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Reds Up The Price For POWs

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Hanoi's chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks says the United States was offered a straight prisoners-for-pull-out swap last year but President Nixon refused.

Minister Xuan Thuy added, however, that such an exchange can no longer be discussed without linking it to the future of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Thuy was asked in an interview in Paris with CBS' "Face the Nation": "Will you agree to a simple swap of American troops out for American prisoners back?"

Honorably

He replied: "It is not a swap here . . . You should remember that this approach was advanced in 1971 . . . It was our earnest desire to see Mr. Nixon rapidly settle the Vietnam problem peacefully.

"That is to say . . . to withdraw U.S. forces and to change the . . . Thieu administration. Through the election of Oct. 3, 1971, it

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was a very opportune occasion to do so, and it would have allowed Mr. Nixon to get out of the war very honorably. But Mr. Nixon refused to do that."

Asked specifically whether the Hanoi position now requires handling of the political and military problems as a single question, Thuy replied:

"As I said, the two crucial points, the two key points, should be settled, and the settlement of these two points will facilitate the settlement of the other points."

CBS followed the Thuy interview, taped Friday, with live questioning of Secretary of State William P. Rogers in Washington yesterday.

Asked whether Thuy had ever offered a prisoner-for-pullout trade, Rogers replied:

"There was never any discussion of that kind. In every . . . session that we had with the North Vietnamese, they made it clear that they would not talk about a military solution, except in the context of an over-all political solution . . .

"So it is not possible for us to work out any military solution unless we, in effect, give them exactly what they want. And that would mean a total defeat for the United States . . ." Rogers said.

Despite a stream of criticism from North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, Rogers said, the Communists still have not rejected Nixon's latest eight-point peace plan.

"They have not rejected the proposal as such," the secretary said. "They have not used that word. They've criticized it obviously . . . But I think they feel that

there are elements of that proposal which . . . could be the basis for a negotiated settlement."

Thuy said Nixon's public disclosure of secret Paris meetings between Dr. Henry A. Kissinger and Hanoi officials, including Thuy, "constitute an obstacle to the negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem."

But he said the obstacle is not an absolute one — and that it is up to the United States to say whether the secret negotiations will be resumed.

Thuy said Hanoi will release a new list of U.S. POWs in due time.

"You can be confident that we highly value human beings," he said.

Asked why North Vietnam refuses to let a neutral delegation inspect POW camps, Thuy said:

"You remember Mr. Nixon's and Mr. Laird's statements that they would be prepared to launch comman-

do operations to rescue the prisoners . . . And if now we let those people visit the prisoners' camp, those people may help Mr. Nixon in his aim."

Asked about that statement, Rogers said: "Well, we are going to do everything we can to get the release of the prisoners of war."

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