

Accord Reported to Leave Many Key Points Unsettled

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SAIGON, Jan. 18 — The peace agreement accepted by President Thieu contains no provision for the release of political prisoners by South Vietnam and leaves critical questions unanswered, reliable American sources said today.

Although the agreement expresses the "hope" that elections will be held within six months, there is no firm timetable, these sources said, nor is it stated specifically what posts will be at stake when the elections are held. It is also unclear to what extent South Vietnam's existing constitution and election laws will apply.

One U.S. analyst said the Saigon government had been proceeding on the assumption that all current regulations would remain in force, but said that senate elections scheduled for next August might be cancelled.

South Vietnamese sources said some of these points had been left vague deliberately to win Thieu's assent to an ac-

cord about which he had reservations up to the last minute. As a result, U.S. officials warned it is still possible that difficulties could develop as the technical experts work on wrapping up a final text in Paris.

But the momentum is clearly in favor of a cease-fire soon. A high-ranking U.S. source said it might come within 10 days. Others estimated two weeks, which would be about the time of the lunar new year beginning Feb. 3. South Vietnam's semi-official newspaper Tin Song reported Tuesday that Tet was a likely deadline.

Thieu accepted the peace agreement Wednesday night at a meeting with Gen. Alexander M. Haig, chief deputy to U.S. negotiator Henry A. Kissinger, South Vietnamese sources said. Haig left Saigon today to brief leaders of other Southeast Asian countries on the results of the peace talks.

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When he left, sources here said, he took with him Thieu's reluctant, but resigned assent to a peace accord of which these details emerged today:

- The troops of the opposing armies are to remain pretty much where they are in South Vietnam, but there is to be no occupation of "lines of communication" such as highways and rivers.

- There are numerous references in the text to the "Government of the Republic of South Vietnam," an important point for Thieu who had been insisting on recognition of South Vietnam as a sovereign country. It had been reported earlier by well informed Vietnamese sources that the agreement provides for the recognition of the Demilitarized Zone at the 17th parallel as a temporary demarcation line between the two parts of Vietnam and specified that North Vietnam accepted the principle of non-interference in the South's affairs.

- There is no provision requiring the release of political prisoners, of whom Saigon is reportedly holding thousands for suspected Communist sympathies. This was a point that Kissinger said in October was to be determined after a cease-fire "through negotiations among the South Vietnamese parties," but Hanoi has been demanding since then that release of these prisoners be a requirement of a settlement.

- Whatever elections are to be held will be under the supervision of a National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, but there is no requirement that the third segment, the neutralists, be represented on the council. Each side—the Saigon government and the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government—is to choose its own members. This would be a victory for Thieu, who has insisted that there is no legitimate third force in South Vietnam, but only nationalists and the North and a setback for the North Vietnamese who had been seeking the three-part formula earlier. Usually reliable Vietnamese sources had said that for neutralist membership.

- The National Council is to operate on the basis of unanimity, as Kissinger said it would in his Oct. 26 press con-

ference, where he discussed the draft of an agreement that had been made public by Hanoi. Many observers here view this provision as a guarantee of the council's impotence, since the representatives of the Saigon government and the Vietcong are thought to be unlikely to agree unanimously on any significant issues.

Vietnamese sources said the council would function on the provincial as well as on the national level.

- The peace agreement does not provide for a simultaneous cease-fire in all of Indochina, and there is little chance that there will be a halt to the fighting in Cambodia and Laos as quickly as in Vietnam, U.S. sources said. This would be a defeat for Thieu, who has insisted that any cease-fire apply to Cambodia and Laos as well.

One of the potential problems still to be settled, U.S. sources said, is that of personal safeguards for Communists in South Vietnam. The agreement is said to be silent on this point, and the Saigon government has made extensive preparations for the quick arrest of political suspects.

As long ago as September, it was learned that Thieu's policy for the period after a cease-fire would be that the Communists, as one American put it, "will be free to move around but not to function as Communists." Thieu has given his province chiefs, or military governors, wide latitude in deciding what constitutes unacceptable activity.

South Vietnam has been playing up the prospect that the Vietcong will take advantage of a cease-fire to resume their efforts to topple the government. The Communists did little to dispel those fears with a broadcast today of a political report delivered a week ago by Huynh Tan Phat at a meeting in Hanoi. Phat is president of the PRG.

Among the goals of the PRG listed in Phat's address, monitored in Saigon, were to "use and develop political and armed forces, expand and defend the liberated areas and revolutionary government at all levels, defeat the enemy and win complete victory."

U.S. sources said, however, that Vietcong instructions to their troops and cadres have accepted a cease-fire as an ac-

knowledgeable fact and urge them to concentrate on administering the territory they already control.

No last-minute military "highpoint" is expected by U.S. analysts, except in fringe areas where Saigon's control is already marginal, such as northern Binh Dinh Province, western Quangnai and western Quangtin.

U.S. sources said that a cease-fire could be implemented quickly once all points have been finally settled, without waiting for international supervisory teams to be fully organized and in place.

Troops from Indonesia, one of the probable member countries of the supervisory team, could be here in a "matter of hours," U.S. sources said, to take up their peacekeeping duties. Officers designated for peacekeeping duty by Poland, another probable member, have been selected and informed, diplomats here said.

South Vietnam's preparations are also complete, down to the selection of the military officers who will take over as village and hamlet administrators in place of civilians, once the cease-fire goes into effect, reliable sources said.

There was little if any visible evidence in Saigon today that anything important had happened one way or the other. Thieu met with members of his National Security Council, but that has been almost a routine occurrence in recent weeks. On the streets, preparations for Tet celebrations continued unabated, and the chief preoccupation of Saigon's high society seemed to be the wedding of President Thieu's daughter, scheduled for Friday.

The presidential palace was lighted and festooned with flags tonight for a mammoth reception, the biggest social gathering since the government clamped down on the

gay life last Spring during the 1972 North Vietnamese offensive.