

# Delegates in Paris at Odds Over Lack of Final Accord

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U.S. Disavows Thieu Plan

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 —

The White House formally dissociated itself today from the cease-fire proposal made two days ago by President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam and said it would support only the plan that Henry A. Kissinger has been negotiating with the North Vietnamese in Paris.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, disavowed American support for the Thieu plan after a two-hour meeting this morning at the White House between President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger.

Mr. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security, returned from Paris last night without concluding an agreement acceptable to both Hanoi and Saigon. He met again with the President in the afternoon.

The White House again refused to discuss details of the talks in Paris between Mr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, the chief Hanoi negotiator.

Mr. Ziegler said that Gen.

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Alexander M. Haig Jr., who is Mr. Kissinger's deputy, participated in the meeting with Mr. Nixon this morning, and then added, "I have no report to give you on the discussion they had."

About 200 newsmen — more than the usual number — were present for Mr. Ziegler's regular morning news conference, in the vain hope that Mr. Kissinger might make one of his infrequent appearances to provide some information on how the negotiations had gone. Mr. Ziegler said Mr. Kissinger might meet with newsmen later.

The White House has not denied published reports that the talks have become bogged down over Saigon's demand — rejected by Hanoi — that North Vietnam either withdraw all its forces from South Vietnam or at least admit that their presence is "illegal" by recognizing Saigon's sovereignty over all the territory in South Vietnam.

This has led many newsmen and officials to the conclusion that Mr. Nixon faces a crucial decision on how to handle the next phase of the negotiations: Does he continue to support Mr. Thieu's position, or does he accept the package worked out

with Hanoi earlier and try to force it on Saigon? Or does he make still another effort to reach a compromise between Hanoi and Saigon?

The "no comment" policy adopted by the Administration has created an air of uncertainty in Washington, in contrast to the optimism before the latest round of talks began on Dec. 4.

Officials who were talking freely until recently about a settlement by Christmas have apparently decided to await a signal from Mr. Kissinger or from other ranking spokesmen before commenting. One official suggested that both sides made unacceptable demands in the last rounds in Paris, but he refused to be pinned down on details.

Today Mr. Ziegler was bombarded with dozens of questions about the negotiations, the President's mood, the chances for a settlement, and other issues that have bearing on the situation. He refused to comment on any of these questions.

The only subject that elicited a response was the American attitude toward Mr. Thieu's cease-fire proposals, made in a speech in Saigon two days ago. Mr. Thieu had proposed an indefinite truce beginning on

Christmas and an exchange of prisoners, to precede direct talks between Saigon and Hanoi.

These proposals, clearly aimed at showing Saigon's dislike for the talks between Washington and Hanoi, were privately scoffed at by United States officials on Tuesday, but the Administration, had refused to make any public comment about them until today.

Circumstances beyond the White House's control forced the Administration to disassociate itself from the Thieu plan.

In Paris, at the regular, formal, four-sided Paris talks, Heyward Isham, the United States representative, urged Hanoi to examine Saigon's latest proposals "objectively" and "to engage in serious discussion of them" instead of merely rejecting them out of hand.

The Associated Press, in its initial report on the Paris session, interpreted Mr. Isham's remarks as support for Mr. Thieu's cease-fire proposal and circulated a dispatch that began, "The United States today threw its support behind the Christmas package proposed by South Vietnamese President, Nguyen Van Thieu." \*

This report created concern at the White House, where officials feared that Hanoi would

interpret it as a sharp change in American policy. This led Mr. Ziegler, in answer to a query, to say that "we have a proposal now being negotiated on a cease-fire, and we support no other position on a cease-fire."

## Report 'Out of Context'

Mr. Ziegler said the news agency report was "taken out of context." In answer to further questions he repeated that "we support no other position on a cease-fire" than that being negotiated in Paris. He noted that the outline of the cease-fire was included in the draft agreement made public by Hanoi on Oct. 26.

This cease-fire calls for a halt to all fighting in both North and South Vietnam and a withdrawal of American forces from South Vietnam within 60 days of the cease-fire. American prisoners would be released in concert with the withdrawal of the remaining forces.

Still under discussion in Paris are the demands of Saigon for the withdrawal of North Vietnam's forces and Hanoi's apparent desire to get assurances on the release of political prisoners in Saigon's prisons. The Paris talks have also discussed international supervision of the cease-fire and similar truces in Laos and Cambodia.