

U.S. Is Said To Agree With Hanoi on Framework of a Cease-Fire; Expects Saigon to Accept Soon

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## WASHINGTON VIEW

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## Aides See a Truce in Few Weeks, Maybe by Election Day

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 — American officials now believe that there will be a cease-fire in Indochina in the next few weeks, perhaps even before election day, Nov. 7, barring a supreme act of folly in Saigon or Hanoi.

The negotiations are still described as precarious and President Nguyen Van Thieu did not authorize Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser, to arrange the final details. But the South Vietnamese leader is believed here to have no logical alternative and his public position is thought to be mostly preparation for a final acquiescence.

As now planned here by many agencies of government, the cease-fire will provide for military standstill in South Vietnam, under rival administrations.

**Bombing Would Be Ended**

The major portion of the country and all population centers would be administered by Mr. Thieu and his forces as now deployed. Minor portions of territory and population would be officially recognized as the preserve of the Vietcong, backed by about 145,000 North Vietnamese troops.

The cease-fire would clear the way for an end of all American bombing, the withdrawal of all American troops, including military advisers, and a prisoner exchange.

Various mixed political committees and commissions would then be expected to work out a new political order, leading toward a new constitution and the election of a national legis-

lature, but these arrangements would be designed to reflect the strength of the rival forces. Intense political competition, as well as strenuous "police" actions and guerrilla activities, are expected to continue.

North Vietnam is being pressed by the Nixon Administration to promise to make no further reinforcements of its

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troops in South Vietnam, whose presence there remains unacknowledged. American warplanes would remain in Thailand and on ships in the region to threaten retaliation in case of a massive violation.

The United States and North Vietnam would also work out rules to govern future aid shipments to South Vietnam. No details are available here on this feature, but it is assumed that Washington, Peking and Moscow will stand behind the rules to deprive both parts of Vietnam of a major aggressive capability.

A structure of international supervision of the cease-fire and neutral adjudication of political disputes would be envisioned in the settlement. But Mr. Nixon and his aides are said to be relying basically on what they perceive to be Hanoi's decision to shift the contest for South Vietnam from the military to the political arena.

There are varying estimates in Washington of how quickly all the remaining details could be worked out and how long President Thieu might hold back to delay the cease-fire. He is said to have been slow in preparing his forces for a standstill.

Mr. Kissinger is expected to have at least one more contact with North Vietnam's principal negotiator, Le Duc Tho, in Paris, and perhaps make one more journey to Saigon. But a final accord within two weeks is not ruled out. Officials who expect a delay mention a period of perhaps six weeks.

Mr. Nixon, feeling confident of re-election, is said to be insisting that the election is irrelevant, justifying neither haste nor delay.

No one in a responsible position here is prepared to say that a settlement is assured, but this is the tone of most conversations among officials. They see no issue that would cause Hanoi to freeze up or reverse its acceptance of the basic outline developed by Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Tho.

**Good Chance Seen for Thieu**

In view of Mr. Nixon's belief the the bargain would give President Thieu a good chance of winning political control over much of South Viet-

POWs

nam, they see no way in which the South Vietnamese leader can long delay acceptance.

Mr. Thieu did not hide his disappointment and reluctance from Mr. Kissinger and other high-level visitors from Washington last week. The South Vietnamese leader held out for continued military action to regain the territories and population, estimated at more than one million, over which he lost firm control during the hard fighting this year.

He was also unreconciled to the idea of ceding sovereignty over various portions of South Vietnam to the Vietcong and curtailing his "pacification" efforts in contested regions that are not securely controlled by either side.

**Hanoi Concession Is Seen**

But the word is spreading here that the Americans gave him little comfort. They pointed out that North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam and in border regions of Cambodia—now estimated to number 145,000—had been worn down, battered and depleted in the fighting.

The enemy would be no easier to handle, the Americans argued, after another season of resupply and infiltration from the North.

Hanoi's willingness to let President Thieu administer the territories now under his control was held up to him by the visiting Americans as the critical concession. He could never be assured long-term political success, the Americans argued, no matter how long the fighting continues. President Nixon had promised him a reasonable chance to avoid a Communist takeover, he was reminded, and that chance was now at hand.

How much pressure was implied or overtly threatened in these discussions with Mr. Thieu is not known. It appears to have been made plain that Mr. Nixon will not expend another year of military effort and division within the United States to enhance Saigon's territorial or population control by a few percentage points.

