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Talks to Save the Vietnam Cease-Fire Open

Paris
Henry A. Kissinger and North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho began and ended in show of smiles and handshakes yesterday their first closed door meeting to salvage the precarious Vietnam cease-fire



AP Wirephoto
Kissinger (right) shook hands with Le Duc Tho as another delegate looked on

agreement they negotiated last winter.

But their obvious effort to put the best possible face on the five-hour, 15-minute meeting appeared to betray diametrically opposed motivations.

The North Vietnamese have made no secret in private of their belief that Kissinger and the Nixon administration have been weakened in the current meetings, which continue today, by the fallout from the Watergate scandal.

Also, congressional opposition to financing further bombing of Cambodia has the undercut viable American

threats to resume bombing of North Vietnam if Hanoi's alleged violations of the cease-fire do not stop.

HOPE

Kissinger, who upon his arrival from Washington hailed Tho as "my old friend in the search for peace," held out hope in a remarkably conciliatory airport statement that mutual goodwill during the talks could "speed the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam."

That phrase apparently signalled that Communist cooperation might persuade the U.S. to resume postwar aid talks and demining

North Vietnam's ports — interrupted last month as an indication of American displeasure with Hanoi's alleged cease-fire violations.

However, diplomats and longtime observers agreed that Congress has whittled away Kissinger's "stick" — his threat of renewed bombing of North Vietnam — and left him with the "carrot" of postwar American aid which Hanoi may decide is more trouble than it's worth.

HOW

Kissinger uttered only a noncommittal "ok" when asked by newsmen how the meeting had gone, and Tho remained totally silent.

Prepared by preliminary talks here in late April, the current negotiations are known to center on American and North Vietnamese charges, and countercharges blaming each other for serious cease-fire violations.

Moreover, there have been suggestions that Kissinger might be willing to exchange North Vietnamese cooperation on saving the beleaguered Cambodian government of Marshal Lon Nol in return for American pressure on Saigon to honor the cease-fire accord's political provisions.

Washington Post Service

Cargo Ships

Ambushed

Phnom Penh

Cambodian rebel gunners ambushed an eight-ship convoy last night despite heavy U.S. bombing along the Mekong river. They set fire to two cargo vessels and forced one aground 14 miles southeast of Phnom Penh.

Seven other ships, including six fuel tankers and an ammunition barge, managed to reach the capital with badly needed foodstuffs and supplies.

United Press