

U.S. Aides Call Foe's Military Position Weak

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 25—American officials said today that the Communists had offered significant new concessions in the Vietnam peace negotiations because they were in a badly weakened military position.

This optimistic view of the situation, according to the officials, was passed on to Washington by the United States command in Saigon and by some intelligence analysts. The report is being used by American sources here to explain the United States' willingness to seek a cease-fire now.

Some Vietnamese acquainted with the recent meetings here between Henry A. Kissinger and President Nguyen Van Thieu speculated, however, that the Americans' new optimism might be at least in part politically motivated. They wondered if President Nixon's national security adviser might have been pressing Mr. Thieu to agree to a cease-fire so as to be able to make an announcement before the American Presidential election on Nov. 7.

According to sources close to the talks, a major reason why Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Thieu failed to reach agreement was that the South Vietnamese President did not fully accept the Americans' optimistic assessment of Communist weakness.

'Recognition of Failure'

Assessing the enemy's position, one high-level American intelligence analyst cited recently captured Communist documents that he termed "a recognition of failure" and said:

"I never thought the day would come, but everything the enemy is doing now is designed to push for a cease-fire."

To achieve a cease-fire, the analyst said, Hanoi is now apparently willing to accept President Thieu in a joint administration, has dropped its demand for the three-sided government and will not insist on breaking up South Vietnam's large police force. The analyst said these were "significant new concessions" that made a negotiated settlement of the war much more attractive to the United States.

Behind Hanoi's new willingness to compromise on its long-

standing demands, some American officials assert, lie the loss of more than 130,000 North Vietnamese troops in the Communists' offensive this year, the virtual destruction of the local Vietcong apparatus, and the continuing strength of the South Vietnamese army.

Some Dissent Reported

However, there are said to be dissenters to this view in the United States Embassy who believe it vastly exaggerates the Communists' losses and does not focus sufficiently on their continuing power in the countryside.

In the view of American intelligence analysts, North Vietnam's military offensive this year was designed to bring about a "favorable political settlement through military pressure." Hanoi hoped, the analysts say, that its attacks would force Washington and Saigon to accept a three-way coalition government and to drop Mr. Thieu.

This over-all strategy for 1972 was outlined in an article in the April edition of Tienphong, a magazine for Vietcong party activists, which said:

"This time the general offensive is designed to basically defeat the enemy's Vietnamization plan, drastically change the situation on the battlefield and force the enemy to acknowledge his defeat and accept a political settlement on our people's terms.

"Thus we will have attained the objectives of a decisive victory," the unknown author wrote."

Further Effort Urged

The political settlement Hanoi had in mind was described as "a transitional government at the upper level while we seize control at the lower level." Moreover, the Vietcong activists were told that a cease-fire would not mean the end of violence.

"Even if a political settlement is reached," the article said, "every effort should be made to step up the three punches." This was a reference to attacks in the cities, villages and jungle areas. Since "the victories gained during this twilight period are of the utmost importance," the author concluded, "one day's effort is equal to that of 20 years."

But, American analysts say, Hanoi soon began to realize

that its big offensive was not achieving the desired results as the South Vietnamese Army did not collapse and most villagers fled rather than stay and come under control of the Communist invaders.

"Their calendar began to slip all over the place," said one American official who has studied a series of documents that the Communists issued analyzing their campaign month by month.

No Victory Threat Seen

In the optimistic view of such American intelligence analysts, the local Vietcong political and military organization was a very minor threat before the offensive this year and is even less of a threat now. "The Vietcong will not be a real danger under a cease-fire," one analyst added.

Officials who take this op-

timistic view often point out that despite Communist orders for attacks on Saigon this fall, there was a total of only three minor terrorist incidents all last month, fewer than for September last year. These officials believe that the recent series of small-scale Communist attacks on villages around Saigon in Binhduong Province showed only that the North Vietnamese and Vietcong were unable to do anything more sensational.

There is some disagreement with this rosy interpretation. One American who works in the countryside, for example, said recently: "After all these years, Washington still doesn't have any idea what revolutionary war in Asia is all about."

"They just don't realize back there that a cease-fire can not work in Vietnam," he added.