South Vietnamese wounded almost 2,500. On the ground there was more heavy fighting between the enemy and South Vietnamese marines for Quang Tri City. Tom Streithorst reports from the highway leading to Quang Tri.

TOM STREITHORST reporting:
The Kissinger visit notwithstanding, the grueling fight for Quang Tri City continued. Here, American Phantom jets bombed the outskirts of the already shattered city. On both sides, this is a conventional war of big weapons and heavy pounding. Digging is as important as shooting, in a battle in which artillery causes a high percentage of the casualties. These mobile 175-mm guns were forced to abandon their position because the North Vietnamese had zeroed in on it and were hitting the big guns with counter artillery fire. As the 175s took up a new position, surrounded by tanks, smaller South Vietnamese guns, 105s and 155s, took up the slack. We couldn’t see the North Vietnamese of course, but these southerners looked very weary. We spoke to American Marine advisors in Quang Tri about Dr. Kissinger’s visit to Saigon. They hadn’t heard about it, but expressed the hope that it didn’t imply a ceasefire would be in place before South Vietnamese marines reoccupied Quang Tri.
The day Dr. Kissinger arrived, the Command announced the death of eight Marines and paratroopers in Military Region 1. Doubtless there were more that weren’t announced. The fighting is at its heaviest here in this part of South Vietnam.
The troops up here have the greatest stake in peace. Ironically, very few of them even know that Dr. Kissinger is in Saigon. Tom Streithorst, NBC News, on the road to Quang Tri.

CHANCELLOR: United Press International has a dispatch from Vietnam today, which quotes Vietnamese medical sources, as saying American B-52 strikes in Quang Tri Province have killed and wounded more civilians than North Vietnamese gunfire. For two months, all of Quang Tri Province was held by the North Vietnamese and during that time it was declared a free fire zone, which meant unrestricted bombing. The UPI report is based on interviews with medical teams from the Saigon University Medical School, which have been working near Quang Tri Province.