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SUBJECT Philippines Crisis/Iran Negotiations Aftermath

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MARVIN KALB: Two Presidents are in trouble today, Corazon Aquino in the Philippines and Ronald Reagan here in Washington. President Aquino has taken dramatic action to save her government. At this time, it is not clear or known what action, if any, President Reagan intends to take to restore his Administration's credibility and the confidence of foreign governments.

Let's start with the latest from the Philippines and a report from Keith Miller.

KEITH MILLER: The showdown came during an emergency cabinet meeting inside the Presidential Palace. The grounds were secured by troops loyal to President Corazon Aquino. During the seven-hour session, Aquino was briefed on the aborted coup and responded by dismissing her Defense Minister and calling for the resignation of her entire cabinet.

In a nationwide television address, Aquino said the country needed a fresh start. She began her new administration with a warning.

PRESIDENT CORAZON AQUINO: I hereby give notice to all those who may be inclined to exploit the present situation that the sternest measures will be taken against them if they try.

MILLER: The shake-up in her government follows confirmation from armed forces Chief of Staff General Fidel Ramos of a plot to overthrow the government. Ramos sent troops out last night to prevent an attack on the government. He said a faction within the military had joined forces with Marcos loyalists to reconvene the National Assembly and remove Aquino from power.

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What role in the plot the former Defense Minister had is not known. But Juan Ponce Enrile, who helped put Aquino in power last February, has been her archrival ever since. His criticism of her policy to negotiate with Communists gained him support within the military, and he has constantly challenged her authority to run the country.

It has been perhaps the most dramatic day of her presidency, but Corazon Aquino appears firmly in control of the country. The capital appears calm tonight, although the military remains on maximum alert. The forces that want to remove Aquino are still at large, and therefore still pose a threat to her presidency.

KALB: Senators Nunn, Durenberger, welcome.

It is clear that the U.S. Government supports the government of Corazon Aquino. Do you feel that the U.S. Government should be in support of this particular action? Senator Nunn?

SENATOR SAM NUNN: I think our government is doing the right thing in this case. I think the Philippine Government now has to be reformed. I think Mrs. Aquino did the right thing. And thankfully, General Ramos supporter her.

KALB: Senator Durenberger, your view?

SENATOR DAVID DURENBERGER: Well, one of the beautiful things about President Aquino is that she can combine love and compassion in appropriate measure with toughness. And as she once said, "Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean I'm not tough."

I think we've been straining here with her compassion and her patience for a long time. Now she's done what she has to do. And I think she'll be supported not only here, but in the Philippines.

KALB: Do you feel that the U.S. Government should do something now in its own right to help her?

SENATOR DURENBERGER: I think our position all along has been, in effect, she's a unique personality at a very unique time. And in effect, we need to take instruction from here because she's not your typical President.

KALB: Senator Nunn, do you feel that the U.S., perhaps, should be sending more arms to the Philippines as a way, perhaps, of reinforcing the U.S. commitment to this government?

SENATOR NUNN: I think they have to call the shots. I

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don't think we ought to impose our own solutions on Mrs. Aquino. She knows what she's doing. They have a real potential for trouble there. And arms are certainly part of the answer, but the main problem with Enrile and his comments in recent months is that they have prevented, I think, restoring some sense of economic forward movement. There's not going to be the kind of investment they need in the economy as long as she has people undercutting her like he has been.

KALB: But do you feel that she should be taking stronger action against the Communists now?

SENATOR NUNN: I think the military has to be reorganized. Perhaps now it can be reorganized. The military has to gain the confidence of the people. The military has to be seen out in the rural areas protecting the rural villages. All of that has to happen. I don't think the military in the Philippines is now prepared or trained to take a very substantial offensive action.

KALB: There's an easy temptation, I think, to conclude that perhaps President Reagan ought to be taking some of the action that President Corazon Aquino took this morning. And we're going to get to that Iran crisis.

First, an introduction of our panel. Bob Kaiser, the Assistant Managing Editor of the Washington Post. Albert Hunt, the Washington Bureau chief of the Wall Street Journal.

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KALB: We are back on Meet the Press with two key senators, Republican Dave Durenberger of Minnesota, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; and Democrat Sam Nunn of Georgia, the incoming Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Okay, let's pick up what it is that the President should be doing, and I'm talking about President Reagan. There are reports in the Washington Post and a number of other places today that the President's closest advisers are recommending a big shake-up. Big shake-up meaning Regan, Poindexter, and the Secretary of State, Mr. Shultz.

