

Haig Heads to Saigon To Discuss Impasse

Envoy to See S.E. Asia Chiefs

From News Dispatches

President Nixon sent a top emissary to Southeast Asia yesterday to brief South Vietnamese President Thieu and other Indochinese leaders on the deadlocked peace talks.

The White House said Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., peace negotiator Henry A. Kissinger's deputy, was leaving for Saigon on a four-day mission to bring allies up to date on the stalled Paris negotiations.

Haig, accompanied by a contingent of diplomatic and military advisers, planned to start with a round of consultations with Thieu, U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and Gen. Frederick Weyand, the U.S. military commander in South Vietnam.

Haig is also scheduled to confer with marshal Lon Nol in Cambodia; Premier Souvanna Phouma in Laos and Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn in Thailand.

Presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Haig would return to Washington on or about Thursday. 2/ DEC

Kissinger, following his briefing of newsmen on the negotiations on Saturday, said late Saturday night that chances of a peace settlement by Christmas have faded. But he insisted that a cease-fire agreement could be wrapped up quickly if North Vietnam would make the "one decision" to settle the one or two remaining issues that have blocked progress.

[Reuter reported from Peking that the North Vietnamese are telling the Chinese leaders and friendly diplomats that the major obstacle in Paris was Washington's refusal to accept that there are two armies and two administrations in South Vietnam. Coupled with American insistence that the Saigon and Hanoi governments represent two separate, sovereign states, the North Vietnamese are reportedly saying, this amounted to an American demand for a Communist surrender in which the North would accept the South's status as a permanent American vassal-state.]

Ziegler described the Haig

mission as a "follow-up to bring the leaders of those countries abreast of the Paris negotiations."

Among those accompanying Haig, who will be making his 10th trip to Southeast Asia for Mr. Nixon, will be Laurin B. Askew, head of the Vietnam task force at the State Department; John Negroponte of the National Security Council staff, who is fluent in Vietnamese, and John Bushnell, another Kissinger aide.

Meanwhile, the official news agency Tass alleged that Kissinger's explanations for the latest breakdown in the talks were merely attempts to "justify another delay" in signing the agreement.

At the Vatican, Pope Paul

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VI expressed sadness that the negotiations apparently will not produce peace in time for Christmas. "We were waiting for peace as a Christmas gift for humanity. But it hasn't happened yet. It is sad," the Pope said in his weekly blessing. He added that the peace talks were a good object lesson in the necessary relationship between peace and justice.

In London, British spokesmen declined official comment on the deadlock, but privately they welcomed President Nixon's refusal to "be stampeded into an agreement."

British leaders have made it clear in the past that they want an end to the hostilities in Indochina, but not with an agreement that would jeopardize Commonwealth members in the area, especially Singapore and Malaysia.

The Swedish Vietnam Committee claimed in Stockholm that the Paris negotiations had "merely been a tactical election game aiming to se-

ecure President Nixon's election victory."

Tho Briefs Chinese On Paris Impasse

By James Pringle

Reuter

PEKING, Dec. 17—The chief North Vietnamese negotiator at the Paris peace talks, Le Duc Tho, met with Chinese leaders here today.

He is on his way home from Paris, where his talks have run into serious difficulties.

North Vietnamese diplomats here told other envoys that the problems arose because Washington questioned basic points in the draft peace settlement worked out by the two sides in October.

In the latest series of talks just ended Kissinger said that Washington does not accept that there are two military forces and two administrations in South Vietnam—the Saigon government and the Vietcong, according to highly reliable sources quoting North Vietnamese diplomats.

There was a high-level meet-

ing here tonight at Peking's Great Hall of the People following Tho's arrival. North Vietnamese Politburo member Truong Chinh, a powerful figure in the Hanoi leadership who arrived here yesterday, is also thought likely to be taking part in discussions here. Observers said the meetings almost certainly included Chinese Premier Chou En-lai.

The North Vietnamese reportedly told the representatives here of countries friendly to them that Hanoi is willing to go on talking in Paris but that Washington should withdraw "absurd proposals" it had recently made and talk on the basis of the agreement already reached.

These new U.S. proposals purportedly questioned the principle of two forces and administrations in the South and called for the establishment of a permanent border at the Demilitarized Zone, the sources said.