

N. Viet Medical Junket Put Off

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WASHINGTON — Sen. Edward M. Kennedy has lost his

first skirmish with President Nixon on the next peace-making moves in Vietnam.

The administration has forced postponement of a visit to North Vietnam by an American medical group under the auspices of Kennedy's senate judiciary subcommittee on refugees. The five doctors and staff members were to have departed yesterday.

Last Saturday and Sunday, Secretary of State William P. Rogers reportedly was on the telephone with Kennedy, arguing against the timing of the visit as harmful to the sensitive negotiations now in their final stages with Hanoi.

Up until Saturday, Kennedy was resisting the Rogers arguments against the timing. His position was that the administration had not offered "credible reasons" for postponing the fact-finding mission.

On Sunday and Monday, Kennedy agreed to continue discussion. It is believed the

administration subtly suggested that if Kennedy persisted in the proposed timing, Sen. James Eastland — powerful chairman of the parent Senate Judiciary Committee — would veto the mission.

Eastland, a strong ally of Nixon on Vietnam, had a "discussion" with Kennedy about the trip in the last few days, according to the senator's aides. Eastland already had signed the covering letter sent to the State Department, necessary to release congressional funds to pay for the trip, but that letter left open the exact date of the mission.

The Hanoi invitation had been extended to Kennedy, through private channels, by North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh on Aug. 22. To avoid any show of politics on the humanitarian issue before the presidential election yesterday, Kennedy planned to send the doctors today.

The aim of the mission, according to a key Kennedy

aide, Dale S. de Haan, was to identify both short-term and long-term needs in the reconstruction of Indochina, as well as to gather information on American prisoners of war. Members of the mission were to visit Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam, as well as the north.

De Haan insisted that, while Kennedy will do nothing to injure the national interests in the search for a Vietnam peace settlement, he will not postpone the proposed mission indefinitely. It will be the first time that a mission representing the Congress is to visit North Vietnam.

Because of time schedules in getting to Hanoi, the group must leave here on a Wednesday to make plane connections in Copenhagen, Denmark, for Bangkok, then on to Vietienne, Laos, for the weekly Soviet Aeroflot flight from there to Hanoi. De Haan insisted the mission will go in the next few weeks, perhaps as early as next Wednesday.

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