

NOV 30 1972

Nixon, Saigon

Envoy Hold a Long Session

SFChronicle

Associated Press

Washington

President Nixon held a long meeting yesterday with special South Vietnamese envoy Nguyen Phu Duc to review the Indochina peace efforts.

White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler said the 2½-hour meeting was a frank, detailed exchange of views, but he refused to discuss any of the substance of the talk.

The meeting was held against a background of persistent reports that South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu wants a face-to-face meeting with Mr. Nixon before the U.S. concludes any cease-fire agreement with the North Vietnamese.

DATE

Before the meeting, some diplomatic sources said Duc would propose in his talk with the President that such a session be held in December.

Ziegler, who was not at the meeting said he had no personal knowledge that Duc had proposed a Nixon-Thieu session. He repeated an earlier statement that "no meeting is planned at this time."

But he added "obviously I cannot . . . rule out a meeting between President Nixon and President Thieu sometime in the near future."

MEETINGS

Ziegler told reporters earlier in the day that the two previous meetings between Mr. Nixon and Thieu had been useful. They met twice in 1969 — on June 8 at Midway Island and on July 30 in Saigon.

Also attending yesterday's

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meeting were presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger and Kissinger's deputy, General Alexander M. Haig.

Duc was accompanied by South Vietnamese Ambassador Tran Kim Phuong. The two Vietnamese officials continued to talk with Kissinger after the session with the President.

Ziegler said Mr. Nixon will hold no further talks with Duc.

PROBLEM

The main problem holding up a final peace settlement is thought to be the continuing presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam.

Saigon has demanded a written pledge by Hanoi to withdraw all its forces from the South. However, North Vietnam never has acknowledged it has troops below the demilitarized zone and this has led to a refusal to make any direct mention of the manpower situation in the prospective settlement.

U.S. sources say, however, that Hanoi has indicated it may accept a tacit accord at least to reduce its forces, estimated at about 145,000 men.

Second meeting following day (SFEx 30 Nov)