

U.S. Aides Seeing Dead End of Hope For Fair Election

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By TERENCE SMITH

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The Nixon Administration expressed its official regret today over the withdrawal of Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky from South Vietnam's presidential race and said it was "studying the implications" of the South Vietnamese election.

"I can only repeat that our interest was and is in seeing an honest and contested election," Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman, said in response to questions at a news briefing.

Privately, Administration officials conceded that their efforts to promote a contested and reasonably fair election had reached a dead end.

"The whole thing is in a shambles," said one specialist on Vietnam. "None of us knows where we are going from here."

Bunker's Role Defended

In separate briefings here and at the Western White House in San Clemente, Calif., Mr. McCloskey and Ronald L. Ziegler, the Presidential spokesman, defended the role of Ellsworth Bunker, the American Ambassador to Saigon, in the electoral deadlock.

They described the meetings that Mr. Bunker had held through the weekend with Mr. Ky and Gen. Duong Van Minh as "completely consistent" with the policy of noninvolvement in the elections.

Mr. Bunker made last-minute appeals to both men to remain in the contest, despite their charges of election rigging by supporters of Mr. Thieu.

"The American Ambassador could do nothing less than urge that there be fair and contested elections," Mr. McCloskey said.

Kerr's Group Applauds Ky

Mr. Ky's decision not to campaign was applauded by the National Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam, the peace organization that is headed by Clark Kerr, former Chancellor of the University of California.

The committee cabled Mr. Ky, approving his decision not to run "under the present disgraceful circumstances." In telegrams to Mr. Bunker and President Thieu, Mr. Kerr urged that a way be found to reinstate General Minh and Mr. Ky as candidates in "rigorously controlled" special elections.