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Peace Envoy Shift No Stall, U.S. Says

Washington

The White House gave assurances yesterday that the shift in ambassadors in Paris is not a means of "stalling" the Vietnam peace talks.

But Ronald L. Ziegler, President Nixon's press secretary, indicated at the same time that it may be more than a month before William J. Porter arrives in the French capital to head the U.S. delegation succeeding David K. E. Bruce.

"I don't want you to go to the conclusion we are delaying Ziegler said at a news briefing. "There is absolutely no reason why the talks cannot proceed as they have."

Bruce, 73, is officially withdrawing for health reasons. He retired Thursday as chief American delegate to the talks in an atmosphere of re-primination with each side blaming the other for the prevailing deadlock.

Ziegler said Porter would be sent to Paris "as soon as possible." He declined to be more specific about an arrival date, saying only that "it wouldn't be a matter of several months."

Porter will first have a round of consultations in Washington and arrange his personal affairs, Ziegler said. Until Porter goes to Paris, Philip C. Habib, the deputy chief of the delegation, will be in charge. Habib has been named to replace Porter as ambassador to South Korea.

"Our intention is not in any way to downgrade the talks, it is not to stall," Ziegler said.

Associated Press