

SFXaminer

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White House Still Claims Progress

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The White House said today "some progress has been made at achieving settlement of the Vietnam conflict," but refused to give any support for the assessment.

Press secretary Ronald Ziegler reported the progress following an hour-long meeting between President Nixon, Secretary of State William Rogers and national security adviser Henry Kissinger, who returned last night from a five day meeting with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Thieu Speech

Ziegler turned back repeated attempts by newsmen to draw out elaboration on his statement. He specifically refused to comment on a speech today by Thieu charging North Vietnamese

proposals for a settlement are ill - disguised attempts to undermine his government. Thieu said no one has the right to impose a peace settlement on South Vietnam.

In an exchange with newsmen, Ziegler at first appeared to say the "some progress" referred only to negotiations with North Vietnam, but later said he was also including discussions with Thieu.

Pledge Cited

Reporters asked why the White House refused to discuss aspects of the negotiations when Thieu and North Vietnamese Premier Than Van Dong had made statements concerning the state of peace efforts.

"We have an agreement with North Vietnam not to

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discuss negotiations," Ziegler responded, "and we are going to stand by that agreement."

He said he would not comment on "any other statement," the same response he gave when asked if Dong's interviews with Western newsmen breached the no - talking agreement.

When Ziegler reported the progress in the Vietnam situation he added, "but I caution you against excessive speculation."

This set off another barrage of questions to the effect that wasn't Ziegler inviting such speculation.

When asked about reports from Saigon that the President has ordered no raids by U.S. B-52 bombers in the North during the current stage of negotiations, Ziegler referred the questioner to the Defense Department. A Pentagon spokesman declined comment on the reports.