

CONFUSION REIGNS ON A PEACE MOVE

APR 2 1975

Conflicting Statements Are
Issued on Whether U.S.
Effort Is Under Way

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 1—The White House and the State Department issued conflicting reports today on whether United States diplomats efforts were under way to halt the fighting in South Vietnam. The White House later retracted its version.

In a confusing sequence of events, Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, said in Palm Springs, where President Ford is vacationing, that "the United States is pursuing diplomatic initiatives."

Secretary of State Kissinger, questioned in Washington, declared,

"No, there is nothing. "Under these circumstances, what can we do?"

More than three hours later, Mr. Nessen issued a corrective statement, saying:

"I was misinformed on this subject today by a member of the National Security Council staff and, as a result, you were given some inaccurate information. At the moment there are no new diplomatic initiatives under way in the narrow sense."

Mr. Nessen, who had conferred with Mr. Kissinger by telephone to clear up the contradiction, added:

"We have tried through normal diplomatic channels to persuade North Vietnam to live up to the accords."

Earlier, at a news conference, Philip C. Habib, an Assistant Secretary of State, indicated that the last American diplomatic effort was made in January.

Mr. Habib referred to notes sent Jan. 13 to the Soviet Union, China and five other governments that were parties to the 1973 Paris accord designed to end the Vietnam war. The notes accused North Vietnam of turning from the path of negotiation to the path of war.

No Move to Reopen Talks

"We didn't get much of a response," Mr. Habib said, adding that the United States was making no effort at this time to reconvene the Paris peace talks.

He said:

"North Vietnam has taken a course which is in complete and total violation of anything that can be construed as the diplomatic solutions that were solemnly agreed to. Now, while they are embarked on that course they show no signs whatsoever of talking any serious steps to abide by the terms of that solemn agreement."

Mr. Habib accused the North Vietnamese leadership of violating the Paris agreements with the current drive into the heart of South Vietnam.

"Obviously, there is a grave military situation," he said, without pointing directly to the Congress, which has rejected appeals for supplementary aid for the Saigon Government. Mr. Habib noted that the United States has not been able to meet supply commitments since the middle of 1973.

Asked whom he blamed for the military debacle in South Vietnam Mr. Habib said: "I blame North Vietnam."

A State Department official, apparently alluding to Congressional opposition to further aid, said privately that Saigon's forces were collapsing because "we triggered it."

Mr. Habib said Congress would be asked for considerably more funds in addition to the \$300-million in supplementary military aid for South Vietnam.

He said there was a "human tragedy of such great dimensions" resulting from the flight of refugees that Saigon would require greater assistance to cover military and economic humanitarian needs."