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Thieu Reported Getting

Saigon

With North Vietnamese troops in the outskirts of Saigon and with the recent series of secret peace talks in Paris, President Nguyen Van Thieu has shown signs of increasing nervousness, ranking American and South Vietnamese officials say.

For the second consecutive day yesterday Thieu postponed a meeting requested by American Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and instead held a day-long conference with key aides and cabinet officers, these sources reported.

The meeting in the presidential palace followed eight hours of discussions Monday, between Thieu and his foreign minister, Tran Van Lam; his representative to the Paris peace talks, Pham Dang Lang, and the South Vietnamese ambassador in Washington, Tran Kim Phuong.

"Thieu is getting very uptight," said one knowledgeable official. "He wants to be well prepared before he sees Bunker or General Abrams." General Creighton W. Abrams, the newly appointed Army chief of staff, will arrive in Saigon

today and is expected to see Thieu.

Much of Thieu's time is reported to be taken up in directing the defense of Saigon, which has come under increasing threat in the last 12 days.

As the North Vietnamese have repeatedly cut the highways leading to Saigon from the north, west and south, fresh vegetables and fish have begun to disappear from the capital's market. Yesterday, for example, there was little lettuce, and no crabs, prawns or catfish, all staples in the Vietnamese diet.

Driving outside Saigon has become extremely hazardous. Yesterday morning three South Vietnamese air force pilots were abducted from their car as they were driving to the giant Bien Hoa base, 15 miles from the capital, American officers reported.

Communist saboteurs yesterday morning blew up two small bridges on Route 1 in Hau Nghia province, 25 miles northwest of Saigon, and shelled Cu Chi a district town in Hau Nghia only 15 miles away.

Although the total number of infiltrating Communist

Nervous

troops near the capital is estimated by allied intelligence at only 2000 men, they have occupied hamlets as close as eight miles from the city and are said to have entered other villages within three miles.

To the surprise of many Americans, the South Vietnamese army has responded very slowly to this threat to Saigon. Almost all the fighting has been done by local militiamen, with the Vietnamese command keeping most of its regular troops in reserve.

Lieutenant General Nguyen Van Minh, the cautious

commander of the military region around Saigon, has been widely blamed for the slow response of the South Vietnamese, but knowledgeable American officers say the orders have come directly from the presidential palace.

Following the extended peace talks in Paris last week, Thieu reiterated his long-standing opposition to any coalition government with the Communists, saying, "We have to kill the Communists to the last man before we have peace."

However, usually well-informed American sources

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say, Thieu is confident that President Nixon will be re-elected and that Mr. Nixon will fully back him for four more years.

Thieu's concern, therefore, these sources say, is to prevent the Communists from scoring any spectacular victory around Saigon before November that might force Mr. Nixon to soften his negotiating position in Paris.

Thieu is so confident, one high-level American official said, that he has been making plans to crack down further on his domestic opposition, believing that Mr. Nixon will back him whatever he does. *N.Y. Times Service*