Do you think that is appropriate now, Senator Nunn?

SENATOR NUNN: Well, I certainly would not in any way say that the President shouldn't have a shake-up. He's got to make that determination. But that's not enough. That's more of a PR let's-start-over type thing. We've got to look at how decisions are made. And the President himself has to look at how

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decisions are made by the highest source -- that is, the President.

KALB: But you do favor some kind of shake-up. You think that would be advisable.

SENATOR NUNN: It depends on the President. It depends on what he told his advisers. It would be awfully hard to call someone in and fire him for following his orders. So he has to decide himself who was at fault here. And if he was at fault himself, he has to review how he makes decisions.

That's why I think we need some wise people to come in and advise him about foreign policy now. We have to restore credibility to American foreign policy. That's the number one challenge.

KALB: Okay.

Would the number one challenge, in your view, Senator, be first a shake-up?

SENATOR DURENBERGER: I think if you get to the heart of this, what we need in this, because of the nature of our society, we need a visible sign that things will go differently in the future. And that doesn't have to mean that the President says, "I made a mistake," or anything like that. But he has to make a visible change in direction.

KALB: Personnel?

SENATOR DURENBERG: Some of it -- sure, I imagine some of it, in the nature of this society, is personnel changes. But with regard to Iran, he needs to redirect the way in which that policy is going to be conducted, our Middle East policy, the Iran-Iraq policy, and a lot of those other policies.

ALBERT HUNT: Let me take the individuals, though, Senator Nunn. You say it's up to the President. But Secretary Shultz has clearly distanced himself from this policy, even though they say that he was briefed several times on what was going on. Do you think it's possible, under those circumstances, for Secretary Shultz to have credibility either within this Administration, within the Cabinet, with the Congress, or with the American people?

SENATOR NUNN: I think some credibility has been lost there. I think the most unfortunate thing, from the Secretary's point of view, is that he was out trying to persuade our allies not to ship arms to Iran at the same time we were shipping arms to Iran, and apparently he knew some of that. So that does damage credibility.

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On the other hand, it would be a supreme paradox if the man who opposed an action which has turned out to be at least a disaster, by anybody's definition, if he were terminated and the people who both implemented and planned for this action were retained.

So, it depends on what else happens. And that's why the President has to make the decision.

SENATOR DURENBERGER: The problem here, Al, is not the man, it's the position.

HUNT: Well, the architect of that position was Admiral Poindexter. Should he say?

SENATOR DURENBERGER: I don't mean the position on Iran. I mean the fact that inside this Administration there is little confidence in the Department of State or its leadership on certain crucial kinds of activities. There's been a gradual shift here to use special operations or covert activities or non-diplomatic, non-State Department channels.

And I don't think that reflects on George. I think that's more of a reflection on the way this Administration has decided to do business in certain areas of foreign policy and national security.

ROBERT KAISER: When you say, Senator Nunn, bring in some wise men, are you saying that the President is not wise?

SENATOR NUNN: No, I'm not saying that. But the President here helped make the decision. And obviously in the news conference the other night, he still is not clear on what his own Administration has done in several instances, and they're very important matters. So I think he needs to take a look at how he's making the decisions and how he's interrelating to his people. And that requires some people who have not been involved that have had extensive experience in foreign policy to come in and advise him about how he should both arrange his personnel and arrange presidential decision making in crucial foreign policy matters.

KAISER: Isn't that an amazing thing to say six years into a presidency? Shouldn't he be able to do that for himself by now?

SENATOR NUNN: Well, the credibility of the American President is important to all of us. It's important to our country. We've got the Philippines situation. We've got South Korea. We've got enormous opportunities and dangers in arms control.

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And so, whether or not it's strange to say it in six years, it has to be said. And I think the President has to act in that way, because we've got to have a restoration of American credibility in foreign policy.

KAISER: Let me ask you this. Does the President of the United States know what he's doing in foreign policy?

SENATOR NUNN: In this instance, I think the President made some serious mistakes and errors, and I do not think that he has corrected those errors yet. And I don't think damage control is the answer. I think we really need to look at the fundamentals.

KALB: Senator Durenberger, isn't there a major responsibility here that Donald Regan, the Chief of Staff, has? There have been a series of, certainly widely interpreted as, disasters in U.S. foreign policy. He's the Chief of Staff. Isn't he the one who must accept some of the responsibility and blame?

