

White House Optimistic and Cautious in Describing Results of Kissinger's Talks

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# White House Optimistic Reports Some Progress; Warns on Speculation

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 24 — The White House combined some optimism with a dose of caution today in describing the results so far of Henry A. Kissinger's efforts in Paris and Saigon to achieve a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam war.

Following Mr. Kissinger's report to President Nixon on his latest rounds of talks in South Vietnam, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said, "We are making some progress in the over-all efforts to reach a settlement of the Vietnam conflict." But he also said, "I caution you against excessive speculation."

The effort to avoid undue optimism was due, one informed source said, to the "reality" that no firm agreement had been reached yet either on a cease-fire or on the broader and more difficult problems of Saigon's political future.

Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's adviser on national security, returned to Washington last night after five days of intensive discussions in Saigon with President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam.

### Purpose of Discussions

The main purpose of those talks, Administration sources said, was to explore with Mr. Thieu the latest Hanoi proposals for a negotiated settlement. These include a first-step cease-fire, which would be followed by an American withdrawal, release of prisoners, and creation of an interim coalition government to supervise new elections and establishment of a new government in Saigon.

Mr. Thieu attacked most of those proposals, but held open the possibility of a cease-fire when he addressed his nation at about the same time that Mr. Kissinger was reporting to Mr. Nixon and Secretary of State William P. Rogers this morning.

Mr. Ziegler refused to comment on Mr. Thieu's remarks, and intelligence analysts were studying the speech.

By his rejection of the political aspects of the Hanoi plan, Mr. Thieu clearly made Mr. Kissinger's further negotiations more difficult.

Washington was seeking to avoid any public statements of its own, except for Mr. Ziegler's brief comment. The white house warned the State Department today against allowing its officials to discuss the current negotiations, even in a speculative way.

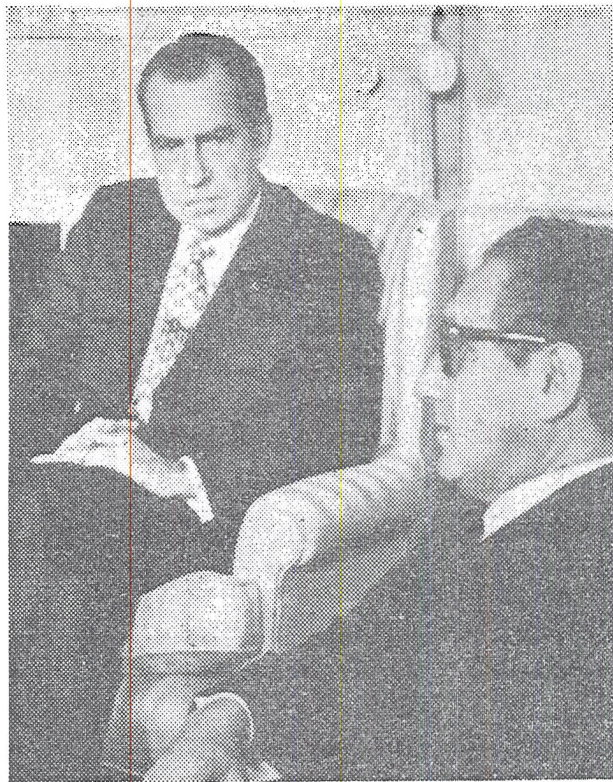
But one Administration source said he was "intrigued" by Mr. Thieu's discussion of a cease-fire. Mr. Thieu said that North Vietnam must withdraw all its forces from South Vietnam and return them to the North once a cease-fire went into effect.

The source speculated that this was a "negotiable" issue, since Hanoi has never acknowledged publicly that it has troops in South Vietnam. "They could just pull them out without saying anything," he said, "and there could be a cease-fire overnight."

Mr. Ziegler refused to define what he meant by "some progress" in describing Mr. Kissinger's talks. Mr. Kissinger used the same words himself last night when he met briefly with newsmen at Andrews Air Force Base after his plane landed. He gave no details either as he got into a car for the drive to the White House where he met for half an hour with Mr. Nixon.

Under strong questioning, Mr. Ziegler declined to discuss any aspect of the Vietnam situation. He also labeled as "preposterous" a newsman's suggestion that the talks were being manipulated for election purposes.

Mr. Kissinger is expected to return to Paris to meet with North Vietnamese officials, and it is likely he will travel to Saigon to talk again with Mr. Thieu. His exact plans were unknown, however. Mr. Ziegler left open the possibility that Mr. Kissinger would meet with newsmen after tomorrow.



Associated Press

DISCUSSING PEACE PLAN: President Nixon with Henry A. Kissinger at the White House. Details, Page 16.

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