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Nixon Aid Offer to Hanoi Told

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President Nixon in early 1973 gave North Vietnam the general outlines of a \$3.25 billion program of postwar reconstruction aid, North Vietnamese leaders told U.S. members of Congress in recent discussions in Hanoi.

There is disagreement among the lawmakers about the precise description of the Nixon offer, which is said to have been embodied in a Feb. 1, 1973, memorandum from Mr. Nixon to North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong.

There is general agreement among lawmakers and staff members who attended that North Vietnamese officials attached major significance to the \$3.25 billion figure. However, Hanoi officials were repeatedly told by visiting lawmakers during the recent conversations that any such 1973 aid plan now has virtually no chance of U.S. approval.

State Department spokesman John Trattner yesterday confirmed the existence of a February, 1973, Nixon memorandum to North Vietnam. Trattner would give no details, but another State Department source said it is "a fair assumption" that a \$3.25 billion figure was used.

At the same time, the State Department source said the aid figure was qualified in several ways, including the need for congressional ap-

proval and a requirement for faithful implementation by the North Vietnamese of the Paris peace accords.

The present U.S. position is that Hanoi's failure to abide by the Paris agreement — particularly its dispatch of massive forces into South Vietnam — voided any promise of aid.

As early as 1969, Nixon stated publicly that the United States was prepared to undertake a program of reconstruction that included North Vietnam. In February, 1972, he said North Vietnam would receive \$2.5 billion of the reconstruction program. This was conditional on a final cease-fire.

After months of secret discussions, the Paris accords were initialed by the United States and North Vietnam on Jan. 23, 1973, and announced the following day. Formal signing was on Jan. 27, 1973.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said in a Jan. 24 news conference that economic reconstruction discussions would take place only after implementation of the Paris agreement was "well advanced" and the definition of any particular sum of money would have to await discussions after the Paris agreement was in force.

The Nixon memorandum of Feb. 1, 1973 — a few days after the signing of the Paris accord — set the stage for meetings of a U.S.-North Vietnamese "Joint Economics Committee," which was to formulate details of an aid plan.

Committee meetings began in March, 1973, but were broken off by the United States four months later amid charges that North Vietnam was violating the cease-fire.

Deputy Foreign Minister Pham Hein referred to a Feb. 1, 1973, Nixon memorandum on postwar aid in discussions in Hanoi last Dec. 21 with four members of the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia. Some lawmakers thought Hien was reading from the memo, while others disagreed.

Rep. G. V. Montgomery (D-Miss.) quoted the Hanoi official as referring to a U.S. "preliminary study," which suggested a program of \$3.25 billion in grant aid over five years.

On a separate Hanoi visit this Jan. 14, Sen. George

McGovern (D-S.D.) was told by Xuan Thuy, a former senior North Vietnamese official in Paris, that "Nixon sent a memo to Pham Van Dong that the U.S. would give \$3.25 billion" in postwar aid, according to notes of a staff member accompanying McGovern.

The House committee discussed with President Ford last Jan. 25 a list of possible steps the United States might take to improve relations with North Vietnam. A massive aid program is not considered a feasible possibility. Efforts by the House members to see Secretary of State Kissinger about the Vietnam problem have so far been unsuccessful.