MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister of Australia  
Dr. Peter Wilenski, Private Secretary to Prime Minister Whitlam  
Sir James Plimsoll, Australian Ambassador to the United States  
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Marshall Green, United States Ambassador to Australia  
John A. Froebe, Jr., Staff Member, NSC

DATE, TIME, AND PLACE: July 30, 1973, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Mr. Kissinger's Office

SUBJECT: Recent U.S.-Australian relationships in general; French Nuclear Tests; Korean policy; Indonesia situation.

(Mr. Kissinger asked Prime Minister Whitlam to join him briefly in private at the beginning of the meeting; he asked the others in after about five minutes.)

Prime Minister Whitlam: Mr. Kissinger was just mentioning to me his regrets that he was unable to see me during my last visit to Washington. The matter got blown out of all proportion when an Australian correspondent imported that you (Mr. Kissinger) had snubbed me. In actuality, you had been seeing the wives of the POWs. You also had to go to Camp David that weekend. I was completely satisfied with the visit.

I myself can't see many people who come to Canberra. I know that you are a very busy man.

Mr. Kissinger: Still, it was bad manners. I assure you it was not out of any lack of respect for you. It was just one of my bad weeks.

Prime Minister Whitlam: The correspondents had played the story as your having snubbed me. When they picture it this way, it is all too easy to
become a prisoner of the story. We in Australia still have an obsession with the media. Particularly as regards our relations with the U. S., every action or reaction becomes the object of great attention.

Mr. Kissinger: I would never have accused the Australians of sycophancy.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Australia and Canada are useful barometers of reactions to the U. S. Relations between both of these countries and the U. S. can be so intimate. Any differences in the family can then become much more distressing. Politically and diplomatically the sheer resemblance between the countries can heighten our differences. Going back to last year, I myself saw Marshall Green twice.

Ambassador Plimsoll: Sometimes problems arise because we don't really think of each other as foreigners. We say things to each other that we would not say to foreigners.

Mr. Kissinger: One of the things the President objected to last December was Australia's treating the U. S. on a par with other foreign countries. However, I agree with your general point on Australian-U. S. relations.

Prime Minister Whitlam: It's been said that your people in Canberra had not expected or correctly assessed our change in government last December. Perhaps the media doesn't realize that Washington also has changed. Australia likewise is not the same. Under McMahon Australia was not the same as under Gorton or Menzies.

Mr. Kissinger: We do not see recent changes in Australia as a greater assertion of Australian autonomy. Rather, we look on it as a change in some of the mechanics in our relations.

Prime Minister Whitlam: There have been changes in Australia's diplomatic position. We are also undergoing some change in the ownership of our resources. In actuality, there are probably greater differences within the Liberal Party. This was certainly the case when there were more Liberals. Gorton's people would have sensed the change that has come about in the Australian populace in the last year or so. The Party which does badly in an election frequently finds differences growing between its main body and its more remote elements.

Mr. Kissinger: This has been the problem in the Republican Party.

Prime Minister Whitlam: There have been these problems in recent years that have worried the American people... those in New York rather than
those in the White House. Gorton was the first to recognize this as a problem for Australian foreign policy, but he was not very effective in dealing with it.

Mr. Kissinger: As I was saying to Ambassador Plimsoll the other day, we understand the problem that you faced in coming into office and the strong opposition within your party on this issue [of U.S. policy toward Vietnam].

Prime Minister Whitlam: This issue had become polarized in Australia.

Let me take this opportunity to make clear that I have discouraged the idea that your Embassy in Canberra was not perceptive in anticipating my Party's victory last December.

Mr. Kissinger: Our people expected you to win.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Your people were perfectly correct and cordial -- with all of the parties. A few years ago we might have had some complaints.

Mr. Kissinger: But we had worked with the previous government and we felt comfortable with it. Our instructions to our Embassy as regards the election last December were to keep hands off.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Your people in Canberra were very observant. Ambassador Rice and his number two were completely cordial. However, it has always been my feeling that in the State Department your people don't pay as much attention to a country with which you have no problems.

Ambassador Green: We do tend to concentrate on countries such as Cambodia rather than Australia.

Mr. Kissinger: I came here as an authority on foreign policy planning -- but found out it is the day-to-day problems that overwhelm you.

