

NO PULLOUT DATE OFFERED BY U.S.

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Aides Say They Feel Hanoi
Would Bar P.O.W. Deal

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 4—

Administration officials said today that United States negotiators in Paris had never proposed a firm date for withdrawal from Vietnam in exchange for the release of American prisoners of war, but that they were convinced nevertheless that the North Vietnamese would reject such a formula.

Rather than putting forward a formal proposal linking withdrawal to the release of prisoners, the officials said, the American negotiators have sought "clarifications" of the Communists' attitude.

As a result of these, and public statements made by the North Vietnamese in Paris, they have concluded that Hanoi will require a cessation of all military and economic support of the Saigon Government in addition to total troop withdrawal and an end of United States air activity as conditions for the release of

Continued on Page 6, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

the prisoners, the officials said.

[The United States and South Vietnam have agreed to a Communist proposal that the Vietnam peace talks be resumed on Thursday, United Press International reported from Paris. It will be the negotiators' first session since Dec. 9.]

The proposals made by the United States at the peace talks became a center of controversy this week when President Nixon asserted in a television interview that the possibility of a total troop withdrawal in exchange for a prisoner release had been "under discussion at various times" in Paris, but that the North Vietnamese had "totally rejected" such a deal.

Yesterday, Senator George McGovern charged that Mr. Nixon had "deceived the public" with his statement.

The Administration officials, discussing the matter today in answer to inquiries, said that the "clarifications" of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong positions were sought at Paris last fall.

In response, the negotiators were said to have received what one official described as "the same convoluted answers" that the North Vietnamese gave in public and to several visiting members of the American Congress at the time.

"The inescapable conclusion," said a senior policy maker who declined to be identified, "is that the North Vietnamese are still demanding what they have always demanded, that we pull the rug out from beneath the South Vietnamese Government."

Despite this conviction, many officials here expect that the Administration will still put forward a proposal linking troop withdrawals and a release of prisoners sometime in 1972. They think that Mr. Nixon may well offer to cease all United States air activity in Vietnam, but they doubt that

he will agree to halt economic and military assistance to the Saigon Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The decision to put forward even such a limited proposal, the officials said, would be contingent on a successful South Vietnamese military performance during the current dry season.

Enemy Drive Expected

The Administration's analysts expect that the North Vietnamese will mount a substantial offensive in the Central Highlands in the period before President Nixon's visit to China, which is scheduled to begin Feb. 21.

Senator McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, who is seeking his party's Presidential nomination, declared yesterday that it was "simply not true" that the United States negotiators at Paris "ever discussed with the North Vietnamese the question of total American withdrawal from Indochina in conjunction with the release of our prisoners."

He repeated his contention, based on an interview he himself had with the Communist representatives in Paris in September, that "if the United States set a date for the complete withdrawal of our forces and the cessation of the bombing in Indochina, it would signal the end of support for the Saigon regime and our troops would be allowed to withdraw safely and our prisoners freed."

Senator McGovern and other Senate critics of the war have been arguing this point for several months and attacking the Administration for not having tested the North Vietnamese by making such an offer.

Privately, the Administration's policy makers have conceded that Mr. Nixon simply was not prepared to make such an offer during 1971, regardless of whether it would be accepted. If the South Vietnamese demonstrate a capacity to defend themselves satisfactorily in the months ahead, however, they believe such an offer will be made.