

[On four-party joint military conference meeting in Saigon.]

..... That's the conference that's been held up by all the problems that have been going on. The problems have not been discussed fully but at least one of the problems that we know about is the Saigon government demanding that the North Vietnamese and PRG delegates go through Customs procedures and filing of credentials and other things of that nature. And there is comment on that from North Vietnam today. North Vietnam said today via the Vietnam News Agency that it strongly protests the fact that the Saigon government has submitted North Vietnamese and PRG delegates to Customs and Immigration formalities on arrival in Saigon. The North Vietnamese government, via VNA, called the acts of the Saigon government in asking for credentials and Customs papers "premeditated" acts, and said that the Saigon government "has sought every means to delay the activities of the four-party military commission."

The statement from the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry mentioned the Saigon government demand that the North Vietnamese delegates and PRG delegates to the commission must observe the Saigon government's entry procedures for all foreign nationals arriving on Saigon government's soil. The North Vietnamese statement said, "The Saigon authorities put forth absurd demands and sent military police to surround the plane * carrying the delegation for 24 hours. This gross act of the Saigon administration runs counter to the agreement of cease-fire in Vietnam signed last Saturday." They talked about specific parts of the agreement; they specifically talked about Article 16 of the agreement. They said that Article 16 "provides that all signatories shall provide full protection and the necessary assistance and cooperation to the joint military commission at all levels," and they say the Saigon government is violating that article.

* See "Agnew, in Saigon, Affirms Ties, Meets With Thieu," Joseph B. Treaster, NYTimes this date.