

Hanoi 'Face Saver'

Eases Viet Talk Jam

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WASHINGTON — The United States appears to have broken the logjam in Paris by submitting new language to North Vietnam that enables Hanoi to "save face" while withdrawing a "substantial" number of its troops from South Vietnam, Administration officials disclosed today.

They added that the new language was initially well received by North Vietnamese negotiators and privately predicted that "final agreement" could be reached by early next week.

The officials also disclosed

that both sides are aiming for a Dec. 15 deadline for a cease-fire and said that this would mean at least a number of American POWs would be released before Christmas. One high-ranking policymaker said this is "very possible."

Hopeful Reports

(Reports from Saigon were similarly hopeful about release of POWs during the holidays but were not so certain about a final cease-fire agreement this month. "We are trying to forget the optimism of the last several weeks," one American source said.)

The only note of caution in generally optimistic assessments by several officials here was that the Paris breakthrough still had to be approved by North Vietnam's Politburo.

Le Duc Tho, Hanoi's chief negotiator, is expected to return home later this week to seek final approval.

If the agreement is indeed in its reported "final stages," a joint announcement of a peace pact probably will be made by President Nixon and North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, the sources said.

Satisfaction Predicted

They predicted that South Vietnam would be "satisfied" with the provision providing for North Vietnamese withdrawal even though the precise commitment may not be made public in the joint statement.

The officials said that if the Saigon government announces its willingness to initial the agreement, then it "can be concluded" that its demands have been "fairly met."

This does not mean, they explained, that Hanoi publicly pledge to withdraw any of its 145,000 troops (by U.S. estimates) in the south but that language will exist to prevent other specific parts of the agreement from taking effect until Hanoi tacitly complies.

This language, like the 1968 "understanding" that provided for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam, may not be made public for months after the pact is reached.

The aim of U.S. negotiators in recent days, the sources said, has been to come up with a formula that will "gracefully" allow North Vietnam the time to remove its troops without having to acknowledge it is doing so.