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# Hanoi Aides Skip Meeting, Hit U.S.

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SAIGON, Feb. 27—North Vietnamese delegates failed to show up for Tuesday's two sessions of the four-party military subcommittee as U.S. and North Vietnamese representatives traded charges of bad faith over the release of prisoners.

North Vietnamese spokesman, Lt. Col. Bui Tin, said late Tuesday that his delegation will resume attending the military subcommittee meeting Wednesday.

"We have the impression that the U.S. delegation is solely concerned with the release of American prisoners of war and this does not correspond with Dr. Kissinger's promises in Paris," Bui Tin said in a telephone interview.

"The United States has the responsibility to regulate all matters concerning the cease-fire and not just

the American prisoners of war," he said, calling for a positive effort to resolve the impasse. "We will wait from day to day to watch developments," he added.

Earlier, Bui Tin said that no more American prisoners would be released until certain conditions were met, including strict application of the cease-fire, simultaneous return of civilian and military prisoners and improved conditions for Communist delegates to the Joint Military Commission (JMC).

The impression Bui Tin gave in a lengthy conversation, however, was that his government would not demand that all the problems he raised be solved before the next group of American prisoners could go home. Rather, he wants serious consideration of his complaints and some show of

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American effort and concern for solving the problems.

[A North Vietnamese statement distributed by the Vietnam News Agency charged that in addition to cease-fire violations and harassment of Communist delegates by the Saigon government, the United States had shown bad faith by delaying the removal of mines from North Vietnamese waters and by bombing Laos after the cease-fire agreement was signed there.]

The American delegation issued a statement accusing the North Vietnamese of saying "different things to different audiences in attempting to explain the delay in the release of POWs..."

It said that the return of Vietnamese prisoners was for the Vietnamese parties to work out, according to the Paris agreement, and that any attempt to link the release of POWs with civilians was contrary to the agreement.

"Extensive effort" had been made to improve working facilities for the JMC, the statement said, and full application of the cease-fire was an obligation which "must be borne by all parties to the agreement, including the (Communist) side."

Neither side appeared to be talking in terms relevant to the other. The Americans were talking about the letter of the agreement while the North Vietnamese seemed to be evoking the agreements spirit.

In the matter of the political prisoners, for example, it is clear from the text of the Paris agreement that the Americans are right in saying civilian prisoners are not to be linked to the return of American POWs.

In signing the agreement, however, the North Vietnamese and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) wanted a political process, if not a solution, whereby certain conditions would flow from the basic agreement.

Now, 30 days after the cease-fire began, they see the fighting still going on. Little that was agreed upon has come to pass and they blame the Americans as well as the South Vietnamese for this failure.

In the American view, the prisoner delay is simply an attempt to gain leverage for North Vietnamese demands against South Vietnam—to get the United States to put pressure on the Saigon government.

The North Vietnamese believe the United States has a duty to become so involved. "All four parties must make an effort to normalize relations between North and South Vietnam as Kissinger promised in Paris," Bui Tin said. "The Americans are not carrying out their role regarding the cease-fire."

South Vietnamese military sources close to the Joint Military Commission have predicted that the Communists would delay the release of prisoners in an attempt to prolong the life of the four-party JMC beyond the 60-day period stipulated in the Paris agreement.

The American delegation, the South Vietnamese sources said, has tried to iron out many a difference between the Vietnamese parties, often acting as a mediator, and the Communists want the Americans to continue to help in dealing with Saigon.

The Communists do not want the American departure to be simply another step in Vietnamization. They want the United States to take a political responsibility for Saigon's actions and the only raw nerve they can touch is to delay the prisoner release.

There have been numerous Communist violations of the cease-fire, but it is probable that the Communists had hoped that the large-scale fighting, which still goes on, would have died down by now.

The Saigon government continues to mount heavy military pressure on Communist-controlled zones, and

the Communists hold the United States at least partially responsible.

Neither the Saigon government nor the Communists are blameless on the issue of civilian prisoners and both have given unrealistically low figures for the number of prisoners they hold.

The issue on which the Communist case is strongest is the manner in which their delegations to the truce commission are treated in South Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese were furious over Sunday's incident in Hue in which the South Vietnamese allowed a mob to break into the JMC compound and injure five North Vietnamese. Similar incidents have occurred in the past.

The Communists' working conditions and accommodations are often very poor. But more than the lack of creature comfort, the North Vietnamese and the PRG are angry that they are kept as virtual prisoners with no access to the press and the people; even though their presence is legal and provided for by the Paris agreement.

The Americans complained Tuesday that, as of Monday, the only official reason the North Vietnamese had given them for the delay in prisoner releases was the lack of weekly liaison flights between Saigon and Hanoi. The Americans learned about Hanoi's latest stand on the prisoners through the press.