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## McGOVERN BIDS U.S. SET PULLOUT DATE

He Is Convinced Freeing of Prisoners Would Follow

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 8—Senator George McGovern said today that a conversation he had this week with a North Vietnamese representative at the Paris peace talks had convinced him that American prisoners of war would be released if the United States set a definite date for ending all military operations in Indochina.

The South Dakota Democrat, an announced Presidential candidate, disclosed at a news conference that he had a telephone conversation on Monday with Xuan Qanh, secretary of the North Vietnamese delegation, in an attempt to clarify conditions for releasing the prisoners.

On the basis of the conversation, Senator McGovern said, he has come to the conclusion that a firm withdrawal date combined with an end to bombing would implicitly meet a

second condition for release of the prisoners—that the United States end its support of South Vietnamese Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Senator McGovern called the news conference to renew his suggestion that President Nixon test the North Vietnamese and Vietcong intentions by offering a firm date of June 1 for withdrawing all American military forces from Indochina.

Noting that the Administration has acknowledged that such a proposal had never been specifically presented to the other side, he said: "There is nothing to lose and, God willing, much to gain in putting that proposal to an actual test."

The McGovern telephone conversation was held the day after President Nixon, in a television interview, stated that the approach of a withdrawal deadline had been discussed at various times at the Paris talks but that the other side had "totally rejected" such an approach.

The conversation took place before a McGovern press conference on Monday at which he accused the President of deceiving the American public by suggesting that negotiators had rejected a proposal to release the prisoners in return for a fixed withdrawal date by the United States. It was only in response to reporters' questions that Senator McGovern today disclosed his recent contact with the North Vietnamese representatives.

On Thursday in Paris, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegations seemed to bear out Mr. Nixon's position by stating that a withdrawal deadline and end of support of the Thieu Government — two principal points in a proposal offered last July—were closely linked con-

ditions for release of the prisoners of war.

Senator McGovern acknowledged that the inseparability of the two conditions appeared to have hardened—a development he ascribed to the recent American bombing of North Vietnam. But he continued to contend, on the basis of his conversations, that a firm American withdrawal date would inevitably lead to the toppling of the Thieu regime and thus satisfy the second Communist condition.

Senator McGovern said he had talked with Mr. Qanh on Monday in an attempt to "clarify" the Communist position by asking if there were any "new conditions" for release of the prisoners.

"What came across," he said, "was confirmation of the same thing they said last September," when the Senator said he was told that a fixed timetable for withdrawal of all American forces would lead to an accompanying phased release of American prisoners.

In Monday's conversation, the Senator said, "I asked, what about our support for the Thieu Government? Wouldn't you agree that if we set a date for withdrawal, General Thieu would quickly resign?"

"They replied that was their best judgment."

"Of course," the Senator said, "They would like us to state publicly that we are through with General Thieu. But I am not absolutely positive they will insist on that second point or not."

"I think they will, publicly. But if we enter into negotiations on the first point, my own judgment is that the rest will be easy."