

A Nixon Plea to Thieu Reported

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Washington

President Nixon has sent a personal letter to South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu urging him to accept a cease-fire plan as soon as possible, well-placed administration officials said yesterday.

These officials said the sealed message was carried by General Alexander M. Haig Jr., the President's deputy adviser for national security.

Haig left Washington for Saigon Wednesday to deliver the plea and to conduct last-minute negotiations.

RETURN

Haig is due back this weekend. Officials say that

if his mission is successful — and administration aides throughout Washington express optimism — Henry A. Kissinger could be in position to conduct a final series of negotiations on a cease-fire package with North Vietnamese representatives in Paris late next week.

Diplomatic and military sources, meanwhile, reported that progress was being made in setting up a 5000-man truce supervisory force. It is expected to consist of 1250 men each from Canada, Indonesia, Poland and Hungary.

At a press conference two weeks ago, Kissinger said it was hoped this supervisory force could be placed on the ground "at the same time that the cease-fire was promulgated."

DELAY

Yesterday, officials said that might not be possible, both because the Hungarians and Poles were not moving as fast as Washington had hoped, and because the Indonesians and Canadians had to work out arrangements on what vehicles and other equipment they could provide and what must be provided for them.

But arrangements are being discussed to have an interim truce force made up of representatives of the U.S., South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong supervise the standstill

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cease-fire for up to 60 days while the international truce team is assembled.

Officials would not discuss the contents of the President's letter to Thieu. But they said that Haig would certainly point out, among other things, that in the past two weeks the U.S. had rushed hundreds of jet fighters, transports, helicopters, artillery and tanks to South Vietnam to improve the South Vietnamese government's ability to defend itself against the roughly 145,000 North Vietnamese troops on its soil.

ARGUMENT

Haig was also expected to argue that a partial demobilization of Saigon's million-man army, along with a proportionate withdrawal of the North Vietnamese army, would not place the Saigon government in jeopardy.

As one senior American official said of the North Vietnamese:

"We don't think they'll really take any major actions during the 60 days while we are pulling out our troops. After the President's landslide victory, they must realize his hand is strengthened. They won't want to do anything to stop or reverse our disengagement."

PLANES

In a related development, administration sources said that the U.S. had flown at least one squadron of American-manned F-4 fighter-bombers to Taiwan to help fill the gap caused by the Chinese Nationalist shipment of 30 to 40 F-5A fighters to South Vietnam.

And the U.S. will soon turn over to the South Korean air force another squadron of F-4s for the same reason, the sources added. South Korea already has a squadron of F-4s and thus has the pilots and maintenance personnel to handle the craft. Taiwan does not.

Over the long run, officials say the U.S. would hope to provide new F-5E aircraft, an advanced version of the F-5A, to South Korea, Taiwan and Iran, which together shipped 116 F-5As to South Vietnam in recent days.