

Nixon Meets Thieu Aide in 'Frank' Talks

By Marilyn Berger
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President Nixon held a lengthy and "frank" meeting yesterday with South Vietnamese President Thieu's special emissary to discuss the details of the negotiations to establish a cease-fire in Indochina.

The meeting with Thieu's foreign policy adviser Nguyen Phu Duc lasted a half-hour beyond the scheduled

two hours. It was later described by White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler as "frank, detailed . . . and marked by the spirit that should exist between two allies." When a reporter asked whether the meeting was "friendly," Ziegler repeated that it was "frank" and "detailed." "I wouldn't say it was unfriendly."

Also present at the meeting were Mr. Nixon's national security adviser, Harry A. Kissinger, who has conducted the talks in Paris with Hanoi's senior negotiator, Le Duc Tho, and Kissinger's deputy, Gen. Alexander M. Haig. Duc was accompanied by the South Vietnamese ambassador to the United States, Tran Kim Phuong.

When Mr. Nixon left the meeting to keep another appointment with black appointees of his administration, Duc and Kissinger continued their discussions in the evening. Duc was also scheduled to see Secretary of State William P. Rogers today but the State Department declined to announce this meeting although officials had earlier said it would take place.

Ziegler declined to give any details of the discussions that took place in Mr. Nixon's Oval Office and refused to confirm reports that Duc transmitted a message from Thieu requesting a meeting of the two presidents. But the press secretary stood on his statement made earlier in the day that there is no meeting planned at this time.

This was a theme Ziegler had reiterated several times in his morning session with reporters at Camp David. "There is no plan at this time," he said, "for President Nixon and President Thieu to meet. I can't be more direct than that."

See TALKS, A16, Col. 1

TALKS, From A1

There were reports from Saigon that Thieu was seeking a meeting with Mr. Nixon to discuss the differences that presumably persist between Saigon and Washington on the terms of an agreement. The main problem apparently concerns the continued presence of North Vietnamese troops in the South, a presence that is legitimized in the agreement made public on Oct. 26. Kissinger sought to harden up the tacit understanding he had achieved with Hanoi on the withdrawal of some forces, but has apparently not yet found a formula Saigon can willingly accept.

Other problems are thought to include the role of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, which Thieu has called a "disguised coalition" but which authoritative administration officials say is nothing but a powerless administrative structure to organize elections.

The length of the meeting yesterday left little doubt that Saigon and Washington continue to maintain their differing interpretations of the agreement. But the attitude among administration officials throughout the week has been optimistic that a settlement can be reached soon, indicating that the United States would not permit the differ-

ences to prevent an agreement.

An unattributed commentary on Saigon's government-controlled radio yesterday stated that Kissinger "had to resume the secret talks because of the strong opposition of the Republic of Vietnam. Thus, people can clearly see that it is because of the RVN [Republic of Vietnam] stand that our country cannot be lost, that Dr. Kissinger's prediction [that peace was at hand] cannot become a reality."

But the commentary went on to say that the Communists "cannot prolong the war indefinitely" and have had to resort to political means because "they have been seriously mauled on the battlefield." This theme has also been pressed by U.S. officials as proof that Saigon can defend itself following an agreement on a cease-fire.

Mr. Nixon arrived at the White House by helicopter from Camp David 15 minutes before the meeting with Duc was scheduled to begin at 3 p.m. Chatting with Duc before the meeting formally began, the President asked whether they had met before. Duc leaned over and whispered that they had indeed, at Midway, when Mr. Nixon met with Thieu and announced the first cut of 25,000 troops from Vietnam. The President shook his head and said: "It's such a

long time." The Midway meeting took place June 8, 1969. The two met again in Saigon on July 30 of that year.

Kissinger, who held a thick loose-leaf notebook in his lap that appeared to be the record of the negotiations, recalled that he and Duc were

in Paris at the same time for 1½ days last week and had met twice. Ziegler later stressed that the meeting yesterday was part of the continuing process of consultation that had been carried on during the entire course of the negotiations.