SENATOR DURENBERGER: Well, of course, you can lay it on practically anyone. And I think this just happens to be coming at the end of the sixth year of an eight-year term. There's a difference in the presidency in the last two years from the first four years. And I think changes in this White House, particularly at the top -- and maybe Don is one of them -- would have come, regardless.

KALB: Do you think they should come now, is what I'm trying to get at.

SENATOR DURENBERGER: Well, I think that's strictly up to the President. I...

KALB: No, but your own view.

SENATOR DURENBERGER: Well, he is the President of my party, and I have a stake and we have a stake in 1988, and I would like to see the President stronger over the next two years, because we've done a lot of great things in the last six years that we don't want to let these fellows take away from us in 1988.

HUNT: Would either of you favor -- do you favor proposals to make the National Security Council more accountable to Congress, to make the head of that subject to confirmation, or whatever? Should we change the laws there?

SENATOR DURENBERGER: I think, Al, in this particular case, and given what's been going on, the problem is not so much

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the NSC as it is the Operations Directorate in the Central Intelligence Agency. The person who, obviously, has responsibility for that, as well as responsibility for the conduct of some of our more unorthodox national security policies, is the Director of Central Intelligence. And it is not -- you can't legislate the influence that a Bill Casey, or anybody else, has over a President.

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So, I don't see in all of this, necessarily, a legislative solution. I see understanding better how this President conducts foreign policy. And that goes way beyond just cutting some throats.

KAISER: Are you saying Casey should be replaced now, too?

SENATOR DURENBERGER: No, I'm not. I'm just saying that we ought to understand the difference between policy and special operations. And this President needs particularly, I think, to put them, the two of them, in context. When the policy people, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, say, "Hey, wait a minute. That operation is going to fail because it's running up against your state policy that we've told everybody in the world," the President has to pull down the operation, or find some other way to do it.

HUNT: Senator Nunn, do you have confidence in William Casey and in Admiral Poindexter?

SENATOR NUNN: I think there are some real problems there. We have not heard, I don't think, all we're going to have to hear from the CIA on this one. They were more involved than we thought they were. And I think the role here has to be clarified.

The difficulty in this situation is no single group of players seem to know the whole story. So it's going to take a lot of oversight here.

But back to your question about the NSC. I don't think the problem here was the law. The problem is that at least the spirit of the law was violated. The National Security Council is not supposed to be an operation agency. When they become an operations agency, there's no one except the President himself to give oversight within the Executive Branch. The President needs to issue a directive making sure they will not be an operations agency, and that will help protect them from some legislative activities that might be unwise.

KALB: Senator Durenberger, do you feel that the President was in violation of more than just the spirit of the law, but the letter as well?

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SENATOR DURENBERGER: No, I don't at this stage. I'm sure we can find some technical violations, but -- and it goes beyond the spirit of the law. It goes to the spirit of the relationship between the Executive and the Legislative Branch, where the Legislative Branch adds value to a presidency. And we've done that in the past, and we'd like to be able to do it again in the future.

KALB: Gentlemen, I'm sorry. Our time's up for this segment. Thanks, both of you, for being our guests.

In a moment, a somewhat broader perspective from the former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

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KALB: We are back on Meet the Press discussing the Iran crisis with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who comes to us from WVIT, the NBC affiliate in Hartford, Connecticut.

Dr. Kissinger, you have often said in the past that there really should be no daylight that anyone can see between the Secretary of State and the President he serves. There is now clearly daylight between Secretary Shultz and President Reagan. Do you feel that the Secretary should resign?

HENRY KISSINGER: When I was Secretary there were endless speculations whether I would or should resign. And I really don't want to participate in that discussion.

I think it is imperative that the daylight that exists between the President and the Secretary of State be closed. And I think that the Secetary and the President must be able to defend the general approach to American foreign policy and cannot afford public debate between each other.

KALB: But there is that public debate, Dr. Kissinger. What do you think should be done at this time?

KISSINGER: I think that the Secretary of State should support his President in a crisis. If he cannot support every tactic, he should be able to support the basic philosophy. And I think, obviously, the President has to keep in mind and take very seriously the point of view of the Secretary of State. But in the end, it is the duty of the Secretary of State to get along with the President, not of the President to get along with the Secretary of State.

HUNT: Dr. Kissinger, do you think it's possible for this Administration to maintain credibility in its conduct of foreign policy, both at home and abroad, without some kind of major shake-up of the top personnel?

