

Hanoi Seen Upset Over Peking Trip

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North Vietnam's suspicions about President Nixon's trip to Peking may be the unexplained reason why Hanoi broke off secret talks with the United States, many experts speculate.

Presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger publicly did his utmost yesterday to discount the probability of any direct link between talks on settlement of the war and preparations for the President's Feb. 21 visit to China.

Kissinger's additional disclosures yesterday about his secret negotiations with Hanoi's envoys, however, suggested to many specialists that North Vietnam's suspicions about the intentions of Washington and Peking nevertheless could have been heightened.

In recent weeks, many Nixon administration officials have openly interpreted North Vietnam's developing military offensive in Indochina as a show of

force timed to coincide with the President's trip to Peking, as well as Tet, the Vietnamese lunar New Year, on Feb. 15.

What now has been added to the public record by the Nixon administration sug-

News Analysis

gest even more circumstantial connection between these events.

If this speculation is correct, North Vietnam is now freezing secret negotiations while it attempts a new show of force on the battlefields of Indochina and intensifies its public attacks on the United States. Most U.S. officials agree on that assessment.

The Kissinger chronology, as he related it yesterday, shows that on the way back from his first secret trip to Peking he stopped in Paris
See DIPLOMACY, A14, Col. 1

DIPLOMACY, From A1

on July 12 for a meeting with North Vietnamese envoys.

Two meetings later in Paris, on Aug. 16, Kissinger tabled an eight-point proposal, which he said was "turned down" at a subsequent meeting Sept. 13. Then, on Oct. 11, Kissinger said, the United States sent to North Vietnam its current, revised, eight-point proposal.

Kissinger yesterday did not mention in his chronology, which was centered on his North Vietnamese probes rather than on his Peking negotiations, that on Oct. 20 he was back in Peking on his second trip to prepare for the President's visit.

Simultaneously, his remarks show, the United States, about Oct. 25, received a North Vietnamese reply demurring at a proposed Nov. 1 date to hold another negotiating meeting between Kissinger and Hanoi politburo member Le Duc Tho.

Kissinger said that, instead, the date of Nov. 20 was suggested, and the United States accepted, only to be informed on Nov. 17 that Le Duc Tho was ill and could not attend the planned meeting in Paris.

It was at that point, Kissinger said yesterday, that discussions ceased. What happened to halt the interchange, Kissinger said, "is a very interesting question... I don't want to speculate on that, because it is a question that also occupies us."

There is other information, however, that has stimulated speculation about what might have contributed to the abortion of the secret talks.

American intelligence sources suddenly learned in early November that Hanoi was planning a worldwide campaign against American policy in Indochina, to be climaxed about Feb. 20. That date meant nothing at the time to most U.S. officials. But on Nov. 29, China and the United States announced that President

Nixon would visit Peking from Feb. 21 to 23. Hanoi presumably had advance knowledge of the dates.

U.S. officials can only guess about how North Vietnam's strategy may have been affected by Peking's strategy. But Hanoi, by Communist standards, has openly registered through its own press about China's reception of the American President, whom Hanoi treats as its chief enemy.

The speculation is that once North Vietnam discovered that Mr. Nixon's trip was as imminent as February, rather than much later in 1972, it decided to abandon the secret talks with the United States and to intensify its military actions to prove to Washington—and Peking—that North Vietnam still has effective power to decide its own fate in Indochina.

North Vietnam and China have had lengthy secret discussions with the same powerful White House emissary. The extent to which they have shared their experience is unknown; equally unknown is the influence this may have on their respective strategies.

The Nixon administration, for its part, is anxious to

avoid jeopardizing the President's trip to China, or other American interests, by indicating that it seeks to play off Peking against Hanoi.

Kissinger yesterday disclaimed any connection between his two sets of secret negotiations. "Our trip to Peking does not revolve around the situation in Indochina," he said. Kissinger also repeated the administration's standard position, "We expect to settle the war in Vietnam with Hanoi, not with Moscow and not with Peking."

But the public record does show, either by design or inadvertence, that the United States has explored Indochina questions in Peking.

President Nixon, in his Jan. 2 television interview, volunteered the information that Kissinger "raised the subject of POWs (prisoners or war) . . . with Chou En-lai on both of his visits" to China.

The current disclosures by President Nixon and Kissinger about the complexities of Indochina negotiations indicate that it is difficult, or impossible, to discuss prisoner release in China or elsewhere as an isolated issue.