

Announcer: The big news today, of course, is the announcement by presidential press secretary Ron Ziegler that the United States has suspended all offensive military operations in North Vietnam, effective at 7 O'clock this morning, Pacific time. Mr. Ziegler said that the suspension was "because of the progress made in the Paris peace talks."

Mr. Ziegler referred to the action as a "unilateral gesture" and refused to comment on reports that Henry Kissinger may have reached some agreement with the North Vietnamese negotiators.

Dr. Kissinger's aide, Gen. Alexander Haig, is expected to arrive in Saigon early tomorrow, presumably to present the latest developments to South Vietnamese Premier Thieu. and referred to

The offensive operations -- aren't they! -- ~~presumably include~~ bombing, shelling and <sup>any</sup> further mining of North Vietnamese harbors. But Mr. Ziegler said that any mines already planted will remain in place. Mr. Ziegler said that President Nixon knew of no change in North Vietnamese military strategy resulting ~~in~~ <sup>from</sup> the United States suspension of operations, but he did say that Hanoi was aware that progress in the peace talks could produce this type of response by the United States.

In Washington, Defense Department spokesman Jerry Friedheim said military operations, including air strikes, would continue over South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia "as necessary." He refused to say whether the United States would still fly fighter-escorted reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam -- that's a matter that was not touched upon by Mr. Ziegler.

The Italian newspaper Il Messagero reported in New York today that the United States and North Vietnam had reached agreement on six critical points at the Paris talks last week. The paper said that the North Vietnamese government had agreed to discuss Vietnamese unification directly with Saigon, and that the two governments had agreed to retain the demilitarized zone and had agreed upon the question of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prisoners of war. The other three points concerned the international commission that would control a ceasefire agreement -- that commission is to be formed by Canadians, Indonesians, Hungarians and Poles, with a total of about 2,500 men.

The fifth critical point was the United States pledge to stop all military activity the day the agreement is signed and to withdraw from Vietnam all its land troops 60 days from then. And the last point was the tri-partite council for national conciliation, which will act on the provincial level to arrange new elections but it will not hold the widespread administrative powers demanded by the Hanoi government.

The North Vietnamese delegation in Paris denied French ~~reports~~ press reports from Hanoi today that a Vietnam peace agreement may be announced during the night. The French news agency Agence France Presse, in a report from Hanoi, quoted North Vietnamese sources as predicting that an agreement might be announced during the night, Hanoi time. The sources were not identified, and a statement issued by the North Vietnamese delegation at the Paris talks said that the report was without any foundation whatsoever.

Meanwhile, the second-level negotiators -- that is the technical negotiators in Paris -- continued their discussions today, working on the wording and other details pertinent to an agreement, should one be reached. The chief spokesman for the South Vietnamese delegation in Paris, Nguyen Tru Dan, is quoted as saying "the negotiations have reached a decisive point -- the less one talks about them, the better. Let's await developments." Indeed, let's.

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