

## Cut Off Saigon

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# McGovern Plan To Free POWs

By Morton Kondracke

WASHINGTON — (CST) — Sen. George S. McGovern (D-S.D.) is proposing that the United States cut off military and political support from the present government of South Vietnam, a move he said would lead to the resignation of President Nguyen Van Thieu and the return of American prisoners of war.

Responding to a series of weekend interviews by North Vietnam's chief negotiator in Paris, Xuan Thuy, McGovern said that President Nixon should immediately announce:

- "That we are withdrawing all American forces from Indochina, that we are ending all aerial bombardment of Indochina and that we are ending all military assistance to the Thieu government as of May 1 of this year . . ."

- That "President Thieu has no claim to legitimacy in South Vietnam and that we do not recognize him as the legitimate leader of that country."

- That the United States expects North Vietnam to live up to international agreements and return American POWs "after the cessation of hostilities."

### Prisoner Release

With American military aid and political support withdrawn, McGovern said, "President Thieu would unquestionably resign — in fact, he told me that when I met with him last September.

"The conditions under which the North Vietnamese have assured us the prisoners would be released would then exist."

An American who interviewed Xuan Thuy and other Communist negotiators in Paris last Saturday, Richard J. Barnet, said he thought that McGovern's new proposals would be acceptable to North Vietnam and lead to the return of the POWs.

Barnet acknowledged that North Vietnam has "raised the ante," but denied administration claims that Hanoi is demanding that the United States set up machinery making it inevitable that the Communists will control Saigon.

"Of course, they want and expect to take over," Barnet said at a press conference here, "but they do not expect the United States to hand it over to them. They

just want the United States to get out of the way."

### 'Lost a Chance'

According to Barnet, McGovern and Thuy, it would have been possible before the one-man presidential election Oct. 3 in South Vietnam for the United States to get its POWs back by setting a deadline for full military withdrawal from Indochina.

McGovern charged that "the administration lost the chance for negotiation of that simple exchange. The North Vietnamese position was based on the premise that if we had set the deadline before last October, President Thieu would not have been elected.

"That condition no longer applies. Hence, they seek a return to the conditions that prevailed before that blatantly fraudulent election."

McGovern has long held North Vietnam would accept a withdrawal-for-prisoners trade. The administration has contended that such a trade was never possible, and that Hanoi has from the outset sought a favorable political settlement in South Vietnam as the price for a prisoner return.

### Red Takeover

The contents of a settlement acceptable to Hanoi are now subject to dispute between McGovern and the administration.

Presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger and Secretary of State William P. Rogers said Hanoi was demanding the overturning of Thieu and installation of a caretaker government that would virtually assure a Communist takeover.

McGovern said that he would not accept such a solution and did not believe that his own plan involved such a conclusion.

"If Mr. Thuy is suggesting that we must dispose Mr. Thieu and replace him with someone else, then I disagree with his position for the same reason that I reject Mr. Nixon's view that we must continue indefinitely to prop up that corrupt, dictatorial regime in Saigon."