

Administration Aides Insist That Hanoi Is Solely to Blame for Talk Breakdown

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 — Administration officials insisted today that North Vietnam was entirely to blame for the breakdown in the Vietnam talks and aid that the United States had resumed heavy bombing because of Hanoi's lack of "seriousness" at the Paris negotiations.

The officials, both familiar with Henry A. Kissinger's negotiations with Le Duc Tho, said that Washington had concluded that for unknown reasons, the Hanoi Politburo must have decided in late November not to sign an agreement when negotiations resumed in Paris on Dec. 4, but rather to keep an appearance of interest in an accord by constantly making new proposals and demands.

Aide Says He's 'Puzzled'

"We are frankly puzzled as to why Hanoi did this," one of the officials said.

The views of the officials, who were interviewed separately, reflected and elaborated on the Administration's public explanation for the breakdown in the talks made by Mr. Kissinger at a news conference Saturday.

The officials vigorously denied suggestions made in the press, and by Congressmen and others, that Hanoi's delaying tactics at the negotiating table might have been provoked by American efforts to secure substantive changes in the draft agreement reached by Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Tho in October.

The White House also strongly denied rumors and printed reports that raised the possibility that Mr. Kissinger's relations with President Nixon might have been strained as a result of possibly different approaches to the negotiations.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White

House press secretary, said speculation about a rift between the two men was "absolutely without foundation," and "totally untrue."

Later in the day, Mr. Kissinger accompanied President and Mrs. Nixon to Key Biscayne, Fla., for the Christmas holiday.

The Administration has clearly been irritated in the last few days by criticism of its negotiating tactics, and also of the decision by Mr. Nixon to renew bombing raids north of the 20th Parallel in North Vietnam.

These raids were suspended late in October because the United States believed North Vietnam was showing "goodwill" at the negotiations, one Administration official said, and were resumed Monday because at the last round of talks Hanoi was "not serious."

Asked why the new raids were so severe, involving for the first time the use of B-52 bombers over Hanoi, another official said that that had been a "judgment" made by Mr. Nixon.

Dual Purpose Reported

The official said the raids had the dual purpose of cutting down any possible military build-up by North Vietnam and showing American anger at what Mr. Nixon regarded as Hanoi's delaying tactics.

The New York Times last week reported that the Paris talks had failed to reach an agreement because Hanoi had balked at American efforts, on the behalf of Saigon, to get language confirming the Saigon government's sovereignty over all of South Vietnam.

This report suggested that Mr. Kissinger and other Americans believed the fault for the breakdown lay in Saigon and that Mr. Nixon should bring pressure on President Nguyen Van Thieu to drop his demands.

But one Administration of-

ficial said this was not the case and that the so-called "sovereignty" issue was not the barrier to an agreement.

Instead, both Administration officials insisted that the talks broke down when North Vietnam began making what Mr. Kissinger has called "frivolous" demands, and started to raise new issues as soon as others had been settled.

The officials said that their belief that Hanoi had decided to stall on an accord was reinforced by intelligence information they said had been received later, which reported that school children were being evacuated from Hanoi starting on Dec. 4.

This indicated, the officials said, that the North Vietnamese Politburo, in the recess between Nov. 25 and Dec. 4, had made a "fundamental" decision not to sign an agreement.

Repeat Kissinger Contention

The officials repeated what Mr. Kissinger had said, that 99 per cent of an accord had been reached, but they added that this was a bit deceiving because a major political decision had to be made in Hanoi for the 1 per cent.

Among possible reasons given by the officials for what they said were Hanoi's "delaying tactics," were the following: a decision to wait until the American Congress reconvened and see whether Saigon would continue to be supported; a victory of politburo "hawks" who wanted to mount a new offensive next year; a feeling that the compromise document that was suitable prior to the American election might no longer be suitable with Mr. Nixon re-elected, and strong reluctance by the National Liberation Front, or Vietcong, to sign an accord that left President Thieu in office.

See also Murray Marder, Washington Post 21 Dec 72.

George Sherman, New Orleans States-Item 21 Dec 72.