

Saigon Fears U.S. Plans to Just Get Out

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(Star-News-Staff Writer)

SAIGON — Ages ago, at the height of the American involvement here, there was the somewhat sardonic idea around Washington that the way to get out of Vietnam was to declare victory and go home.

Now there is a growing suspicion in Saigon that President Nixon intends to declare peace and get out, and never mind if the killing goes on in little battles instead of big.

Even those who are optimistic about a cease-fire being achieved soon are pessimistic about its being properly observed and the war really ending.

It is this kind of doubt which made President Nguyen Van Thieu reluctant to accept the type of cease-fire now being offered. He sees it as a step to another phase of war which he would have to fight without much American support.

Pointers Noted

Reports from U.S. military sources of preparations to withdraw American forces quite soon point toward Nixon's finding some way out. So does Nixon's statement that "you can bank on . . . a settlement."

But the question worrying some Vietnamese officials is whether this will be a settlement for the Vietnamese themselves or just for the Americans.

The stalemate of firmly reiterated public positions by Saigon and Hanoi still appeared to be tight after a weekend spate of peace rumors.

A "high-ranking officer of the (South Vietnamese) National Security Council" was quoted by the newspaper Tin Song as denying the rumors. Tin Song is regarded as a semi-official voice of Thieu's Palace.

'Out of Question'

Reports that "an agreement concerning Vietnam is going to be signed in the very near future are completely out of the question," Tin Song quoted the officer as saying, "because discussions between the (South) Vietnamese and the Americans have not yet reached any conclusion."

The unidentified official added that the viewpoints of North and South Vietnam remain completely different.

Tin Song then reiterated the main demands of no three-part-

"administrative structure" including Communists to supervise the Saigon government during a cease-fire and complete withdrawal of 300,000 northern troops.

Thieu's presidential palace was a trifle angry in denouncing the most spectacular report as "completely groundless."

Published Saturday by the Paris newspaper France Soir, it said Thieu had been blackmailed by a threatened cutoff of U.S. aid into accepting the draft peace agreement and would sign it by next Monday.

Directly Opposite

The report had been directly opposite to the hard line being put out by senior officials here.

This line was still being repeated by the South Vietnamese after Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. left here yesterday.

This pointed to his apparent failure to get Thieu to drop his refusal to accept the plan which Haig's boss, Henry A. Kissinger, had worked out in Paris a month ago with Le Duc Tho, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator.

But the U.S. Embassy claimed Haig's talks with Thieu had been "cordial and constructive," suggesting that something else was up aside from simply getting Thieu to buy the plan.

United Press International quoted American sources as saying Thieu gave Haig the go-ahead for Nixon to make a separate peace with Hanoi, if it did not commit South Vietnam to anything.

Termed Inaccurate

The embassy termed this "inaccurate" and said there were no informed sources other than Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, who is not talking.

Rather curiously, however, the palace spokesman who denounced the France Soir report had only a terse "no comment" on the separate peace report.

Radio Saigon was somewhat pointedly recalling that Thieu had said in his Nov. 1 speech that the United States could go ahead and settle with Hanoi any way it wanted, so long as it did not commit South Vietnam. Thieu added that Saigon was ready to talk to Hanoi itself, and to talk separately with the Viet Cong.

The Communists in Paris have rejected such an arrangement.