

Nixon Assured Thieu He Would Retaliate

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President Nixon assured South Vietnam that he intended to "respond with full force" if North Vietnam violated the 1973 Paris cease-fire pact, according to letters made public yesterday by a former South Vietnamese cabinet member.

In another letter, Nixon was quoted as assuring President Nguyen Van Thieu that "if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action."

These letters are part of the alleged "secret agreements" made to induce

Thieu to sign the Paris accord, according to Nguyen Tien Hung, who was minister of planning in the Thieu cabinet.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen said the letters released by Hung, which the Ford administration has refused to make public, "appear to be genuine." But Nessen said they add nothing to what was publicly known about the Nixon administration's policy.

Before the release of the letters by Hung, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.) made public a letter from President Ford declining to give this type of correspondence to Congress. Mr.

Ford said he had reviewed the exchanges and said they contained statements "reflecting the same policy" stated publicly.

Mr. Ford said Nixon repeatedly said publicly that the United States "intended to continue its aid relationship with the Republic of Vietnam and react vigorously to massive violations."

The Nixon-Thieu letters actually gave Thieu "much more forceful assurances" than the public record shows, or Congress knew, Hung told reporters at a press conference he called at the Mayflower Hotel.

Nessen challenged that contention

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at a White House briefing last night. At the briefing, Nessen produced public quotations from Nixon and members of his administration that Nessen claimed were even stronger than the language used in the Nixon-Thieu exchange.

Therefore, Nessen contended, the administration is justified in its insistence that there were no "secret agreements" between Washington and Saigon.

The Ford administration, despite the disclosure by Hung of two documents described as Nixon-Thieu letters,

which Nessen did not challenge, and Hung's quotations from two other letters, maintained its refusal to make the letters public officially. President Ford repeated to Sen. Sparkman that to publish the correspondence would damage the confidentiality of exchanges between governments.