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Red Pullout SF Examiner

SAIGON — (CDN) — South Vietnam will agree to a gradual, rather than an immediate, withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops if Hanoi's peace negotiators agree in writing to an eventual total pullout, South Vietnam Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam said today.

This represents a major change in the Saigon government's terms for a Vietnam peace settlement and could get the apparently stalemated talks moving again.

It also could break the deadlock between the United States and South Vietnam over the pending draft peace agreement.

Western diplomatic sources said the question of North Vietnamese troop withdrawals had been the major stumbling block between the two allies.

Withdrawal Proposal

However, there was no indication whether the United States agreed to the South Vietnamese plan. Lam said only, "We know that Dr.

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Kissinger intends to propose to the North Vietnamese that they withdraw more troops."

There were reliable reports that South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu's private secretary and confidant, Hoang Duc Nha, would leave for Paris this week in an effort to represent his country in the secret talks, which so far have been exclusively between the United States and North Vietnam.

Lam said Kissinger would try to persuade the North Vietnamese to allow the South Vietnamese to participate.

Plan Explained

Explaining the gradual withdrawal plan, Lam said a specific number of Communist troops would initially return to North Vietnam while the rest would move into regrouping areas and withdraw under international supervision.

The number of Communist troops in South Vietnam is a matter of controversy between the Allies. U.S. intelligence estimates put the number at between 150,000 and 180,000, including the Viet Cong. South Vietnam contends that there are about twice as many.