

Rumors on Truce Persist As Capital Awaits Report

Kissinger Is Expected to Brief President on Meetings With Thieu—No Firm Accord to End War Is Indicated

NYTimes By BERNARD GWERTZMAN OCT 24 1972
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23—The capital awaited the return of Henry A. Kissinger from Saigon tonight amid continuing speculation that a Vietnam or all-Indochina cease-fire was near, but with no firm agreement to end the war apparently reached.

It was expected that Mr. Kissinger, the Presidential adviser on national security, would report to Mr. Nixon on his five days of intensive talks with President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam, and probably fly to Paris to continue the negotiations with the North Vietnamese there.

But in this city—as elsewhere—it has become difficult to distinguish between fact and informed speculation. Rumors that start in one capital appear in the press of others as accepted fact.

Hanoi's View Presented

One of the few high officials to speak publicly about the negotiations is Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam. He outlined in an interview with a Newsweek editor last week what his Government

would like to see in a peace package. It includes the following elements:

¶ A cease-fire, as the first step, to be followed by the withdrawal of remaining American forces in South Vietnam, and the release of all prisoners.

¶ Following the American withdrawal, the Saigon Government would enter talks with the Vietcong on the composition of the neutral segment of a three-part administration made up of Vietcong, Saigon and neutral elements. This interim administration would run the country for six months and pave the way for general elections. Presumably, the elections would be nationwide, and choose representatives who would create a new constitution and government.

¶ The future of Mr. Thieu was left unclear. Presumably, he could stay as head of the Saigon part of the three-part leadership, but would probably be forced out of office eventually. The result of this government would be establishment of an

Continued on Page 3, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

independent, neutral government.

Mr. Thieu has on many occasions—and he reportedly repeated it to Mr. Kissinger last week—rejected any sharing of power with the Vietcong. He has, however, apparently expressed willingness to enter into a cease-fire that would be properly policed and that would extend to Laos and Cambodia.

U.S. Position Unclear

The current American position is unclear because of the refusal of the Administration to allow its spokesmen to make any comments on Vietnam in recent weeks.

But in the past, Mr. Nixon has pressed for two points that were included in the Hanoi "package": a cease-fire as the first step, and allowing the South Vietnamese to choose their own government, without a Communist government being "imposed."

Thus, experts on Vietnam in the State Department, while uninformed on the actual negotiations, have speculated that Mr. Kissinger had found the latest Hanoi terms acceptable in many respects, and was sent by Mr. Nixon to Saigon to persuade Mr. Thieu to show more flexibility in his attitude toward a final Vietnam settlement.

What is not known is whether Mr. Kissinger was told to threaten Mr. Thieu with an end to American aid, or any other extreme measure, such as a threat to end American bombing. Those familiar with Mr. Nixon in the Administration said they doubted that he would permit Mr. Thieu to be so humiliated.

Thieu Seen Adamant

Thus, there was a tendency among State Department officials to speculate that Mr. Kissinger was returning to Washington without having obtained Mr. Thieu's agreement to the political elements in the North Vietnamese plan.

The North Vietnamese, meanwhile, have taken advantage of the secrecy imposed by Washington to begin a well-coordinated propaganda campaign to gain popular support in the United States and to bring additional pressure on Mr. Thieu.

Mr. Dong seemed unusually conciliatory in his interview. He said his Government had done everything "humanly possible" to reach a settlement.

The implication of his remarks was that it was up to Washington and Saigon, particularly Saigon, to make concessions.

This point was made more explicit today by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegations in Paris. Both issued statements that said "All depends on Nixon" and that the remarks of Mr. Thieu "makes us doubt that peace is imminent."

It is assumed in Washington that Mr. Nixon must decide how much pressure to apply to Mr. Thieu in Saigon, if in fact, only his opposition is blocking an agreement.

What is not known is whether in private, Mr. Thieu has been more conciliatory in his attitude toward the Vietcong than his spokesmen have been in public. It is also not known whether the North Vietnamese in private have expressed any interest in divorcing the political aspects of a settlement from the military ones.

In other words, would Hanoi, lacking a political accord with Mr. Thieu, be willing to implement a cease-fire with the United States and South Vietnam, allowing the United States to withdraw its forces and retrieve its prisoners, without its being assured of a change in the political alignment in Saigon?



Associated Press
Henry A. Kissinger, Presidential adviser, shaking hands with Nguyen Phu Duc, President Nguyen Van Thieu's special adviser, before leaving Saigon for the U.S. yesterday.