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Nixon Tells Of Private Peace Talks

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Washington

President Nixon said yesterday that the United States "is very actively pursuing negotiations" in private on the seven-point Viet Cong proposal for peace in Vietnam.

He declined to speculate on the outcome.

Mr. Nixon also cautioned at an impromptu news conference that speculation on the effect his forthcoming visit to China might have on the Vietnam peace negotiation "will not serve the interests of constructive talks."

Mr. Nixon indicated there are two factors which could affect the course of the Paris talks on Vietnam peace.

North Vietnam's hopes for a political settlement will be affected, he said, by the outcome of the October 3 South Vietnamese elections.

Unless the winner is a candidate that Hanoi is "not as much against" as it is President Nguyen Van Thieu, he said, "it will be very difficult for them to have a negotiated settlement." He said the United States position is one of "complete neutrality in the Vietnam election."

ACTION

And, the President said, the enemy in Vietnam "doesn't have the punch it had" because allied operations in Cambodia and Laos severely disrupted its ability to wage offensive actions. Because the level of fighting has thereby been reduced, he said, U.S. and South Vietnamese casualties have been substantially lowered.

The President's disclosure that secret negotiations are proceeding on the seven-point plan the Viet Cong submitted in Paris on July 1 came when he was asked why there had been no formal U.S. reply.

Declaring that he did not want the press "to get out on a limb," Mr. Nixon said:

"We are very actively pursuing negotiations on Vietnam in established channels. The record, when it finally comes out, will answer all the critics so far as the activity of this government in pursuing negotiations in established channels. It would not be useful to negotiate in the newspapers . . .

"I am not predicting that the negotiations will succeed. I am saying, however, that . . . we have gone and are going the extra mile on nego-

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tations in established channels. You can interpret that any way you want, but do not interpret it in a way that indicates that the United States is missing this opportunity.

He gave no clue to the channels being used.

POWs

In their peace proposal, the Communists said they are prepared to free all U.S. prisoners of war by the end of this year if all U.S. troops are gone from Vietnam by then. The Saigon government would simultaneously have to release all its Viet Cong and North Vietnamese prisoners.

The Communists previously had said only that they would be willing to discuss release of the U.S. prisoners after the United States announced a withdrawal date.

Most of the other points in the Viet Cong plan were old demands previously ejected.

At the news conference, his first since June 1 and one of the longest among the 18 he has held in 30 months as president, Mr. Nixon made these other points:

- He opposes suspension of economic