

"... Ziegler acknowledged that Kissinger discussed the trip with Hoffa's emissaries last June ... " (This story.)

" [Hoffa] said he was first approached early last July on the POW trip by Taub." (SFExaminer 12 Sep.)

Hoffa Trip Bid Called Move to Ease Parole

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9 SEP 72

Former Teamsters Union president James R. Hoffa's short-circuited attempt to visit North Vietnam extended across the top level of the Nixon administration and even reached Hanoi politburo member Le Duc Tho.

This fuller, but still incomplete, account of the resourceful Hoffa's determined effort to get to Hanoi to seek the release of American prisoners spilled out yesterday.

According to the official, and now revised, White House account yesterday, Hoffa's aborted mission to North Vietnam was pushed through uncoordinated levels of the Justice and State departments by "a very persistent" and "very aggressive" Hoffa attorney, William L. Taub of New York.

Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, in an angry letter to Taub last night, said he was informed that Taub's admitted objective was to get parole restrictions removed on Hoffa "if Mr. Hoffa were to visit Hanoi and obtain the release of some prisoners."

Kleindienst said Taub had presented that proposal to Deputy Attorney General Ralph E. Erickson, involving "the condition imposed in connection with the commutation of Mr. Hoffa's sentence."

Those restrictions bar Hoffa from resuming activi-

See **HOFFA**, A4, Col. 3

ties in the Teamsters union. Last December, President Nixon commuted Hoffa's 13-year sentence for jury tampering and mail fraud after Hoffa served about 4½ years.

A Taub claim that there were "negotiations with the U.S. Attorney General in behalf of James R. Hoffa to visit Hanoi" was labeled "incredible" and "a gross misrepresentation" by Kleindienst.

Kleindienst said Taub was told that any Hoffa venture to North Vietnam would have to be "on his own initiative." Kleindienst further charged that although Taub "indicated" to one of Kleindienst's assistants that he had "cleared a possible visit to Hanoi" with presidential national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger, "I subsequently learned that no such visit had been cleared."

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler acknowledged that Kissinger discussed the trip with Hoffa's emissaries last June, but declined to give any official sanction to the mission. However, said Ziegler, Kissinger urged Hoffa to put off the trip until after July 20 if he decided to pursue it as "a private effort."

Ziegler said Kissinger's objective was to avoid any interference with Kissinger's own secret talks in Paris with Le Duc Tho on July 19.

At that meeting, Kissinger did "pass a message" to Tho concerning Hoffa, Ziegler said. The message, said Ziegler, was to emphasize that if Hoffa went to North Vietnam he would be going as "a private citizen," not a government negotiator.

Ziegler, under questioning, could not recall any similar attention accorded to any other American traveler in the Kissinger-Tho meetings. Ziegler said he "believed" Kissinger brought the matter to President

Nixon's attention, but only as "an informational matter," on a subject that was "not active."

Taub's contrary version, given in New York yesterday, was that "Kissinger approved the plans," asking

every time a member of Congress says do it this way or as you won get your bill?" 1972
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nam via Paris because the story leaked out, causing complications over his invitation from North Vietnam's trade unions, which required secrecy.

In Paris, North Vietnamese spokesmen denied knowledge of any invitation to Hoffa and scoffed at the idea. But Taub yesterday said Hoffa "very likely will go" to North Vietnam later—although Secretary of State William P. Rogers on Thursday indignantly canceled official validation for Hoffa's travel, on grounds of "irregularities" in the validation.

"We hold valid passports and there is no need for us to get any further approval from Rogers," Taub countered in New York yesterday.

State Department officials acknowledged there is no binding legal requirement for passport validation or even for passports, for that matter, for American citizens to go to North Vietnam if they do not seek passport validation.

In addition to the Justice Department's discussions with Hoffa's attorney, and the U.S. Parole Board's approval of Hoffa's travel on a 4-to-1 vote, Raymond F. Farrell, chief commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, became involved in expediting Hoffa's case.

For reasons not fully explained, officials said that about a week ago Farrell telephoned Robert D. Johnson, deputy director of the State Department's Passport Office, to tell him that Hoffa was coming over for passport validation and that the request had official approval.

On Wednesday, as officials reconstructed it, when Hoffa and Taub appeared at the Passport Office, the only documentation they presented was a copy of the letter signed by Taub, dated Sept. 6, and referred to by Kleindienst last night. This letter, in addition to claiming there had been "negotiations" with Kleindienst, said that Hoffa holds "official authorization, with unlimited travel, to depart the U.S.A. on Thursday, Sept. 7, 1972, for Hanoi, travelling via Paris."

The letter said that accompanying Hoffa to Hanoi would be Taub and Harold Gibbons of St. Louis, a Teamsters vice president who visited North Vietnam last March and who accompanied Taub in the approach to Kissinger last June.

Johnson, at the Passport Office, telephoned an aide in Kleindienst's office, it was said, and received verification of the authority for Hoffa to travel abroad.

Johnson then reportedly telephoned a special assistant in the State Department for prisoner-of-war affairs, Frank A. Sieverts, to ask if that office had any objection to Hoffa's travel, and reportedly was told Sieverts had none. Sieverts, however, was only giving his specialist's opinion, and was not granting authorization. Passport Office officials, nevertheless, reportedly concluded that there was authorization at levels far over their heads, and granted the passport validations to Hoffa and Taub.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers was described as "furious" when he discovered, one day late, what had happened. Rogers, after a quick investigation and hurried calls to the White House and the Justice Department, revoked the validations on grounds of "irregularities."

Rogers was put in a doubly awkward position because he previously attacked former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, a Democrat, for Clark's recent trip to Hanoi. In addition, Rogers was said to regard it as highly inappropriate for a paroled ex-convict, such as Hoffa, to be bargaining for American prisoners of war in Hanoi.

State Department spokesman Charles W. Bray said yesterday that Rogers believes "individuals, or groups of individuals, ought not to inject themselves into negotiations with other governments, and particularly where the United States government, as a government, is currently engaged in negotiations of its own."