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Thieu Still Reported Balking

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Saigon

White House aide General Alexander M. Haig conferred with President Nguyen Van Thieu for nearly two hours yesterday amid indications that South Vietnam still has major objections to the peace settlement worked out by Hanoi and Washington.

Tin Song, the quasi official newspaper that often reflects the views of the presidential palace, said last night that Haig had been told that any peace agreement that does not provide for the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam "would be considered as of no validity."

Haig, deputy to Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security affairs adviser, arrived in Saigon from Washington yesterday morning, reportedly to get Thieu's agreement to new joint U.S.-South Vietnamese terms for a peace settlement. The nine-point settlement worked out by the United States and North Vietnam does not call for North Vietnamese withdrawal and had previously been denounced by Thieu as "surrender."

BLUSTER

But despite Tin Song's tough language, which was echoed by a broadcast on the official Saigon radio, American officials were reliably reported to be "optimistic" that Haig would soon overcome Thieu's

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objections. Some American officials were said to feel that Thieu's demands were more bluster than substance.

"The iceberg is marching on its way," one well-placed U.S. official remarked about the peace negotiations, "and all this talk here in Saigon is not going to stop anything."

The United States Embassy was also reported to be less tense than when Kissinger spent five days here two weeks ago talking with Thieu.

Both American and South Vietnamese officials are reported to feel that Haig's mission is more an effort to inform Thieu of the new American peace terms than an attempt at complex negotiations such as when Kissinger was here.

STAY

Haig is expected to leave Saigon tonight or tomorrow, and there are no plans, informed U.S. sources say, for him to prolong his stay.

In reporting yesterday's session at the presidential palace, Tin Song stressed that South Vietnam will not abide by a cease-fire unless Thieu signs it.

"No one can represent South Vietnam in signing any future peace agreements," the newspaper said Thieu had told Haig.

In what some observers here took to be a possible reference to the new terms that Haig had brought with him, Tin Song added that "any token of symbolic withdrawal, such as of 14,000 North Vietnamese from the

Quang Tri area" in the northern part of South Vietnam, would be unacceptable.

TOKEN

The Saigon radio also referred to this possible token withdrawal of some North Vietnamese. "If the North Vietnamese Communists agree to make only a show of troop withdrawals, such as in this case," the radio broadcast said, "no cease-fire agreement whatsoever will be signed or approved and respected by the people and the army of the Republic of Vietnam."

In addition, Tin Song insisted that any peace settlement must include the reestablishment of the demilitarized zone as the boundary between North and South Vietnam as it was in the 1954 Geneva Accords. This has been one of Thieu's repeated demands in his recent speeches on radio and in public.

Yesterday's article in Tin Song did not make any reference to Thieu's other objection to the proposed nine-point peace agreement — that it would impose a three-part coalition government on South Vietnam.