

Present Policy Will Win The War, Wheeler Says

By George C. Wilson
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The United States will win the Vietnam War by sticking to its present strategy but it will be "a long and difficult road," Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said yesterday. He called U.S. military progress in the last year "substantial" and said "the enemy

has lost whatever chance he may have had for military victory in South Vietnam." The four-star Army general refused to predict just how long the war would last but contended the present policy was a winning one. He conceded his optimistic outlook was based on the assumption Red China would not enter the war.

"I have no particular apprehension that the Chinese are going to intervene in this conflict," Wheeler said. He said it would "take an over action on our part such as an attack against Communist China to trigger any such action."

In a rare press conference, the top U.S. military man commented on a wide range of Vietnam war topics, including:

- Force levels. He denied press reports that Gen. William C. Westmoreland, U.S. commander in Vietnam, wanted more troops than the civilian homes would provide. Wheeler said on his recent visit to Vietnam he saw Westmoreland and heard no complaint from him about not having enough forces to do the job. He predicted draft calls would "stay substantially the same."

- Wheeler refused to comment when asked if Johnson Administration manpower planning levels for the war were lower than that favored by Westmoreland.

- Enemy action. He said the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces appear to be avoiding "large-scale combat at this time. I would think they will continue to conserve their forces in order to continue to present a threat. He said enemy initiatives are continuing where the advantage is on his side.

- Iron Triangle strategy. He said Westmoreland in the current Cedar Falls offensive is pursuing the overall strategy of keeping "relentless pressure" on the enemy. He said the triangle is a

vital base of supplies for the Vietcong. Some people have the idea that guerrillas can fill around like birds, and maybe they can, Wheeler said, but they have a light source that is their light source. The Iron Triangle base have been dug in there for 20 years or more. He said enemy forces need supplies and the base for them "are more important to him than ours are to us because we can replace anything we lose" more easily.