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Hanoi Delays Kennedy Panel Mission

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Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's Subcommittee on Refugees said yesterday that Hanoi has asked them to postpone a scheduled visit of five American doctors to North Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese gave no reason for the postponement other than to say they were "too busy," but a Refugee Subcommittee source said: "The fate of the doctors' travel has always been gauged to what has been happening in regard to the cease-fire negotiations.

"The whole trip was geared to a settlement," the source said. "We were led to believe by all sources that a cease-fire was imminent, but it hasn't happened."

A team of doctors under the auspices of Kennedy's Judici-

ary subcommittee had been scheduled to leave New York this Wednesday, for Hanoi. Last Friday, however, North Vietnamese representatives asked for a postponement.

Kennedy subcommittee sources said that the trip will be rescheduled, hopefully early next year, but no date has been set.

The trip was originally planned following an invitation last August from North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duc Trinh inviting Kennedy to send a team of "physicians and doctors" to North Vietnam. The invitation followed several years of correspondence between Kennedy and the North Vietnamese concerning prisoners of war and, more recently, war damage in North Vietnam.

The trip was to be a "study mission" concerned with "immediate relief needs and long-term rehabilitation," according to the Kennedy subcommittee.

The Doctors and Dale DeHaan, a Refugee Subcommit-

tee counsel, had originally planned to leave right after the election but the State Department said that it was inadvisable to leave at that time.

A compromise was worked out with the State Department, according to Kennedy sources whereby the group would visit Hanoi the first week of December instead, but this time Hanoi postponed the trip.

Besides studying health problems in North Vietnam, the Kennedy study mission had also hoped to visit prison-

ers of war and get an updated list of prisoners being held in the north.

The Kennedy subcommittee had told the North Vietnamese that they were interested in U.S. prisoners in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos as well. Although the North Vietnamese did not mention Cambodia and Laos in their reply, they did say they would "facilitate" efforts to get a list of U.S. prisoners being held in South Vietnam by the Vietcong, a subcommittee source said.