

Hanoi Halts Lower-Level Peace Talks

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North Vietnam officially suspended the remaining link to secret negotiating talks with the United States yesterday and denounced President Nixon for copying "the strategy of Hitler's blitzkrieg from the sky."

Hanoi's suspension of meetings by technical experts, announced in Paris, was an acknowledged attempt to

halt the American B-52 bombings of the Hanoi-Haiphong region, rather than an attempt to break off all talks. North Vietnam's action indicated it is trying to raise counter-pressure on the United States over the bombings, without wiping out all chances for a negotiated settlement.

In Paris, the North Vietnamese delegation said it cannot participate in any further meetings with American technical experts while "barbarous air attacks" against the Hanoi-Haiphong area continue.

Referring to statements made by North Vietnamese delegation chief Xuan Thuy on Sunday, the Communist side said these meetings can be resumed only "when the situation existing before Dec. 18, 1972, has been restored . . ." On that day the United States launched unprecedented B-52 bombings after private negotiations between presidential envoy Henry A. Kissinger and North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho reached a deadlock and were suspended by the United States on Dec. 13.

The Nixon administration, through a state department spokesman, declined to treat the North Vietnamese suspension move in Paris yesterday as a complete breakdown of negotiations. The spokesman, John F. King, noted that there has been no severance of the four-sided formal, 4½-year-old Paris talks, from which North Vietnam and the Vietcong walked out last Thursday. A United States suggestion to resume those talks on Jan. 4 is still unanswered.

The procedural maze of multiple level of talks, some in the state of suspension, others in clouded states of limbo, now almost requires a chart to sort out. But there is a pattern

in the maze.

When the Kissinger-Tho talks foundered — and they were the only substantive negotiations in Paris — a thread of diplomatic contact was maintained through the device of continuing "technical" meetings at a lower level. As the American bombing of North Vietnam took an increasing toll, North Vietnam twice last week walked out of these technical talks. Now North Vietnam has carried its indignation a step further by throwing these talks into suspension.

For the same purpose of registering outrage over the bombing, North Vietnam also walked out of the formal Paris conference on Thursday after denouncing the bombing. But that was a temporary walkout, and North Vietnam and the Vietcong proposed resuming those meetings on Dec. 28, which the United States and

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South Vietnam opposed, suggesting Jan. 4 instead, after the New Year's holiday.

The formal Paris conference is meaningless as a real negotiating forum; it is only a mutual propaganda forum, but it also acts as a facade for showing a semblance of continuing diplomatic contact.

The strands of diplomacy, however, are showing increasing strain.

North Vietnam yesterday raised its personal attacks on

President Nixon to a new level of bitterness. Radio Hanoi, broadcasting an editorial from the newspaper Nhan Dan, charged that "bellicose criminal Nixon" is "applying Hitler's blitzkrieg from the sky," but suffering "the most serious losses in the history of U.S. air war . . ."

Hanoi Radio said: "The bandits have invaded our home at night. They closed the door, gagged us, blocked off all contact with the outside world so that they could beat us while

we could not scream until . . . we dropped to our knees with blood oozing from our mouths." But this is only another "in a long string of Nixon's miscalculations," said the broadcast.