18 San Francisco Chronicle

** Thur., May 4, 1972

'Sheer Nonsense'

Rumors of Peace Pact at Paris --U.S. Denies It

Washington

Reports that the United States and North Vietnam were approaching agreement on a broad peace settlement circulated through world capitals yesterday but drew strenuous denials from the Nixon administration.

The rumors of an impending agreement were stimulated by an account in the French newspaper France - Soir that the U.S. had proposed a seven-day truce in secret negotiations that the newspaper said were under way in Paris.

Vietnamese Communist sources in Paris reportedly confirmed the account, which said the two sides had agreed in principle on a mutual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese forces, the exchange of prisoners and the resignation of President Nguyen Van Thieu.

KISSINGER

Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser, and Le Duc Tho, a member of the North Vietnamese Politburo, were said by the sources to be in Paris negotiating the make up of the government that would take over in Saigon after the resignation of Thieu.

Despite the administration denials of an imminent agreement, it was authoritatively reported yesterday that Kissinger had made another secret trip to Paris, presumably to meet privately with the North Vietnamese

He reportedly left Washington late Monday and returned Tuesday. Reliable administration sources said they could not rule out the possibility that he might return to Paris this week.

DENIAL

The administration's spokesmen, without confirming or denying that Hanoi and Washington were in secret contact, categorically rejected the reports that an impending agreement was near.

Privately, officials here said they believe North Vietnam circulated the rumors in a deliberate effort to create an atmosphere of expectation around the Paris negotiations. They noted that the settlement described closely followed Hanoi's demands.

SESSION

A public session of the Paris peace talks will be held today.

Representative Gerald R. Ford, the House minority leader, told reporters that Kissinger attended a briefing given at the White Horyesterday morning bral Thomas Moman of the Staff.

1 ~14~