

# Hanoi Offers Secret Peace Talks If ...

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## Paris

North Vietnam offered possible new secret peace talks yesterday in exchange for an agreement by the United States to halt its air attacks on North Vietnam and to resume the regular

weekly sessions of the Paris conference.

(Last night the Associated Press in Saigon reported U.S. military sources as saying President Nixon has ordered U.S. bombing of North Vietnam suspended in the Hanoi-Haiphong area and greatly reduced in the southern panhandle while awaiting a political response from Hanoi.

(The suspension order applied to all territory above the 20th parallel of latitude, 60 miles south of Hanoi, the sources said.

(In Washington, however, State Department officials said they had no knowledge of a bombing cutback.)

Earlier Xuan Thuy, Hanoi's chief negotiator here, had told a news conference that Le Duc Tho, who engaged in secret talks

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last year with Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's security adviser, would return to Paris if the U.S. agreed to the two conditions.

They made no formal link between the presence of Tho, a member of North Vietnam's politburo and an adviser to the delegation here, and resumption of the secret meetings that were broken off last October. But, when he was asked whether such talks could resume if the American bombing stopped and the American delegation returned to the conference room, he answered: "That is correct."

They also emphasized the point in a negative way.

"If the Paris conference on Vietnam does not resume its work and on the other hand if the United States does not stop its escalation of the war and destruction against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, then there is no basis for private meetings," he said.

There was no immediate reaction from the U.S. delegation which, on instructions from President Nixon, suspended the semi-public Thursday sessions March 23 on the ground that the Communist side was using them merely for propaganda purposes and would not engage

in true negotiations.

Since then, the North Vietnamese have launched a military offensive against the south and have made repeated demands that the Paris conference continue "as usual." The U.S. and South Vietnam have answered, as the chief U.S. negotiator William J. Porter did last Thursday, that "meeting at gunpoint would not be acceptable."

However, Porter revealed last Thursday that Mr. Nixon had proposed secretly on April 2 that the meetings resume April 13. There had been, according to North Vietnam, a flurry of secret messages between the two sides via "a private channel" in an effort to get the stalled talks started again.

Mr. Nixon's proposal for April 13 was accepted but was withdrawn four days later, Hanoi said. According to the U.S. side, the answer to Mr. Nixon's offer has been "a mushrooming invasion" of the south by the north.

Despite the confusion between public statements and private messages, it is believed that what the U.S. is really after is a resumption of the secret sessions, which Washington charged were broken off when Tho refused to attend a meeting scheduled for last November 20.