

Another Trip for Kissinger

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — In a speedup of his secret North Vietnam negotiations, Henry Kissinger is expected to return to Paris next week.

Kissinger flew back here Wednesday night to report to President Nixon.

Today the White House announced that Maj. Gen. Alexander Haig, Kissinger's chief deputy, would leave tonight for Saigon to confer with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu on Kissinger's private peace talks.

While both the White House and the North Vietnamese denied reports that

an agreement had been reached on a cease-fire and a new coalition government in Saigon, Nixon added fuel to speculation that a deal may be in the making by declaring in Los Angeles Wednesday night: 27 SEP

"We have prepared the South Vietnamese so that it is now very clear that they will be able soon to undertake their complete defense without our assistance. We are going to end our involvement. We will end the war."

By the same token, White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler did not deny that diplomatic progress is being made — but only that a final

agreement has already been achieved.

Other officials indicated privately that there has been considerable progress and that the negotiations have been narrowed down to the question of a new balance of political power in Saigon.

They acknowledged, however, that a major sticking point is the status of Thieu, whose ouster is demanded by the North Vietnamese as part of any settlement.

One report from Saigon said the feeling there is that there has been some kind of development but there was no indication whether it is a move forward, whether new

proposals have been made, or whether one side or another has hardened or in some way shifted its stand.

(It is believed that only a handful of U.S. and South Vietnamese officials, including Thieu and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, have any indication — and they are not talking.)

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird reportedly told a group of Texans yesterday that "negotiations with North Vietnam are more serious than they have ever been."

Laird met privately in Fort Worth with families of American soldiers held prisoners or missing in action in Vietnam.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram said it learned from several present at the session that Laird expressed regrets about the rumors that Kissinger's meetings led to a settlement.

"I know how your hopes must go up and down with each story," he was quoted as saying. "Hang on... this is an important time."

In a Fort Worth speech and news conference earlier Thursday, Laird said he had "nothing to report" concerning the speculation.

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