I hope our Ambassador is under control. You don't have to tolerate his puns as we did for four years here in Washington.

Prime Minister Whitlam: I first met him here nine years ago.

Ambassador Green: And you still find me tolerable?

Prime Minister Whitlam: Completely, we are gratified to have a career man.
Mr. Kissinger: One of our best.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Yes.

Ambassador Green: I accept that.

Prime Minister Whitlam: What should I raise with the President? I might take up the question of French nuclear tests. They are of unquestionable importance in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. I have no doubts that the tests are a big issue in these countries -- as well as here in the U. S. It is inevitable that with the French tests pressures for a denuclearization of the South Pacific will grow. New Zealand is committed to this. My own party is not, however. I don't like to adopt a gimmicky attitude on such issues. I prefer rather to look at them as a whole.

When I was in Mexico just before coming here, they suggested extending westward the Treaty of Tlatelolco. I'm not expecting the U. S. to denounce the French, even though the press might say "Nixon rebuffs Whitlam on French nuclear tests." Other countries are also pressing this issue and the French testing inevitably is adding to such pressure.

Mr. Kissinger: In your meeting with the President, we are approaching this with the attitude that Australians and Americans have strong emotional bonds. This is reflected in our ties. We can't deny that we have had some strains recently -- but we consider these as a matter of the past. If you want to begin your meeting with the President by making a few observations on Asia and the Pacific, the President can then reply and we can then let the rest of the conversation run freely.

Prime Minister Whitlam: He's a more austere person than I.

Mr. Kissinger: Yes, but I might mention that he is sensitive to any suggestion of being lectured. Have you met him?

Prime Minister Whitlam: Yes, twenty years ago when I was a new Member of Parliament. I then recognized him as a rising leader having the most brilliant of futures.

Mr. Kissinger: I can keep the conversation moving in various ways.

Prime Minister Whitlam: I would appreciate that. I'm not particularly inhibited, but I'm afraid I might freeze up with him.

Mr. Kissinger: If you speak with him as you've spoken with me, I'm sure it will all go well. I will go in to see him for a few minutes.
Prime Minister Whitlam: To soften him up?

Mr. Kissinger: No softening is needed.

Prime Minister Whitlam: I assume he doesn't want U.S. - Australian relations to be contentious.

Mr. Kissinger: This is definitely our attitude. We are not looking for the slightest confrontation.

Prime Minister Whitlam: As to the way we will play this for the press...

Mr. Kissinger: We'll put out something positive to the press after the meeting.

On the question of French testing, our general policy is to avoid public statements. We have talked to the French. We believe that they don't want to go beyond two more years of testing. We are willing to let them test in our underground facilities. This is all confidential, of course, you understand.

Prime Minister Whitlam: I get the impression that your State Department leaks more than our Foreign Affairs Department.

Mr. Kissinger: As regards the basic question of our two countries' policy towards the French tests, we differ only in the tactics of how to handle the tests publicly.

Prime Minister Whitlam: I only wanted to make the point that the chances for a confrontation are growing.

Mr. Kissinger: On the question of denuclearization of the South Pacific, we have not yet studied this question. I suppose we could live with it. But I'm not sure how it might affect such things as the transit of aircraft.

From the historical perspective, Australia might want to consider how it might affect its own security. You have such problems in your recent past as Sukarno, and there are other similar potential problems to be considered. I don't know whether denuclearization of the region would be in Australia's basic interest or not.

Prime Minister Whitlam: The whole matter would be a dead issue if the French would stop their testing. If it were in the U.S. interest not to allow these pressures to grow.... We are not trying to be devious about this.
Mr. Kissinger: After the current French test series ends, we will offer the French our underground testing facilities. For tactical reasons we don't want to make this offer to them at this point. But we believe they will test only one or two years more.

Prime Minister Whitlam: The French were probably angrier with my predecessor than with me.

Ambassador Plimsoll: Is the U. S. against all atmospheric tests?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes, but with the French and the Chinese we have not made a public issue of this problem. Obviously, we can't offer the Chinese our underground testing facilities. Our relationship with the Chinese has not advanced that far.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Do you think you are getting along well with the PRC?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes.

