

Castro Talk Of Detente

Washington

In an apparent breakthrough in a 14-year-old hemispheric cold war, the White House accepted yesterday what seemed to be overtures toward reconciliation by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Presidential Press Secretary Ron Nessen said Castro "seems to have accepted what the White House has referred to as the mutuality of obligation in improving relations between Cuba and the United States."

Nessen's remarks were based on news reports from Havana quoting Castro at a news conference as saying, "we wish for the people of the United States a wish of friendship." Castro also had indicated during a talk with visiting U.S. Senator George McGovern (Dem-S.D.) a

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willingness to consider returning a \$2 million ransom from a hijacked U.S. plane plus possible release of nine U.S. political prisoners in Havana.

"The United States has said we see no future in perpetual antagonism" toward Cuba, Nessen told reporters when asked about Castro's remarks.

Nessen said the State Department is prepared to discuss previous Castro requests for medicines.

Nessen said he is "not announcing a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba," and noted that a number of significant differences remain between the two countries.

Nevertheless, veteran White House observers noted in Nessen's remarks a definite softening of the U.S. position toward Cuba.

In Havana, yesterday,

McGovern said he proposed to Castro — and Castro liked the idea — of using baseball and basketball to help break the ice between Cuba and the United States in the same way that "Ping Pong diplomacy" helped thaw U.S. mainland China relations.

"It is quite possible basketball and baseball teams from the United States would be flying here soon," McGovern said, summing up a four-day visit to Cuba during which he spent eight hours with Castro.

McGovern, the 1972 Democratic candidate for president, said he told Castro, "we both have some very fine basketball and baseball teams" who are followed by millions of fans in both countries, and exchange contests might help speed up normalization of relations.

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