

New Snag Delays an Agreement On Vietnam Prisoner Exchange

SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 25 (Reuters)—An agreement on plans to exchange military and civilian prisoners was announced today by the Vietcong after a meeting with Saigon Government representatives. But a new deadlock soon developed, and further talks on the issue were scheduled for tomorrow.

According to a Vietcong spokesman, agreement had been reached in the morning on the number of prisoners to be released. But then, he said when a subcommittee of the Joint Military Commission held an afternoon session, Saigon representatives demanded changes in the sites for the exchanges.

"Because of this, the prisoner release situation is at the moment deadlocked," the spokesman said, "But the chief delegates will discuss it tomorrow."

A South Vietnamese spokesman said it had been suggested that the Vietcong release 410 military prisoners and 207 civilians. In exchange the South Vietnamese authorities would turn over to the Communists 500 civilians and 33 military prisoners.

The level of fighting throughout the country remained at roughly the same level that has prevailed since the second cease-fire agreement reached in Paris went into effect on June 15. The Saigon command charged that the Communists had violated the truce 60 times in the 24 hours ended at dawn and 19 more times by noon.

The heaviest fighting was reported in the Mekong Delta and the Saigon command said 22 Communist soldiers had been killed during an attack on infantry position in Chuong Thien Province, a traditional Vietcon area about 150 miles southwest of Saigon. Government casualties were put at 15 wounded.

The Vietcong have accused the Saigon Government of heavily reinforcing its units in Chuong Thien before the June 15 cease-fire with the aim of carrying out new "landgrabbing" attacks.

A Communist spokesman told reporters over the weekend that an average of 2,000 heavy artillery shells a day had been fired into Communist areas in the Province as a cover for infantry assaults.