

KISSINGER FLYING TO SOUTH VIETNAM AFTER PARIS TALKS

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Washington Signs Indicate
Cease-Fire Negotiations
Are at Critical Point

SAIGON CHIEFS CONFER

While Progress Is Hinted,
U.S. Aides Are Uncertain
About Thieu's Reaction

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 17—

Henry A. Kissinger was flying tonight from another meeting with the North Vietnamese in Paris to a meeting with the South Vietnamese in Saigon amid strong indications throughout the Government that negotiations for an Indochina cease-fire had reached a critical point.

Almost nothing is being said here about the substance of the negotiations. And no one will speak in public even about their atmosphere.

Several informed officials suggested, however, that there had been considerably more progress between American and North Vietnamese negotiators than had been acknowledged so far. But there was uncertainty here about the reaction of President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam to the negotiations.

Pace in Saigon Accelerates

In Saigon, as in Washington, the pace of high-level meetings was accelerating. President Thieu held a second daylong conference with key aides and Cabinet officers.

Diplomatic reports relayed from Hanoi by third countries suggest some optimism in the North Vietnamese capital. But they also record a continuing emphasis on the problems that remain — including disagreements between the North Vietnamese and their southern allies, the Vietcong.

Some of the patterns of com-

bat in recent days in hamlets close to Saigon have been interpreted as contests for maximum political advantage in case of a military standstill.

Optimism in Laos

And from Laos have come reports of the first promising negotiations in two years between the pro-Communist Pathet Lao and the neutralist Government in Vientiane. The two sides are talking about the "normalization" of their virtual partition of the country. Laotian officials are optimistic in their reports to Washington because the Pathet Lao have dropped a long standing demand that an agreement must include the cessation of American bombing of the Communist supply trails through Laos, from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

Although these signs of motion and progress offer obvious political advantage to President Nixon in his bid for reelection, the White House and other official Government spokesmen have tried to dampen speculation. There has

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been no organized effort—as there often has before—to convey a political or propaganda message. On the contrary, officials who normally deal with reporters are urging them to be cautious with the available evidence.

The White House dealt as blandly as possible with the announcements of M. Kissinger's travels. It issued a statement at 6 A.M. that the President's adviser on national security was in Paris, with four aides and William H. Sullivan, an Indochina expert and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, for a meeting with Xuan Thuy, Hanoi's permanent representative at the peace talks. They had met for four days last week. Also participating in those talks was Le Duc Tho, Hanoi's principal negotiator, who reported in person to his fellow members of the Politburo today.

Ziegler Tells of Trip

At 11:30 A.M., Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, announced that the Kissinger party was ready to fly to Saigon to continue "the regular consultative process" with President Thieu. Mr. Kissinger last visited Saigon in August. His deputy, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., conferred with President Thieu before

joining the Paris talks last week.

Mr. Ziegler said today's brief Paris contact had been planned at the end of last week's four-day session and that President Nixon had ordered the visit to Saigon on the same journey after he heard Mr. Kissinger's

progress report on Friday. No time for his return was disclosed, but State Department officials said the White House party was planning to spend two days in Saigon. It will arrive there Wednesday night, Saigon time (Wednesday morning in New York).

That was the sum total of official comment.

Key Aide Called In

At the same time, however, there was a report that U. Alexis Johnson, the Under Secretary of State for Policial Affairs and Mr. Kissinger's principal emergency planner, had been summoned from important personal business to confer with the President and to supervise the continuing military and political planning here for a possible cease-fire and change in the political structure of South Vietnam.

There were suggestions by Pentagon officials that Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, the new Army Chief of Staff, had been

rushed to Saigon not merely to study the Vietnamization program, as announced, but as Mr. Nixon's personal representative for the delicate round of consultations now under way.

The general enjoys a special confidential relationship with President Thieu, developed in his years as chief of the American military forces in South Vietnam. His testimony, both private and public, would also be vital if Mr. Nixon planned a further reduction in American military activity or total reliance on Saigon's military defenses as part of a settlement.

Military Chiefs in Saigon

Also in Saigon this week will be Adm. Noel A. M. Gayler, the new commander in chief of the Pacific command. The American's stationed in Saigon will be led in the talks by Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and Gen. Frederick C. Weyand, the commander of American forces in Vietnam.

In the Defense Department

here, ranking military officials said a cease-fire throughout Indochina might be attained as part of a larger agreement and they stepped up their planning accordingly. One senior planner said the progress of the Paris talks had not been fully reflected in Administration comments.

Only a handful of officials in the major departments have been given access to the planning here. They have been shuttling to a series of private meetings at the White House.

Pressure on Hanoi

Both American and foreign diplomatic sources hedged their predictions of a breakthrough by pointing out that the South Vietnamese allies of both Hanoi and Washington would have to be brought into the settlement and that both had reason for suspicion and restraint.

The North Vietnamese, under pressure from their principal supplier, the Soviet Union, as well as from American aerial

attacks, have shown increasing flexibility in recent weeks. They have talked informally of a willingness to "live with Thieu," diplomats report, provided the Vietcong were given some share of political power in South Vietnam.

Yesterday, Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann of France had a long meeting with Vo Van Sung, North Vietnam's chief diplomatic representative in Paris.

The French have refused all comment on renewed reports that Mr. Kissinger has asked the Paris Government to be one of several guarantors of a cease-fire. Previously, such reports were denied.

Mr. Thieu has insisted that peace is attainable only after the Communists have been defeated and has denounced the idea of a coalition as a "wicked scheme." And Vietcong representatives have found it difficult to abandon thoughts of victory, as symbolized by the overthrow of Mr. Thieu.