

Aide Is Convinced Thieu Will Sign Cease-Fire Pact

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By SYLVAN FOX DEC 5 1972
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 4—A Vietnamese source close to President Nguyen Van Thieu said today that he was convinced Mr. Thieu would sign the cease-fire agreement that is expected to emerge from this week's meetings between Henry A. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho.

The comment was the strongest yet on what Mr. Thieu would do in the event that a cease-fire accord was reached in Paris. It came as Senator Charles H. Percy, Republican of Illinois, told South Vietnam's Foreign Minister that Saigon could not count on continued American support if his Government rejected the current peace effort.

Senator Percy said in an interview that he told Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam the

American people were solidly behind the current peace initiative and there would be "no support for South Vietnam if this chance, on the terms laid down by President Nixon, was missed for having a swift end to the war."

There has been speculation in Saigon and elsewhere that Mr. Thieu might refuse to sign a Washington-Hanoi cease-fire agreement and decide to go it alone.

But the South Vietnamese source, reflecting the growing pressure on Mr. Thieu, dismissed that possibility and said he believed the South Vietnamese President would sign the agreement despite his vehement de-

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nunciations of some of its elements.

"Thieu is a realist," the source said. "He will sign ultimately. He does not want a break with Washington."

The source maintained that the South Vietnamese President realized that to reject the cease-fire agreement could lead to a break with the United States or possibly an end of American support for South Vietnam.

Mr. Thieu's primary objection to the cease-fire terms, as they are currently understood, is that they do not provide explicitly for the removal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. The Saigon Government estimates that there are 300,000 North Vietnamese troops in the South. According to American estimates, the number is more like 145,000. North Vietnam has always refused to concede publicly that they are here.

Mr. Thieu also has sought to guarantee the re-establishment of the demilitarized zone between North Vietnam and South Vietnam and has demanded assurances that a three-faction National Council of Reconciliation and Concord to be established under the cease-fire agreement would not function as a coalition government.

In discussing Mr. Thieu's plans, the source provided some new details about the evolution of the proposed cease-fire agreement.

He confirmed what has been widely understood—that the turning point in the negotiations came when Hanoi dropped two key demands: that Mr. Thieu be removed and that a coalition government including the Communists be established in Saigon.

Early in October, the source said, the North Vietnamese negotiator, Le Duc Tho, gave Mr. Kissinger a 15-page draft of a cease-fire agreement.

Although numerous clarifying appendices have been added to this document, it remains without substantial alteration as the basic formulation of the cease fire agreement under discussion in Paris, the source said.

The fact that the document was prepared by the North Vietnamese has added to Mr. Thieu's wariness.

While this source expressed confidence that Mr. Thieu would ultimately sign the agreement, other sources reported that the President might adopt what one called "a middle way"—neither accepting nor rejecting the plan formally. According to these reports, Mr. Thieu would agree to sign not the document itself but a separate declaration of agreement "in principle" with the terms of the cease-fire accord.

These sources believe that if Mr. Thieu pursues such a course, the National Liberation Front might adopt the same approach. Thus Washington and Hanoi would sign the cease-fire agreement while Saigon and the Vietcong signed an agreement in principle with it.

Before signing anything, however, Mr. Thieu is expected to appear before the National Assembly to explain his position fully and to seek legislative approval of his plans.

Today Mr. Thieu met for several hours with his National Security Council to hear a report from Nguyen Phu Duc, the Saigon envoy who met with President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger in Washington last week.

Still a lively source of conjecture in Saigon is the precise date of the signing of the agreement. Dec. 15 has been mentioned frequently, but to-

day spokesmen for Mr. Thieu called that date "ridiculous and misleading" and dismissed it as "pure speculation."

This afternoon, the semi-official newspaper Tin Song denounced articles that appeared in The New York Times and Le Monde quoting South Vietnamese sources on an agreement around Dec. 15. In an eight-column headline across the top of page 1, Tin Song said, "The New York Times and Le Monde deduced ridiculously the results of the negotiations—the news that there would be a cease-fire on Dec. 15 is only an invented story."

The accompanying article said "highly placed sources of the . . . Government stressed that no cease-fire will be able to take place around Dec. 15." The article said The Times and Le Monde were trying to "create a falsely optimistic atmosphere."

The source who predicted that Mr. Thieu would sign the cease-fire agreement said one possible date for the signing was Dec. 19. On that date in 1946 the Vietminh launched the war of independence against French colonial rule. This date is favored by the Communists but it is likely to be opposed by the South Vietnamese, according to some South Vietnamese sources.

Senator Percy, who is a member of the Foreign Relations and Appropriations Committees, met with Foreign Minister Lam during a brief visit to Saigon

that began last night and will end tomorrow morning.

The Senator said he told Mr. Lam that 99 per cent of the American people favored ending the war and that "Congress stands fully behind the current peace initiative."

Referring to the South Vietnamese, Mr. Percy said, "It is very important for this Government to recognize that there is no division among the American people."

Meanwhile, the Saigon Government announced that a spontaneous anti-Communist demonstration would be held tomorrow in the Mekong delta south of Saigon. Correspondents were invited to Cantho today for a briefing and an overnight stay before attending the demonstration.

"The people organized it all by themselves," a Government spokesman said.