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VIET PROMISES
BY KENNETH J. FREED

SCOWCROFT, LL

WASHINGTON (AP) -- A FORMER SOUTH VIETNAMESE CABINET OFFICIAL TODAY RELEASED A COPY OF A PURPORTED LETTER IN WHICH PRESIDENT RICHARD M. NIXON PROMISED SAIGON THE UNITED STATES WOULD USE "FULL FORCE" IF HANOI VIOLATED A PEACE AGREEMENT.

THE COPY WAS OF A LETTER DATED JAN. 5, 1973, SIGNED BY NIXON AND ADDRESSED TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU.

THE CONTENTS BOTH IMploRED THIEU AND THREATENED HIM TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT THEN BEING COMPLETED IN PARIS. IT ENDED WITH THIS PARAGRAPH: "SHOULD YOU DECIDE, AS I TRUST YOU WILL, TO GO WITH US, YOU HAVE MY ASSURANCE OF CONTINUED ASSISTANCE IN THE POST SETTLEMENT PERIOD AND THAT WE WILL RESPOND WITH FULL FORCE SHOULD THE SETTLEMENT BE VIOLATED BY NORTH VIETNAM."

THAT COPY AND ONE OF A NOV. 14, 1972, LETTER TO THIEU ALSO SUPPOSEDLY WRITTEN BY NIXON WERE RELEASED TO NEWSMEN BY NGUYEN TIEN HUNG, AN AMERICAN-EDUCATED ECONOMIST WHO WAS VIETNAMESE MINISTER OF PLANNING UNTIL LAST WEEK.

THESE LETTERS WERE THE FIRST FULL DISCLOSURE OF PRIVATE ASSURANCES NIXON GAVE THIEU IN RETURN FOR THE SAIGON LEADER AGREEING TO SIGN THE PARIS AGREEMENTS ON JAN. 17, 1973.

SEN. HENRY M. JACKSON, D-WASH., HAD CHARGED EARLY THIS MONTH SUCH PROMISES HAD BEEN MADE. THE WHITE HOUSE AND STATE DEPARTMENT RESPONDED BY SAYING NO COMMITMENTS WERE MADE PRIVATELY THAT WERE NOT APPARENT FROM NIXON'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

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WASHINGTON ADD VIET PROMISES (N131)

HUNG SAID THIEU AND THE REST OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED NIXON'S STATEMENT AS ASSURANCES THAT NIXON WOULD USE MILITARY FORCE IF THE ACCORDS WERE BROKEN.

"THESE PRESSURES AND ASSURANCES FORCED PRESIDENT THIEU TO SIGN THE AGREEMENTS," HUNG SAID.

SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD NEVER HAVE ACCEPTED THE AGREEMENTS, WHICH ALLOWED NORTH VIETNAM TO KEEP TROOPS BELOW THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE, IF THIEU DID NOT FULLY BELIEVE THAT NIXON WOULD USE ARMS TO PUNISH ANY VIOLATIONS, THE FORMER MINISTER ADDED.

IN THE NOV. 14-DATED DOCUMENT, NIXON PURPORTEDLY SAID THAT "YOU HAVE MY ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE THAT IF HANOI FAILS TO ABIDE BY THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT IT IS MY INTENTION TO TAKE SWIFT AND SEVERE RETALIATORY ACTION."

LATER, IN TELLING THIEU THAT ACTIONS RATHER THAN WORDS WILL BEST GUARANTEE THE AGREEMENT, THE COPY HAS NIXON SAYING:

"I REPEAT MY PERSONAL ASSURANCES TO YOU THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL REACT VERY STRONGLY AND RAPIDLY TO ANY VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT."

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