**May Have Threatened Break**

Moreover, the Americans are said to have expressed the view that Hanoi will never end a war to which it has committed so much without at least some hope, no matter how modest, that its southern allies could gradually gain political influence.

Directly or indirectly, therefore, the United States officials visiting Saigon appear to have threatened a public break with Mr. Thieu or a curtailment of aid to him if he resists too long. In either case, he would probably suffer irreparable political damage in his own country from such a breach.

The statement by Premier Pham Van Dong of North Viet-

nam that "Thieu has been overtaken by events" apparently had the intended effect of complicating Washington's dealing with Mr. Thieu.

The Americans are said to have told Mr. Thieu that, far from becoming irrelevant, he stood to inherit the larger slice of power from a settlement.

For internal reasons, as well as for psychological pressure on Saigon, the men in Hanoi are expected to celebrate a "victory" in the impending bargain. President Thieu has been advised to do likewise and to show confidence instead of fear of the American withdrawal.

In his public reaction yesterday to the American pressure, Mr. Thieu said a "serious" cease-fire would be possible only if the North Vietnamese troops were wholly withdrawn. But he acknowledged that a cease-fire without such a withdrawal was "unfortunately" likely to occur and he promised vigorous military action to defend it.

Simultaneously, he ordered the preparation of flags with which to proclaim control in contested areas and passed a decree threatening arrest and execution of "Communists."

The Thieu speech was read here as largely a preparation for the cease-fire, despite its over-all negative tone.

**Cites Vietcong Demands**

Mr. Thieu also cited Vietcong demands that he be deposed and that his followers gain no more than equality in any future political arrangement. American officials say that their package did not involve these conditions and they suspect Mr. Thieu recited them largely to claim a negotiation success when the final settlement is proclaimed.

A divergence in the war aims of the United States and the Thieu government is now openly acknowledged here. Mr. Thieu is said to want total victory over his adversary and unchallenged control over every inch of South Vietnam.

The American objective is described as an end of the fighting on honorable terms—meaning no more than assurance that Hanoi cannot impose a government on Saigon by force and that rival South Vietnamese forces begin the contest for political power in a system that recognizes their proportions of strength and number.

That is all that American officials familiar with the negotiations claim for the impending settlement, but they insist that no more can be expected from the United States. No amount of American military support can enhance the political skill and stature of the Thieu Government, they say, once a fair structure of competition is created and the threat of invasion is blunted.

The contend that if President



Thieu, with a million-man army plus his local police forces intact, with an experienced administration and control of most of the country's population, cannot withstand the challenge of the Vietcong and 145,000 North Vietnamese troops through a period of uneasy cease-fire, then nothing will ever suffice.

#### Deny Deliberate Delay

At the same time, Administration officials are contemptuous of charges by Senator George McGovern and other critics of the war that the settlement now evolving could have been achieved four years ago. Until this summer, after the major North Vietnamese offensive had been repulsed, the Americans say, Hanoi's negotiators had insisted on the virtual destruction of the Thieu Government—a political objective that the North Vietnamese failed to achieve militarily.

The outlines of the new Hanoi position appear to have been offered to Mr. Kissinger at the Paris talks last August, but the course of the negotiations since then has not been revealed here.

#### Further Meetings Expected

Mr. Kissinger met Mr. Tho in Paris on Aug. 15\* and then flew to the first of a series of intense discussions with President Thieu in Saigon. He met Mr. Tho in Paris again on Sept. 15 and Sept. 26 and 27. After a visit by his deputy, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., to Saigon, Mr. Kissinger and General Haig met the North Vietnamese yet again for an unprecedented four days of talks, Oct. 8 to 11. And Mr. Kissinger paid a brief visit to the North Vietnamese in Paris on his way to another meeting with President Thieu, starting last Wednesday.

Further meetings with both groups of Vietnamese are expected, but no time has been set, officials here said. The indications are that these meetings will follow Mr. Thieu's agreement in principle to settle some outstanding details and questions of timing.

The most difficult of the procedural issues is said to be some plan for avoiding bloodshed in disputed areas, when the rival administrations proclaim their control over one area or another in the cease-fire. Whatever the arrangements, a certain amount of fighting and ugly conduct is thought to be unavoidable.

\*Republican National Convention  
scheduled for 21 Aug 72.