

Tough Talk in Washington

Congress Convenes In a Fighting Mood

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Washington

High administration officials said yesterday that the United States is entering the negotiations with North Vietnam next week without assurances that an early settlement of the Vietnam war will be achieved.

The officials, in conversations with members of Congress, legislative staff members and newsmen, stressed in somber tones that they do not know how the next round of talks, starting Monday, between Henry A. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, will turn out.

They said that when President Nixon renewed the halt in the bombing of North Vietnam's populated area, it was solely on the basis of a pledge from Hanoi that the upcoming negotiations would be "serious." They said there have been no secret agreements on the substantive issues that were unsettled when the talks broke down last month.

### REASONING

Because North Vietnam has always insisted that it is negotiating seriously, such a pledge did not in itself provide grounds for optimism, an official said. He added that Hanoi may decide to stand firm against any of the modifications sought by the U.S. in the original nine-point draft agreement that was reached in October but not signed.

Mr. Nixon and Kissinger discussed the forthcoming talks for two hours Tuesday night and again for an hour yesterday morning, the White House said.

White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler did not disclose any details of the administration's negotiating position but did express considerable concern about the growing anti-war mood on capitol hill, which he said could jeopardize the negotiations.

"Members of Congress should ask themselves if they want to take the responsibility of raising doubts in the minds of the enemy about the U.S. position and thereby prolong the negotiations," he said.

"There can be only one negotiator," he went on. "Our objective is to bring an end to the conflict in Vietnam through a negotiated settlement, but at such negotiations there can be only one negotiator."

Although Ziegler was speaking in response to the sharp criticism on Capitol Hill, mostly from Democrats, it was also evident from private discussions that the administration feared Hanoi may be encouraged to hold out until Congress acted against the war.

The bombing of North Vietnam above the 20th parallel, which included the area around Hanoi and Haiphong, was ordered by Mr. Nixon on December 18 after the talks collapsed on December 13. At a news conference on December 16, Kissinger charged that North Vietnam was to blame for the breakdown because it deliberately "stalled" at

the talks by raising one "trivial" demand after another.

Officials later asserted that the bombing would halt when Hanoi signaled it would resume serious talks. The administration did not define what it meant by "serious," but indicated in private that it wanted a constructive bargaining atmosphere, with both sides searching in good faith for an agreement. It said that this mood was lacking in the last round of talks.

North Vietnam has disputed the American interpretation of the breakdown and has said that the talks failed to achieve an agreement because Kissinger sought important changes in the agreement to strengthen the Saigon government at the expense of the Viet Cong.