

Nixon Halts Attacks on North -- Peace 'Progress'



AP Wirephoto

PRESS SECRETARY RONALD ZIEGLER
He said bombing and new mining were suspended

Hopes for a Settlement Grow--Ziegler Calls U.S. Move 'Unilateral'

Washington Post Service

Key Biscayne

President Nixon yesterday suspended all offensive action against North Vietnam amid increased speculation that progress toward a cease-fire agreement is moving more rapidly than appeared possible only a few days ago.

The President's order, which went into effect at 7 a.m. (PST) means that the bombing, shelling and further mining of North Vietnamese harbors by American forces was stopped in the expectation of agreement at the negotiating table.

Henry A. Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, will return to Paris "in the relatively near future" for further meetings with North Vietnam Politburo member Le Duc Tho, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said.

Yesterday's announcement, which cited the President's conviction that "progress" has been made in the Paris negotiations, was taken as an unusual sign of optimism here, where officials have previously refused to characterize the status of the negotiations.

SIMILAR

In using the word "progress," Ziegler, reading a prepared statement, employed the same word a North Vietnamese spokesman used in Paris Saturday and a Viet Cong spokesman used in Paris Sunday.

After noting that the President had had "extensive

discussions and consultations" with Kissinger since his return from Paris at Sunday, Ziegler said:

"Because of the progress made in the negotiations between Dr. Kissinger and special adviser Le Duc Tho, President Nixon has directed that the bombing, shelling and any further mining of North Vietnam be suspended."

SAIGON

In Saigon, South Vietnamese sources said to be close to the government reported that General Alexander M. Haig Jr., Mr. Nixon's chief liaison with President Nguyen Van Thieu, will meet with Thieu today to present a revised peace agreement.

Ziegler said Haig's visit to Saigon was part of continuing consultations between Mr. Nixon and Thieu and he declined to say whether Haig actually carried with him a tentative agreement.

The President's order applies to action north of the demilitarized zone — the

See Back Page

PEACE 'PROGRESS'

From Page 1

17th parallel — separating the two zones, or, as Ziegler said, to "the entire area of North Vietnam."

SIGNING

Ziegler would not give any indication of when he believes the negotiations would be wrapped up or whether an initialing ceremony might be possible before the President's inaugural Saturday.

He said that the negotiations are continuing, implying that there is more substantive work to be done.

But there were reports from some capitals that such a schedule might be possible. Previous indications had been that even if all went well, it might take two or three weeks to complete an agreement.

When asked about reports from both Saigon and Hanoi that an agreement has been reached, Ziegler replied:

"We have made it very clear that we will in no way discuss the substance of the negotiations which are taking place in Paris.

"I have said that the negotiations are still in progress. "I will stand on that statement."

Regarding the possibility of a signing or initialing be-

More Vietnam News, Pages 8 and 9

fore the inaugural, Ziegler repeated what he and the President have said before, that the President has "not established any artificial timetable."

UNILATERAL

Ziegler said that the President's action was made "unilaterally" on the basis on progress made in Paris.

North Vietnam was aware that once progress was made in the negotiations the U.S. "would take unilateral steps such as we announced today," Ziegler added.

Asked if the President's order would preclude the possibility of "protective reaction" strikes in the North, Ziegler said he did not expect that issue to arise.

Reconnaissance flights over the North will be continued, he said later.

PAST

In the past, when reconnaissance flights were attacked or when U.S. planes flying south of the 20th parallel were attacked, fliers were authorized to go North to pursue the attackers and to strike at airfields from which the attackers took off. U.S. planes also were au-

thorized to hit missile bases employed in attacks on American planes.

Such attacks by American planes were called "protective reaction" strikes.

Ziegler's comments suggested that there was careful discussion of the new order with the North Vietnamese negotiators.

However, Ziegler repeatedly referred to the order as a "unilateral" decision made on the basis that "progress" had been made at the peace table.

MINES

He made it clear that mines in place in North Vietnamese harbors will not be immediately deactivated. But no new mines will be planted, he said.

The President's order was transmitted to American forces in Indochina Sunday night, Ziegler said in answer to questions, following an evening meeting with Kissinger. They met twice Sunday in the President's home and met again three times yesterday.

One meeting Sunday was with Haig before he departed for Saigon for consultations with President Thieu.

Thieu was "fully informed" prior to the issuance of the President's order to halt offensive action against the North, Ziegler said. Asked if Thieu endorsed the action, Ziegler said the President directed the action "following thorough discussions with Thieu."