

# U.S. MAY PUT OFF REPLY TO VIETCONG

Need for Further Study of  
Peace Plan Is Likely to  
Delay a Response  
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WASHINGTON, July 6—The United States is giving such serious study to the Vietcong peace plan submitted in Paris last Thursday that a formal response is likely to be delayed, senior Administration officials said today.

They added that subsequent Communist clarifications, given through private channels and in press interviews, were also contributing to making it unlikely that a reply would be delivered at the next scheduled session of the peace talks in Paris on Thursday.

Under a seven-point plan presented by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, the chief Vietcong delegate, the Communists would gradually release all American prisoners of war this year if all United States troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in the same period of time.

## 'New Ground' Seen

But officials, speaking privately, noted that in an interview with The New York Times today, a high-level adviser to the North Vietnamese delegation Le Duc Tho, may have "broken new ground" in suggesting that the prisoner question was "separable" from the other proposals, which apparently linked a cease-fire with the political settlement in Vietnam.

They also found it to be of interest that, whereas Mrs. Binh's seven-point plan had called for the formation of a new government in Saigon to negotiate a settlement with the Communists, Mr. Tho today spoke of talks with the existing South Vietnamese Government, except for President Nguyen Van Thieu.

"If he means what he is reported to have said, the Communist position indeed sounds interesting," an official familiar with peace-talk diplomacy said

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tonight.

For all these reasons, the officials said, additional time may be required to formulate an answer or a counter-proposal to the Communist plan and the new interpretations being given it by Vietcong and North Vietnamese spokesmen.

President Nixon, with the advice of Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Henry A. Kissinger, the White House assistant on national security affairs, is expected to make the final decision on whether the Vietcong plan is acceptable, at least in some of its elements.

## Nixon Flies to Coast

Mr. Nixon and Mr. Rogers flew today to San Clemente, Calif., to review United States foreign policy with emphasis on the Paris negotiations, according to high Administration officials. They were accompanied by Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence, and Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Haig, deputy to Mr. Kissinger.

Mr. Kissinger, who met during the weekend with top South Vietnamese officials in Saigon and is to confer with the American delegation in Paris later this week, is scheduled to join the President and Mr. Rogers in San Clemente on Sunday.

At this juncture, the Administration continues to hold publicly to its original position that the plan contains "positive" as well as "unacceptable" elements, but that it is interested in exploring the Communist proposal further.

"This matter is too serious for us to rush headlong into instant responses," an official said today.

## Negotiations Possible

Other officials cautioned that it "does not necessarily follow" that, when the basic political decision is made, David K. E. Bruce, the chief American delegate, will submit a formal or public reply to Mrs. Binh.

Instead, they said, the United States may seek to engage the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese in negotiations through

which areas of potential agreement may be explored.

This was suggested today by Charles W. Bray 3d, the State Department spokesman, when he told newsmen that United States responses to the Communist peace plan would come through the "negotiating process."

Mrs. Binh, in the interview today with United Press International, said that her July 1 plan was not an inflexible take-it-or-leave-it package.

The view among officials here was that the Communist "clarifications" would be more useful if they were made directly to the United States delegates rather than "through the newspapers."

The officials said that the Communists were applying maximal propaganda pressures, by working through the Western press as well as through a steady outpouring of Hanoi radio broadcasts, to force the Nixon Administration to respond quickly and favorably to their proposals.

Administration spokesmen, citing a standing policy in this field refused to say whether any private contacts had occurred between Mr. Bruce and the Communist delegates since Mrs. Binh made her proposals.

They said that the United States was anxious to explore all negotiating possibilities and they repeated that the American delegation was always ready to engage in private talks.