Prime Minister Whitlam: What about the problem of North Korea?

Mr. Kissinger: You are familiar of course with the new direction of South Korean foreign policy. We will favor both Koreas joining international organizations.

Prime Minister Whitlam: When North Korea joined WHO, we thought they would be interested in joining others as well.

Mr. Kissinger: But if you look carefully at the North Korean statement commenting on the new South Korean foreign policy, the North seems to be playing on the subtleties of some sort of confederal arrangement. We want to discuss this with the Chinese. I delayed my trip to Peking since I didn't want to be there when the bombing in Cambodia stopped on August 15. The trip has been delayed a few weeks. If there had been no Congressional cut-off, my going would have created problems for both the U. S. and China. I will probably go sometime in September. We had never set a date for my trip, but it probably would have taken place in early August.

Prime Minister Whitlam: What will happen in Cambodia?

Mr. Kissinger: This is a very difficult situation. Let me first explain the bombing. The elements of the situation include the Khmer Rouge,
who are controlled by Hanoi. Then there is Sihanouk who is not under Hanoi's thumb. The PRC wants to give Sihanouk a role because they don't want Hanoi to control the situation — a circumstance in which Hanoi might end up leaning on the Soviets against the PRC. The U.S. has a basic interest in the neutrality and independence of Cambodia. Sihanouk, however, needs Phnom Penh. The U.S. for its part must be able to offer Sihanouk something he needs. We had intended to stop all B-52 raids on July 1 and to continue only enough tactical bombing to make clear to the Khmer Rouge that they could not win a military victory. Under this situation, I could have gone to Peking. With the Congressional cut-off, we had to continue the bombing. Sihanouk is now being reduced to the status of a figure head and would come back now only as a tool of the Khmer Rouge. We must now wait to see whether Phnom Penh will come apart after August 15. We are getting widely different opinions on how long Phnom Penh can hold up. Some say a few weeks — some say a year. I must say I don't agree with the most optimistic. If this is wrong the Khmer Rouge will win. The PRC in that event would presumably turn their support to the Khmer Rouge as the revolutionary party in the situation.

Prime Minister Whitlam: The PRC does seem to be looking to Sihanouk.

Mr. Kissinger: Yes, if Sihanouk returns under this situation, he must lean on the non-communists, the PRC must support him, and Hanoi will have some influence. But the bombing pause has interrupted some very delicate negotiations.

I would point out that in my experience with the PRC, they have not once gone back on their word. They may negotiate long and hard trying to avoid giving in on a point that you want, but if they do they will stick to their commitment.

Prime Minister Whitlam: How overt is Peking in referring to Hanoi's dominance of fifty million people?

Mr. Kissinger: The Chinese are very circumspect when talking about Indochina. The PRC has said it is in favor of a free and independent Cambodia — free of outside influence.

Prime Minister Whitlam: What about the Laos situation?

Mr. Kissinger: We now have a satisfactory settlement there. It is a pity that the U.S. domestic situation has caused the U.S. negotiations in Cambodia to come apart. Whatever the claims of liberal humanitarian
philosophy, it has some decided deficiencies as regards dealing with North Vietnam. Have you yourself dealt with them?

Prime Minister Whitlam: Only in the course of negotiating diplomatic recognition.

Mr. Kissinger: We have no objection, you know, to your recognizing Hanoi.

Hanoi was at its most impossible when they took Quang Tri. At that time I offered them a cease-fire and they treated me with complete disdain. They treated me best in two instances: (1) last October when during the election campaign the President was twenty points ahead, and (2) last January when in private Lee Duc Tho in the meeting room was so affable that he couldn't keep his hands off of me. They are an extremely tough, heroic people. To take on the greatest industrial country in the world.... When you visit Hanoi, you wonder how they could have lasted six months in this war.

In Cambodia, Hanoi will watch the balance of forces very carefully -- if Phnom Penh can last --

Prime Minister Whitlam: What about the Paris economic talks?

Mr. Kissinger: We have formed the Joint Economic Commission. We have reached a substantial economic understanding. We completed the Laos talks, but we refused to sign. We have told them that only when the Laos settlement is completed will we withdraw our troops. If they will withdraw their troops, we will sign the agreement. We have also told them that until there is a settlement in Cambodia, we will not ask Congress for funds for Indochina rehabilitation.

