

NIXON SAYS PACT ON ARMS DEPENDS ON MOSCOW TRIP

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Tells of Ordering a Break in Vietnam Peace Talks to Cut Off 'Filibuster'

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WASHINGTON, March 24 — President Nixon said today that agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on a limitation on strategic arms would probably have to await his trip to Moscow in May for talks with Soviet leaders.

The key issue that has produced the deadlock in the talks — an American demand for inclusion of submarine-launched missiles in an accord on limitations on offensive weapons — remains on the table, Mr. Nixon said. But he suggested that he would make the compromise necessary for a first-stage agreement during his Soviet visit, beginning May 22.

He said at an impromptu news conference that he did not believe that the American and Soviet negotiators could reach an accord during the talks on limitation of strategic arms that resume on Tuesday in Helsinki.

'A Good Chance' Seen

But he said he believed that "there is a good chance at this point" that, in the light of the conciliatory tone of Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet party leader, in a speech on Monday, "we may reach an agreement on SALT in Moscow on defense and offensive limitations, and also agreements in a number of other areas."

"This is our goal," he said, "and I would say that at this time the prospects for the success of this summit are very good."

Mr. Nixon was less optimistic about the prospects for the Paris talks on Vietnam, now suspended. At yesterday's session, the American delegate, William J. Porter, announced an indefinite suspension until the Vietnamese Communists indicated they were ready for "serious discussions."

Asked about the suspension,

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Mr. Nixon said that he had ordered the move to break what he called "a three-and-a-half-year filibuster" by the North Vietnamese at the talks.

"Whenever the enemy is ready to negotiate seriously, we are ready to negotiate and I would emphasize we are ready to negotiate in public channels or in private channels," he said. But, he added, the way the talks were going, "there was no hope whatever" for progress.

"I am not saying that this move is going to bring a negotiation," he said. I do say, however, that it was necessary to do something to get the talks off dead center and see whether the enemy continued to want to use the talks only for propaganda or whether they wanted to negotiate," he said.

He said that "when they are ready, we are ready," but he repeated that he would not allow the Communist side "to use this forum for the purpose of bullying the United States in a propaganda forum rather than in seriously negotiating peace."

State Department officials had said earlier that the President had decided to suspend the talks because he felt that with the United States continuing to pull troops out of Vietnam, the Paris sessions were losing their value as a means of ending the war. The main value of the talks remains as a forum to work out a possible deal on releasing American prisoners.

Sees Withdrawal Going Well

Mr. Nixon said that the withdrawal program was going well — another pull-out, set for next month, will bring the total of Americans in South Vietnam below the figure of 69,000 already targeted for May 1.

He said that while there was "an ominous" enemy build-up in Indochina, he had just received an optimistic report from Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, the American commander, saying that the South Vietnamese would be able to contain any attack—even if their lines "may bend." [Question 10.]

In his discussion of the Moscow trip, Mr. Nixon made it clear that he regarded an agreement on limiting strategic arms as the most important accord that might emerge from the session. The two governments have been negotiating on this question since November, 1969, and have already agreed in principle on the outline of the first state — or interim — agreement. [Question 21].

This would consist of a treaty limiting defensive missiles — anti-ballistic missiles, or ABM's — and an accord short of a treaty for some kinds of offensive missiles.

The current deadlock has lasted several months because of an American desire to include both land-based and sea-based missiles in the offensive accord. The Russians have reportedly insisted on linking

inclusion of sea-based missiles with American inclusion of tactical United States bombers, based in Europe, and in the Sixth Fleet carriers. In his state of the world message last month, Mr. Nixon had said that "a consensus" on the outlines of an accord was developing. He indicated at that time that there would be a condition in the ABM treaty making it mandatory for the two sides to continue a second round of talks to reach an agreement on limiting all offensive weapons not in the first stage.

The President said today that as a result of conversations he held with Gerard C. Smith, the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, who heads the American delegation, "it does not appear now likely that they can complete SALT before Moscow."

"I found that while we are agreed in principle on the limitation of offensive and defensive weapons, that we are still very far apart on some fundamental issues — well, whether or not SLBMS should be included, matters of that sort," he said, referring to submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

Mr. Smith and his delegation left Washington for Helsinki today with "very full instructions from me, both written and oral, to do everything he could to attempt to narrow those differences," the President said. [Question 21.]

Asked about his trip to Canada, planned for April 13, Mr. Nixon said that "quite candidly," the United States had had "very little success" in trade talks with "our Canadian friends." [Question 16.]

American efforts to get Canadian concessions to reduce a trade balance in Canada's favor have led to strains in relations between the two countries and are expected to figure prominently in the April talks.

"Sometimes you have more problems negotiating with your friends than you do with your adversaries," he said, "but that is as it should be."

He defended the conduct of Arthur K. Watson, the American Ambassador to France, who had been accused of being

drunk on a recent flight from Paris to Washington.

Mr. Nixon, smiling, said that Mr. Watson had been carrying out talks with the Chinese Ambassador in Paris "with great competence — and, I understand, total sobriety." [Question 18.]

He added that he had noted that some members of Congress had raised questions about "the personal conduct of an ambassador when he travels to his post."

"I would say that people in glass houses should not throw stones," he said.