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KISSINGER: I think that -- I think that the President has to make clear who is in charge of foreign policy. It of course has to be said and has to be enunciated. Whether that is done with personnel changes or not, I don't know.

I am struck by the fact that in the middle of a crisis the President is all alone on a parapet, and almost none of his close assocaites are supporting, not only not the tactics, but not even the general philosophy of what he has attempted to do. And the general approach of improving relations with Iran seems to me correct. The method seems to me totally wrong.

HUNT: Well, again, just to come back to Marvin's first question, if that's the case, shouldn't Secretary Shultz either resign, because he can't support the policy, or, since he's not supporting the policy, shouldn't the President dismiss him?

KISSINGER: Well, but of course it's also possible that the Secretary of State, for whom I have very great regard, who's been an old friend, would support the policy.

It seems to me there are two parts to the policy. One, improvement of relations with Iran. I don't see what could be the objection to that. Secondly, the use of arms sales to promote the improvement of relations. That was a grave mistake. And I think everybody can agree on that now and go on from there.

KAISER: Secretary Kissinger, you've lived through this, you've been in both jobs. That's a unique perspective. Isn't this really, from a foreign government's point of view, just a stunning spectacle of a government -- just as you described it, they've put the President up there on the parapet and everybody's looking up and saying, "Gee, not me. Not me." But how are we ever going to get this American government back into a position that it has international credibility? Doesn't some radical steps have to be taken?

KISSINGER: I think this Administration has been extremely lucky for six years that it has not had a major crisis and has not had to shake itself down. So there has been a tendency to rely on public relations as means of solving immediate problems, and also a tendency to fight bureaucratic battles with a ruthlessness that is unusual even by Washington standards. And Washington is not a soft town, to begin with.

Now they are coming back to reality. They are having their first real crisis after six years. And it is absolutely imperative that discipline be restored and a sense of cohesion be established.

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KAISER: I'm told by people -- when I heard we were going to be on this show together, I called a couple of friends. They say that your private assessment of this Administration is scathing, that you have absolutely no regard or respect for the way this Administration has conducted foreign policy.

Do you owe the public in this country a glimpse of that view of yours?

KISSINGER: No, that is not correct. I think that until this summit, the Administration had put itself into a really outstandingly strong position, especially in East-West relations and in other parts. I have no huge dis -- no significant disagreement with the Administration.

I do have significant disagreements over Reykjavik and over the Iran sales. And I think that there has been a tendency to push bureaucratic self-will excessively and that we have lost the thread in the last few months. That is a criticism I have stated publicly.

KALB: Dr. Kissinger, do you agree with the President that his effort to open up to Iran is the same as President Nixon's effort to open up to China?

KISSINGER: I think that in time Iran may become the same as China. I think that the methods that were used, the approach that was used is quite different. The opening to China, we knew that we were going to deal with the head of government of a country that wanted to shift away from its previous orientation. We knew what we were going to find, in general terms, when we got there. I do not think the situation is analogous, except in the fact that both were done secretly.

KALB: Well, all right. Do you agree with Donald Reagan's assessment that what the Reagan Administration was trying to do with Iran was similar to what happened after World War II in bringing West Germany into the Western Alliance?

KISSINGER: No, I don't agree with that. But I do agree with the importance of moving -- of improving relations with Iran. I have no quarrel with that at all. I do have a quarrel with the selling of arms to Iran, or the giving of arms to Iran. That was a big mistake.

HUNT: Dr. Kissinger, if this Administration or this President were to ask you to come back in any function, would you come back and help Ronald Reagan in this time of problems?

KISSINGER: I would be willing to help on a part-time basis, on a consulting basis, preferably without publicity. I

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don't think that my best role is to go back on a full-time basis. But I think it is important for our country that the Reagan Administration succeed in the last two years. And in the public debate, we should remember that we have an unusual opportunity still to negotiate, and that the assault on presidential credibility must be limited by the importance of the national interest that all of us have in a strong and purposeful foreign policy.

KALB: Do you think that the Russians, Dr. Kissinger, will try to take advantage of this situation?

KISSINGER: I was convinced that the Soviets would attempt to make an agreement with President Reagan because it is in their interest to make an agreement with the most conservative American President and the most popular American President of recent times. However, if the confidence -- if they believe that he's becoming a lame duck, then that may slow down the negotiating process.

So it's important...

KALB: Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Kissinger. We're sorry to break in. But that's very much for being our guest and sharing your views on this strange grip that Iran seems to hold on American Presidents and politics. And we're clearly not out of the woods yet.

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