

AUG 17 1972

Kissinger Arrives in Saigon Amid Much Speculation

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 16—Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser for national security, arrived in Saigon tonight amid lightning and rain and much speculation about the purpose of his trip.

No factual information was available on the reason for Mr. Kissinger's flight here. But Saigon, a city that thrives on rumors and conspiracy theories, was buzzing with conjecture. Some saw a breakthrough at the Paris peace talks. Others saw an attempt by Washington to get President Nguyen Van Thieu to step down.

The drama surrounding the Kissinger visit has been heightened by the return of the North Vietnamese Politburo member with whom he has been having private talks in Paris, Le Duc Tho, to Hanoi, presumably for consultations.

Met by Bunker

The timing of the two trips has led to the belief that the Paris peace talks have reached a critical stage.

[Mr. Tho, in a brief statement before he left Paris for Moscow on his way home, said that speculations surrounding his trip "do not correspond to reality." The trip, he added, "was routine and has no other significance."

Mr. Kissinger landed at the military area of Saigon's tansonnhut Airport shortly after 8 P.M., local time, in one of President Nixon's big Boeing 707 jets, Air Force II.

All newsmen were kept 50 yards away. Mr. Kissinger emerged wearing a gray suit and pinkish tie, shook hands down a short receiving line, chatted smilingly with the

United States Ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, for a couple of minutes in the drizzle and then drove off to the Ambassadors' residence, where he will be staying during his two-day visit.

A stiff-backed marine in civilian clothes held an umbrella over the Ambassador's head during the welcome. There was no umbrella for Mr. Kissinger, but he did not seem to mind, for his cheery grin never faded.

Only one Vietnamese official was at the airport to greet Mr. Kissinger—his counterpart in the Saigon Government, Nguyen Phu Duc, special assistant to President Thieu for foreign affairs.

Embassy officials provided almost no information about the visit, except to say that Mr. Kissinger "is going to be shown a proposed schedule and he will decide."

About all they reported beyond that were the names of the National Security Council aides accompanying Mr. Kissinger and where they will be staying in Saigon.

The White House has said only that Mr. Kissinger's two days of talks with President Thieu, Ambassador Bunker and other American military officials are for the purpose of "a general review of all aspects of the Vietnam problem, including the negotiations in Paris."

The White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, urged newsmen yesterday in Washington not to speculate about the trip, but in the absence of hard information, speculation is virtually all that has emerged.

Some of it stems from President Thieu's recent public statements, which seem to reflect concern that President Nixon, to win more votes in the November election, might make concessions to Hanoi that

would be unacceptable to Saigon.

Mr. Thieu has become increasingly hard-line in his speeches, saying, among other things:

¶That an unconditional halt in the American bombing of North Vietnam for the purpose of, say, gaining the release of some or all of the American prisoners of war would be "suicidal" for South Vietnam.

¶That an in-place cease-fire giving the enemy large portions of the territory won in the current offensive was out of the question.

¶That the bombing of the North must continue "relentlessly" for another six or seven months to destroy Hanoi's economy and war potential, or otherwise the war will go on "for many more dozens of years."

President Thieu, in a recent major speech, almost wondered aloud as to how firm the American commitment to South Vietnam was and how determined the Americans were to continue the bombing.

Some news columnists and foreign-affairs analysts, therefore, think that Mr. Kissinger's primary mission might be to reassure an uneasy Mr. Thieu that the Administration is still standing four-square behind him.

Other analysts, however, have speculated that Mr. Kissinger might be here to try to persuade Mr. Thieu to soften his stand and agree to some compromise formula.

Some Vietnamese newsmen tend to think that the United States has "sold out" South Vietnam, and that Mr. Kissinger is here to deliver the bad news.

Mr. Kissinger, who arrived here from Switzerland where he was helping his parents celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, is expected to leave

SAIGON on Friday evening. Mr. Ziegler said yesterday that the Presidential adviser would get back "some time over the weekend" and report to Mr. Nixon before the Republican convention gets under way. But Mr. Ziegler left open the possibility that Mr. Kissinger might stop somewhere on the way home, although he ruled out Paris and Hanoi.

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