

U.S. Says Hoffa Asked for a Deal

SFChronicle

United Press

SEP 9 1972

Washington

Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst said yesterday that James R. Hoffa's lawyer proposed a deal under which the former Teamsters president could return to union activities if he won Hanoi's release of some American prisoners of war.

Kleindienst said the deal was rejected by Deputy Attorney General Ralph Erickson during an August 28 meeting with Hoffa's lawyer, William L. Taub.

On Thursday, 10 days later, Hoffa called off plans to visit the North Vietnamese capital, and Secretary of State William P. Rogers simultaneously canceled a special validation of his passport for travel to Hanoi.

Kleindienst disclosed Taub's alleged proposal in a letter to the lawyer denying Taub's contention — made in a separate letter to Rogers — that he had conducted "negotiations with the U.S. attorney general in behalf of James R. Hoffa to visit Hanoi, North Vietnam."

TERM

Hoffa was released from the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pa., last Christmas Eve after serving four and one-half years on a jury

See Back Page

From Page 1

tampering conviction. His sentence was commuted on the condition that he not take part in any Teamster Union activities before March 6, 1980.

The Teamsters Union, breaking with many Democrat-oriented labor organizations and some others that have expressed neutrality in this year's presidential election, warmly endorsed President Nixon's re-election early in the summer.

Kleindienst reminded Taub in his letter that the lawyer, unable to see Kleindienst, had met with Erickson.

Later, he said, "Mr. Erickson advised me that you presented him with a proposal whereby the condition imposed in connection with the commutation of Mr. Hoffa's sentence would be removed if Mr. Hoffa were to visit Hanoi and obtain the release of some prisoners.

"Mr. Erickson advised you (Taub) that he had no authority to consider any

such proposal and that if Mr. Hoffa were to undertake any such venture he would have to do so on his initiative," Kleindienst wrote.

VIEW

Taub said yesterday that Hoffa "very likely will go" to Hanoi anyway.

"We are awaiting word from North Vietnamese trade union members in Paris," Taub said. He said once clarification is reached on matters dealing with the actual POW situation Hoffa probably will leave for Hanoi.

Taub said the clarification sought from the North Vietnamese did not deal in any way with the controversy concerning Hoffa's attempt to obtain State Department validation of his passport for travel to Hanoi.

"We hold valid passports and there is no need for us to get any further approval from Rogers," Taub said.

Under U.S. law, travel by Americans to North Vietnam and a handful of other countries can be undertaken only if approved by author-

ized State Department officials.

Meanwhile, State Department officials said Secretary of State Rogers was furious when he found out Hoffa had been given a passport validation to travel to North Vietnam — and plans to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The White House made it clear it did not approve of Hoffa's trip either, and even told the North Vietnamese peace negotiators in Paris that Hoffa, if he showed up, would be without official status.

DISPUTE

How the validation was granted in the first place remained in dispute within the administration. But Rogers, through a spokesman, said individuals "ought not to inject themselves into problems with other governments and particularly where the U.S. government is currently engaged in negotiations of its own."

The spokesman, Charles W. Bray, added that if Hoffa were to request another validation he would not get it.

"While we do not reflexively wish to rule out any avenue which would lead to the release of our prisoners of war, we don't want to undercut our own strong preference for intergovernmental negotiations," Bray said.

Other officials said Rogers was particularly upset that Hoffa had been given State Department approval after the Administration's strong criticism of former Attorney General Ramsey Clark's trip to Hanoi.

Rogers was also reported to have felt that it was inappropriate for an ex-convict to be talking to officials in

Hanoi.

ISSUE

Hoffa said he had been invited to Hanoi to discuss the POW issue by representatives of the North Vietnamese trade union movement.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Hoffa's representatives met with presidential adviser Henry Kissinger on July 5 and told him Hoffa wanted to "involve himself in seeking the release of the prisoners of war" by going to Hanoi.

Ziegler said Hoffa had not been encouraged by the administration and that Kissinger told Hoffa's emissaries he did not approve of the trip and that he asked Hoffa to hold off his travel until he met in Paris on July 19 with the chief Communist negotiator, Le Duc Tho.

When Kissinger did meet Tho, Ziegler said, he passed him a written message saying that whatever Hoffa did "was a private matter and did not represent the United States."

Hoffa said in Detroit he was sorry he couldn't go.

"I had confidence that we could have brought one or two or possibly more prisoners home," he said. "Why somebody tried to capitalize on my going to Hanoi, I don't understand. They're the ones who will have to accept responsibility for stopping the meeting."