

Senate Backs Authority for Ford to Use U.S. Troops for Evacuation; Votes Humanitarian Aid to Saigon

A MOVE FOR TRUCE

South Vietnam Is Said to Aim for a Regime That Can Negotiate

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 23—Saigon's leaders were apparently attempting tonight to form a new government acceptable to the Vietcong as a negotiating agent.

The primary objective in a day of confusing high-level conferences appeared to be to offer the Communist side as acceptable a political formula as could be devised to stave off a mass enemy attack on Saigon. There was little change in the generally quiet military situation.

Well-placed political informants said that the conversations among Saigon's leaders centered on Lieut. Gen. Duong Van Minh, the leader of the coup that overthrew President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. General Minh, known among Americans as Big Minh, became President after that coup and was himself overthrown several months later.

Since then, he has been a major critic and sometimes an opponent of various regimes, including that of former President Nguyen Van Thieu.

List Not Available

Neither the Vietcong nor the North Vietnamese have been willing to offer a list of names that would satisfy their demands for "a complete end of the Thieu clique" and formation of the government of "National Concord and Reconciliation." But Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, the Vietcong Foreign Minister, has mentioned General Minh in the past as being acceptable.

Following President Thieu's

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South Vietnam Reported Trying To Form a Negotiating Regime

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resignation two days ago, the Vietcong denounced his appointed successor, former Vice President Tran Van Huong, as unacceptable.

According to present thinking, President Huong reportedly would delegate a peace-seeking role to General Minh, who would be named premier.

There have been no signs of direct negotiation between the two sides here, although there have been reports of contacts through intermediaries elsewhere.

Willingness to Wait

The Vietcong and Hanoi, which have reiterated their support of the Paris peace agreement of 1973, are thought to be willing to wait for a period of days or weeks to see what develops before committing themselves.

One political informant said: "When most of the Americans are withdrawn—including all of those in any way connected with the military, and when a new government ready and eager to settle with the other side comes into being, we can only hope both of these will be done in a matter of hours."

"Perhaps their answer, if negative, will take the form of moving their divisions on Saigon and destroying the city.

That would be one answer. The other, we hope, would be to bring about final peace."

The North Vietnamese are now believed to have 26 divisions in South Vietnam, with 5,000 to 6,000 men in each. The heaviest concentration is said to be within easy striking distance of Saigon.

Vietnamese and American experts believe that the Saigon forces would collapse quickly if the other side began a full offensive.

In fact, since the resignation of President Thieu, little of strategic importance has happened in the fighting. The Communists continue to shell positions and outposts, but no major attacks were reported.

Saigon's forces are reported under orders to avoid offensive action and merely to try to hold major positions close to Saigon.

The Government issued a call for a cease-fire, but such an appeal in itself has little practical significance.

What little optimism remains in political and military circles here is based mainly on the Communist statements backing the Paris accord, which provides for a coalition government rather than bald Communist power. The Communists are said to prefer a political settlement to a military one for reasons of diplomacy.