

# CLIFFORD OFFERS PLAN TO QUIT WAR

Sees Quick Prisoner Release  
if U.S. Agrees With Hanoi  
on Pullout by Dec. 31

JUN 9 1971

By TERENCE SMITH

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 8—Clark M. Clifford, former Secretary of Defense, said tonight he had "reason to believe" that the United States could reach an agreement now with North Vietnam to end American involvement in the Indochina war by Dec. 31 and obtain the release of the American prisoners of war within 30 days.

In a speech prepared for delivery to peace groups meeting here, Mr. Clifford outlined what he called a "concise, workable" plan that could be put into effect without delay. It calls for a complete United States withdrawal and a halt to all military activities in Indochina by the end of the year.

Under this proposal, North Vietnam and the Vietcong would agree, in return, to release all American prisoners within 30 days of a joint announcement

Continued on Page 6, Column 1

# Clifford Offers a Plan to Quit the War

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

of the accord by Washington and Hanoi.

In addition, the Communists would give an agreement to refrain from attacks on American military personnel during the period of withdrawal.

Mr. Clifford also included in his plan a safeguard that attempts to meet President Nixon's repeated contention that the North Vietnamese cannot be trusted to do more than discuss the release of the American prisoners they are holding.

The agreement would be void, he said, and the United States's obligation to withdraw would be suspended if the Communists did not release the prisoners within 30 days.

In an interview Mr. Clifford, who served as Defense Secretary in 1968 and 1969 under President Lyndon B. Johnson, said it was his opinion, and "even my conviction, that if we were to go this route in negotiations with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, that this plan could become a reality."

### 'Conventions' Cited

He said his convictions was based on a "number of conversations and meetings I have had in recent week with different people, some of them Americans and some of them not."

"Some of these people have sought me out because of my interest in this aspect of this subject," he said.

Asked whether he had been in direct contact with the North Vietnamese, Vietcong or even Soviet officials, Mr. Clifford said he "could not and would not" be more specific about the meetings he had had.

The former secretary said that he had been engaged in the "careful formulation" of his plan for several weeks and that he had become persuaded in that time that it would be accepted by the North Vietnamese.

He outlined it in a speech to

be given before a "Convocation for Peace," in the Statler Hilton Hotel here, sponsored by a coalition of organizations lobbying in Congress this week for a total United States withdrawal by Dec. 31.

At the White House, Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary, took issue with Mr. Clifford's assessment of the enemy's negotiating position.

"We have no indication directly from them that they are prepared to do anything more than discuss the release of our prisoners if a withdrawal deadline is set," he said. "In their official statements they remain hard in their posture."

Mr. Ziegler also objected to the Dec. 31 deadline proposed by Mr. Clifford for a complete troop withdrawal.

"This is a deadline so precipitate that it would not give the South Vietnamese the opportunity to defend themselves and determine their own future," he said.

Security for the South Vietnamese after the United States withdrawal is one of two conditions President Nixon has said must be fulfilled before all American troops are removed. The other is the release of all American prisoners.

The Administration has become persuaded in recent months that substantial United States military support will be required well into 1972 if the Saigon regime is to have a chance to sustain itself after the American troops leave.

### Fear of 'Collapse' Voiced

One White House official said privately today that "the whole thing would collapse" in South Vietnam if all American forces were withdrawn by Dec. 31.

The official, who declined to be identified, said the Administration was being intentionally cautious in its reaction to Mr. Clifford's proposal lest it encourage Hanoi to continue to deal outside the regular negotiating channels.

Mr. Ziegler spoke to this

point in the daily afternoon briefing at the White House for newsmen when he said: "Anything the other side has to say they can say to us, rather than through other contacts."

He added that in its meetings with individuals outside the Administration, the North Vietnamese were "attempting to convey a feeling of flexibility which we do not sense."

Mr. Ziegler said that Mr. Clifford had not discussed his proposal with the Administration before releasing the text of his speech this afternoon. However, a White House official said later that the former secretary was being invited to come in and discuss the details of his plan.

Mr. Clifford's proposal is generally similar to the Senate resolution of Senators George S. McGovern and Mark O. Hatfield that has been scheduled for a vote June 16. That resolution calls for the same withdrawal deadline but provides that if North Vietnam does not return the prisoners within 60 days of its enactment, the withdrawal deadline would be postponed by two months.

The Hatfield-McGovern resolution has been endorsed by W. Averell Harriman, who served as the chief United States negotiator in the Paris talks under President Johnson.

In an interview tonight, Mr. Harriman said that he supported Mr. Clifford's proposal and added that he was personally confident that the North Vietnamese would agree to release all the American prisoners in exchange for a firm withdrawal date.