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**Deliberate
Stall Seen
On Peace**

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President Nixon never intended to risk putting the draft Vietnam peace plan into force on Oct. 31, one week before the American election, according to sources inside the administration.

The Nixon administration, according to these sources, planned to stretch North Vietnam over the Nov. 7 election date in the secret bargaining, in order to complete the accord at a less hazardous date.

Multiple reasons for this circuitous strategy, it is said, were to prevent North Vietnam from exploiting a sudden pre-election cease-fire; to avoid danger to the Saigon government of President Nguyen Van Thieu, and by no means least of all, to avoid the risk of a back-fire on President Nixon's re-election.

If the Vietnam peace plan had gone into effect on Oct. 31, as projected in the last of several shifting timetables in the draft accords, administration sources now acknowledge, President Nixon would have been exposed to a "messy" situation during the critical week before the presidential election.

The cease-fire was bound to be less than 100 per cent secure, for no cease-fire in Vietnam ever will be inviolate, administration officials concede. In the week before the U.S. election, it is said, President Nixon therefore would have been exposed to a double charge: that he rushed into an insecure war-end pact for political purposes, and that an unsafe agreement was being visibly breached.

As a result, it is said, the President chose instead to expose himself to what he regarded as the lesser hazard of a charge of duplicity by North Vietnam. That charge did come, in North Vietnam's first disclosure of the summary of the nine-

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point peace plan on Oct. 26, when it evidently concluded it had been outmaneuvered on its strategy for concluding an accord before the election, to pin down President Nixon.

North Vietnam charged on Oct. 26 that the United States three times had agreed to a sequence of dates for concluding the agreement, including dates for presidential envoy Henry A. Kissinger to initial the accord in Hanoi, and a series of dates for a signing ceremony by foreign ministers in Paris.

By backing out of the agreement on Oct. 23 on grounds of "difficulties in Saigon," Hanoi charged, the United States had revealed that its real goal was "to drag out the talks so as to deceive public opinion and to cover up its scheme of maintaining the Saigon puppet administration for the purposes of continued war of aggression in Vietnam and Indochina."

North Vietnam has intensified that accusation ever since the proposed Oct. 31 signing date slipped by. Its official newspaper, Nhan Dan, charged yesterday that the United States is "plotting some kind of double dealing . . . stepping up the war and threatening to destroy the agreement."

The Nixon administration has insisted that it was and is sincere about concluding an agreement, and continues to express "confidence" that this will be accomplished in coming "weeks."

All the timetables for concluding the agreement, U.S. officials insist, were, in the diplomatic phrase, "ad referendum"—subject to concurrence by South Vietnam and final approval in Washington.

President Nixon yesterday dispatched Kissinger's deputy, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., to Saigon for another round of talks in preparation for the anticipated reopening of negotiations between Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Haig will "confer with President Thieu on the progress of peace negotiations and make a general assessment of the situation in Indochina."

Haig was last in Saigon Sept. 29-Oct. 4, just prior to the last round of secret talks between Kissinger and Tho. Both sides have said that it was on Oct. 8 that North Vietnam formally made the "breakthrough" offer in the negotiating stalemate, to which the United States immediately responded the next day. Kissinger went to Saigon on Oct. 18, from Paris, for what is now described as an attempt to "stretch" President Thieu's position toward the draft terms.

Unofficial claims are now circulating that Kissinger pressed beyond President Nixon's intentions in his attempt to induce South Vietnam to shift its demands enough to produce an agreement by Oct. 31 and that

President Nixon pulled back.

The current edition of the extremely conservative Washington weekly, Human Events, for example contends that Kissinger tried "to foist" the final accord on Mr. Nixon, provoking "a bitter dispute among top officials involved in the negotiations and that even the White House has been having serious second thoughts about the tentative provisions . . ."

No direct comment was available immediately from the White House, but officials there earlier this week scoffed at rumors that there was a breach between the President and Kissinger. All the President's statements about the negotiations, informed sources said, have been processed through Kissinger's office.

The Human Events report describes the tentative accord as "a catastrophe." There is no public sign whatever that this is the President's attitude toward it. On the contrary, the President has been at least as effusive as Kissinger about the intended agreement, hailing it as one of the administration's greatest accomplishments, even though both stress that revisions are required to improve it to the point where the United States is prepared to sign it.

Haig's trip to Saigon, from which he is scheduled to return Sunday, indicates that further secret negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam are unlikely until then.

In effect, this is a continuing part of the three-way-stretch process between Washington, Hanoi and Saigon.

The long delay in bringing the originally negotiated agreement into force, and the suspicions being aired with increasing openness by North Vietnam that it was tricked, automatically raise questions about whether the "stretching" operation now going on will snap—collapsing the agreement.

High-level administration sources say they believe this will not happen, because the imperfections in the accord are "manageable" and both Washington and Hanoi, in private communications, are registering a desire to succeed.

No party in the secret negotiations has approached full candor about its role, and there is no reason to conclude that any presently available version of what happened is wholly authentic. Each side has seen engaged in a combination of secret and public diplomacy, interwoven with psychological and political warfare, while the war in Vietnam continues.

President Nixon told a press conference on Oct. 5 that "under no circumstances will the timing of a settlement" of the war, including a cease-fire or a bombing halt, "be affected by the fact that there is going to be an election Nov. 7."

However, he said, "we are talking" with North Vietnam, and "we will try to convince them that waiting

until after the election is not good strategy."

In other words, the President was saying that it was North Vietnam, not the United States, that was operating on the American election timetable.

The United States, in fact, had sent numerous warnings to North Vietnam, through the Soviet Union and other nations, that President Nixon was a sure prospect for re-election and that when that occurred, he would not only be less inclined to compromise on peace terms but North Vietnam would face mounting military punishment.

Speculation that a cease-

fire and a war settlement were imminent began to soar in September, when Kissinger and Le Duc Tho had an unusual two-day secret meeting, followed by their conclusive Oct. 8-11 talks in Paris. North Vietnam, in taking what it called "a new, extremely important initiative" to end the war, proposed that the United States and North Vietnam sign it "by mid-October, 1972."

Hanoi said the first "agreed" timetable provided for a U.S. halt in the bombing of North Vietnam on Oct. 18, initialing the document in Hanoi on Oct. 19, and signing it in Paris on

Oct. 26. These dates continued to slip, through counter-proposals on the U.S. side, until an ultimate set of action dates for the same sequences on Oct. 23, Oct. 24, and the Oct. 31 signing.

The final set of dates was confirmed, Hanoi has said, in one of a series of letters from President Nixon to Premier Pham Van Dong, culminating in an Oct. 20 letter in which President Nixon reportedly wrote, "The text of the agreement can now be considered complete."

No full text of any of these exchanges has been made public. U.S. officials claim that Hanoi's quota-

tions are "highly selective."

On Oct. 18, the day Kissinger arrived in Saigon, Pham Van Dong gave an interview to Newsweek correspondent Arnaud de Borchgrave, who had been invited to Hanoi, evidently for that explicit purpose. In the interview, the premier said he believed the end of the war was at hand, and projected part of the secret agreement. He apparently gave the interview to portray his version of the anticipated accord, and perhaps also to put on the public record a version of it to try to assure its completion.