Prime Minister Whitlam: How durable is Phnom Penh?

Mr. Kissinger: This is the key question. Based on my conversations with Lee Duc Tho and the Chinese, we were moving toward a settlement. But the bombing cut-off then threw a new element into the equation.

I can give you some feeling for Lee Duc Tho as a negotiator by telling you one of his comments to me at my last meeting with him: approaching me very cautiously at one point, he said "I want to talk to you very franky and sincerely: you're a liar." I must say that he puts on an impressive performance. Coming from his background and that little country, he negotiates
with me for four years -- at times he can be absolutely maddening to deal with -- along with the South Vietnamese. There must be something of a Vietnamese national characteristic about it.

Ambassador Plimsoll: Do the South Vietnamese have a good chance of surviving?

Mr. Kissinger: In June we concluded that South Vietnam, as perceived by Hanoi, was infinitely stronger than before. The tone of my June negotiations with Hanoi was much different. Hanoi behaved as if South Vietnam were here to stay. We can't tell at this point whether Hanoi thinks that the U. S. is domestically so weak that it is no longer a factor. But at the same time the Soviets and the Chinese have reduced their shipments to North Vietnam.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Is the settlement in Laos really in train?

Mr. Kissinger: In the next few days we will be able to tell. We would very much appreciate it if Australia would continue its participation in FEOF.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Our budget will be coming out in the next few weeks. We don't want to make new commitments in Cambodia.

Mr. Kissinger: But FEOF pertains to Laos.

Ambassador Green: Yes, ESF is in Cambodia.

Prime Minister Whitlam: Our problem begins with our domestic inflation. We must restrain either government expenditures or private expenditures -- and we can't restrain the latter. We also can't cut domestic public expenditures. So we must cut on the foreign side. We recently established a small task force which went through government expenditures. Their report will be completed on August 21. They recommended cuts on Laos and Cambodia. These will both be chopped. Nevertheless, we still could take up FEOF in the supplemental. But if there is a settlement in Laos, we can put a new face on the matter. If a new coalition in Laos wants us to continue our contribution, we will reconsider. We are in a very tight budgetary situation.

[Mr. Kissinger left the room to confer with the President.]

Ambassador Green: The U. S. problem is that if Australia drops out it hurts us in Congress. This fund keeps Laos together.

Ambassador Plimsoll: Could we avoid announcing the contribution?

Prime Minister Whitlam: There will be no announcement. We don't want
negative announcements. On this we don't particularly want attention drawn
to what we are undoing.

Dr. Wilenski: We could background the press to the effect that if a coalition
in Laos sticks together we would be willing to reconsider.

Ambassador Green: Funds are not now in the budget?

Prime Minister Whitlam: No. We must look at the total foreign aid context.
What we are doing here would look lousy by comparison with our professions.
My big trouble is not over-extending ourselves. We have just overridden
Treasury on Papua-New Guinea. There is a very considerable sum involved
there.

Ambassador Green: If there is a settlement, we might be able to look at
it again.

Ambassador Plimsoll: But we can't reconsider before November. We might
consider telling the Laotians privately that our contribution might continue.

[Mr. Kissinger returned.]

Mr. Kissinger: What I'll be good for when I leave this job is to become
headmaster for a school for wayward boys. I'm getting a solid background
for that sort of job in dealing with our bureaucracy.

Prime Minister Whitlam: (Looking at the exterior of the State briefing
book) The number of these briefing books you produce must be prodigious,
given the number of visitors who must troop through here. There must be
tremendous pressure on you and the President.

Mr. Kissinger: This sort of book can be very educational, not in the case of
Australia, where we keep up to date on events, but in the case of the small
countries.

Prime Minister Whitlam: But in Australia, I must point out that the new
Prime Minister still must get his legitimacy within the first few months by
gaining U. S. accolades. I would like to be able to get to the place in my
relations in the U. S. Government -- as with the U. K. -- that Australian
heads of government can drop into Washington informally for discussions.

Mr. Kissinger: I very firmly believe that our relationship should rest on a
friendly basis of total equality.

[Mr. Kissinger escorted Prime Minister Whitlam to the President's office.]