

U.S., Red Optimism

Many Sources Say Peace Pact Near

Washington Sets It on Thursday

U.P. & A.P.

Washington

White House sources said yesterday that President Nixon had authorized Henry Kissinger to initial the proposed Vietnam peace settlement in Paris on Thursday. 25 JAN

South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu was understood to have agreed to it.

Communist diplomats also expressed optimism over what appeared to be an imminent agreement ending the war.

In Saigon, senior South Vietnamese officials said today a captured Communist high command document puts the time for initialing a cease-fire agreement at 9 p.m. Wednesday Saigon time — 5 a.m. PST. 24 JAN

They quoted the document as saying the agreement would be initialed in Paris and signed there Saturday, and the cease-fire would take effect on Sunday. 26 JAN

MEETING

The White House sources said that Kissinger will meet with Mr. Nixon again early today before he leaves for Paris and new talks with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho tomorrow.

It was understood that Mr. Nixon gave Kissinger the go-ahead in a meeting yes-

terday after learning that General Alexander Haig was able to win Thieu's backing.

Haig returned early yesterday from a trip to South Vietnam and Korea to present a revised draft of a tentative peace agreement reached by Kissinger and Tho in Paris two weeks ago. Thieu was believed to have some reservations but ready to go along generally with the accord.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Both the U.S. and North Vietnam announced last Thursday that the next peace talks were arranged

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to complete the text of an agreement.

The optimism at the White House was echoed in Paris by negotiators for North Vietnam and the Viet Cong.

Xuan Thuy, head of the North Vietnamese delegation, said he expected the Vietnamese lunar new year on February 3 to be "happier than usual" this year.

Asked whether he meant a peace settlement was imminent, Thuy replied: "We must first finish the text we are working on."

Nguyen Thi Binh, the Viet Cong foreign minister, said she had returned to Paris with instructions to "employ all our efforts" to sign a peace agreement.

As diplomats began converging on Paris for tomorrow's meeting between Kissinger and Tho, other reports from both Communist

and non-Communist sources also indicated a peace settlement could be completed this week.

There were also these developments:

- South Vietnam Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam left Saigon for Paris for what a government source said would be the "final phase" of a peace settlement the source said might be signed next Monday.

- U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker called on President Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon after the curfew last night and again shortly after noon today, apparently maintaining up-to-the-minute consultations on the situation.

Bunker stayed ten minutes last night, and it was believed that he delivered a communication of some kind from Washington. His visit today lasted 25 minutes.

- American and North Vietnamese experts on language and international law held an unexpected and unprecedented Sunday session, working out the precise language of a peace agreement and the protocols which will spell out how a cease-fire is to be put into effect. 26 JAN

In Saigon, a South Vietnamese government source said in an offhand remark to newsmen:

"Well, it'll be signed on the 29th, at least that's what I'm told. That's if everything goes according to schedule."

On Saturday, South Vietnamese sources said Vice President Spiro Agnew would travel to Saigon next Sunday.

Protocol experts pointed out that for cease-fire to be put into effect, it would have to be signed by at least a cabinet-level officer.