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to Diplomatic Contact on Ending Hanoi, in New Move, Adamant on Its Peace Terms

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Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, April 3 — North Vietnam, though shifting its tactical position to meet with American representatives, showed no change today in its basic terms for a peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam.

This is the reading of American officials who have studied Hanoi's statement broadcast in response to President Johnson's limited bombing suspension. Officials here said privately they were "flabbergasted" that Hanoi had agreed to contacts with the United States in response to President Johnson's move. "We had all thought Hanoi was not going to pick this offer up," said one official.

Previously, Washington noted, Hanoi's position had been that there would be talks with American representatives as soon as the United States proved that it has stopped unconditional bombing and all other war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Limit on Topics

This position, taken recently as Feb. 8 by the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, is interpreted here as requiring a total cessation of American air, naval and artillery attacks throughout North Vietnam's territory.

As a consequence, Hanoi's willingness to meet with American officials while bombing continues against the Vietnam panhandle, running about 200 miles north of the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam, is regarded as a significant tactical concession here.

Both Hanoi's radio broadcast and comments of authoritative North Vietnamese sources in foreign capitals today sought to limit the topics for discussion with Americans only to arrangements for a total bombing halt.

Hanoi's statement, broadcast in Vietnamese and monitored by American listening stations

U.S. Aides Privately Concede They Are 'Flabbergasted' That Enemy Responded

and translated by the United States Government, said that Hanoi was ready "to send its representatives to make contact with United States representatives to decide with the United States side the unconditional cessation of the bombing and all other war acts by the United States against [North Vietnam] so that talks could be begun."

Elsewhere, North Vietnamese sources said that the initial contacts would be limited to this subject. If the bombing were halted, these sources said, then Hanoi would be ready to meet "promptly" to discuss a general settlement within the terms of its long-stated program and the political program of the National Liberation Front.

Some American officials suspected, however, that world public opinion would interpret Hanoi's statement as signaling approval for over-all peace talks, making it difficult for either side to break off contacts. These officials suggested this could mean that the talks, once started, would be broadened beyond the subject of a total bombing halt.

Moscow Meeting Secret

The last-known direct contacts between American and North Vietnamese officials took place last month in Laos. These were restricted to working out arrangements for the return of three captured North Vietnamese sailors in American custody.

Previously, American and North Vietnamese diplomats had met secretly in Moscow in January, 1967, as part of an effort to get peace talks under way. To promote that diplomatic effort, President Johnson suspended American air attacks in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong. But the effort fell through.

Some American officials

were wary of Hanoi's intentions today. They interpreted the North Vietnamese statement as a shrewd tactical move designed to respond to the pressure of world opinion generated by President Johnson's initiative without giving any substantive ground on the terms of an over-all settlement.

The broadcast reaffirmed North Vietnam's four-point program and the political program of the National Liberation Front, political arm of the Vietcong, as "a correct basis for a political solution of the Vietnam issue." Hanoi has "not budged an inch on that position," American officials said today.

Hanoi's four-point program, first made public April 13, 1965, calls for withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam; the removal of all foreign military bases, troops, personnel or alliances with Vietnam; settlement of South Vietnam's internal affairs in accordance with the political program of the National Liberation Front, and the peaceful reunification of Vietnam decided by the Vietnamese people in both zones without outside interference.

Program Outlines Sept. 1

The Liberation Front's new political program, published last Sept. 1, calls for abolition of the "puppet administration" in Saigon and establishment of a "national union democratic government" to include all factions, personalities and forces that "have contributed to the cause of national liberation."

The program said that a new national assembly should be chosen by "free general elections" and given the responsibility of writing a new constitution.

The Johnson Administration has contended, on the basis of captured Vietcong documents, that "the objective in any coalition structure would be for the National Liberation Front to secure at once the levers of power and, in effect, control the resulting government both at the local and central levels," an administrative statement to this effect was issued last Dec. 15.