

White House Issues Reminder Of Progress in Viet Peace Talks

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While maintaining official silence on the Vietnam peace negotiations, the White House issued another reminder yesterday that the forward movement was continuing.

By agreement with the North Vietnamese, the White House released a series of pictures showing American and North Vietnamese negotiators at the conference table in Paris.

The first direct word from President Nixon on the negotiations will come at noon today in his second inaugural address.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, reporting that the speech will be less than 2,000 words in length, hinted that the President's references to Vietnam would be more general than specific.

The President will not discuss the negotiations in detail because of the agreement with North Vietnam to withhold comment until the document is completed, Ziegler said.

However, he is expected, as White House spokesmen have done almost every day since last Saturday, to indicate continuing progress.

Asked if he could characterize the address or describe it in any way, Ziegler said he had asked the President about that and "he said he preferred that I not do so."

The President continued work on his speech and also conferred with national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger.

Kissinger is scheduled to leave Monday to resume talks in Paris Tuesday with Le Duc Tho, North Vietnam's chief negotiator, and Xuan Thuy, the minister who has headed the unproductive formal sessions.

Ziegler said that Mr. Nixon continued to receive reports from Gen. Alexander M. Haig, Jr., vice chief of staff of the army, who has been conferring this week with officials in South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. Ziegler said he was not certain when Haig would return to Washington, but he is expected back early next week.

CBS radio reported from Saigon that Vice President Agnew would be in Saigon Jan.

28 for a visit intended to coincide closely with the signing or at least the initialing of a Vietnam cease-fire agreement."

Ziegler refused to confirm or deny the report, leaving the impression that the report was substantially correct. However, a spokesman for the Vice President said he did not know whether it was accurate.

The pictures released by the White House were made last Saturday by an official photographer and were the first showing Kissinger and Tho at the negotiating table.

"We have agreed with the North Vietnamese to release the pictures," Ziegler said.

Asked why the pictures were being made public on the eve of the inaugural, the press secretary said that it was "mutually agreed" to release the pictures but that the timing "does not relate" to the inaugural.