

Administration Silent on Charge By Agnew of Concession in War

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 14—The Nixon Administration refused to comment officially today on the meaning of Vice President Agnew's charge that the United States, under the Johnson Administration, had "swapped some of the greatest military concessions in the history of warfare for an enemy agreement on the shape of a bargaining table."

But the remark, made by Mr. Agnew in a speech last night in Des Moines, Iowa, posed a difficult diplomatic problem for the White House.

One authoritative White House source said that, in his view, Mr. Agnew could only have meant that "tacit understandings" given to President Johnson by North Vietnam in return for the cessation of bombing on Nov. 1, 1968, had been violated by the North Vietnamese.

Thus Mr. Agnew's view was interpreted by the source as a belief the United States had nothing to show in return for the bombing halt other than North Vietnamese agreement last January on the shape of the bargaining table at the Paris peace talks.

Question of Retaliation

Other White House officials acknowledged privately that Mr. Agnew's remarks, if taken to represent the Administration viewpoint, posed a question of

why the United States has not retaliated by resuming bombing of the North.

These officials indicated that at a time when Mr. Nixon was attempting to demonstrate good faith in the search for a negotiated peace, the implications of Mr. Agnew's remarks were

The official White House response to Mr. Agnew's Des Moines speech, most of which dealt with criticism of the nation's television networks, was that the Vice President was once again expressing his own views and not necessarily those of the White House.

Agnew Unavailable

Asked later whether the assessment of the White House sources of the meaning of Mr. Agnew's remark was an accurate appraisal of the Administration's viewpoint, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, replied: "You'll have to ask the Vice President on this. He delivered the speech."

Mr. Agnew, who remained in Cape Kennedy, Fla., following the launching of Apollo 12, was not available for comment.

Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department's spokesman, refused to make any comment on Mr. Agnew's speech.

W. Averell Harriman, who was criticized by Mr. Agnew for his role in the Paris talks, said last night, "I don't think that the statement deserves serious comment."

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