

Nixon Cites Talks 'Progress' ATTACKS ON N. VIET HALTED

Related Story on Page 6.

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla. (AP)—President Nixon ordered a halt Monday to all offensive military operations in North Vietnam "because of the progress made" in Paris peace talks, the Florida White House said.

Press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Nixon's order took effect at 9 a.m. CST and includes "bombing, shelling and any further mining of North Vietnam."

In Washington, Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. 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 higher-escorted reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam, a matter not mentioned by Ziegler.

The White House spokesman described the move as "a unilateral gesture" that followed an exhaustive presidential assessment of the negotiations.

ZIEGLER refused to discuss reports that Henry A. Kissinger, Nixon's peace negotiator, and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho have, for all practical purposes, already reached an accord.

He did say in response to a question: "Dr. Kissinger will be returning to Paris at some point in the relatively near future."

Asked if North Vietnam had agreed to scale down its military operations in South Vietnam in return for Nixon's military concession, Ziegler said the White House had no information to indicate any change in Hanoi's military strategy.

"This action was not an element of the negotiations," he said.

ZIEGLER DID say Hanoi was aware that progress in the Paris talks could lead to a U.S. move of the type he announced.

Nixon and Kissinger conferred for an hour and a half Monday morning at the President's bayside office here. It was their fourth meeting in two days since Kissinger flew here from Paris early Sunday morning.

Ziegler said Nixon transmitted the order to halt military operations in North Vietnam late Sunday night following one of his discussions with Kissinger.

ASKED IF any move would be made to deactivate mines already placed along the North Vietnamese coast, he said those weapons "will remain in place" and be discussed in future Paris talks.

Asked if Nixon was hopeful that a peace agreement could be announced by Inauguration Day—Saturday—Ziegler replied, "We have no artificial

Continued from Front Page

timetable." He said the objective all along has been to end the war at the earliest possible date.

South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu was fully informed in advance about Nixon's decision, Ziegler added.

The President has dispatched Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., to Saigon to consult with Thieu about the Paris talks. Haig had a lengthy talk with Nixon and Kissinger prior to his departure.

Haig flew off to Saigon at Nixon's behest Sunday night following Kissinger's return from six days of peace negotiations in Paris that the President's foreign policy aide described as "very extensive and very useful."

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Haig would "discuss the current status of negotiations with President Thieu" and with leaders of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Haig made the same circuit just before Christmas, after the Paris talks were temporarily broken off and the United States launched the heaviest bombing raids of the war against Hanoi and Haiphong. The raids in that section of North Vietnam have been suspended while a renewed search for peace continues.

Ziegler said he could not say when Kissinger might return to Paris to resume apparently crucial talks with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho. The presidential spokesman declined to say anything substantive about the negotiations.

There was no word on when Nixon, who flew here Friday, would return to Washington.

Between 1968, when President Lyndon B. Johnson halted the bombing of the North, and last April, when it was resumed by President Nixon, the United States continued to fly reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam. The unarmed planes were escorted by armed fighters and often drew fire from North Vietnamese gunners.

Several were lost during that period, and the U.S. Command gave attacks on the planes as a reason for flying so-called "protective reaction" raids against the North.

Asked about the mines already implanted in North Vietnamese waters, Friedheim said there had been no request or order to deactivate them but said that no new mines would be planted.

At least some of the mines deactivate themselves after a pre-set time, and they presumably will not be replaced when they expire.

Turn to Page 10, Column 1