

Nixon Peace Plan Doesn't

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Nothing the White House has said over the last two days about settling the Vietnam War commits President Nixon to removing the bulk of U.S. airpower from Southeast Asia.

Mr. Nixon in his remarks Tuesday night and Dr. Henry Kissinger in elaborating on them yesterday talked only about removing U.S. forces from South Vietnam itself — not from Thailand, where most of the airpower is now based.

Further, the President

said nothing about removing the two carriers, with their fighter-bombers aboard, from the waters off North Vietnam.

Thus, Hanoi under the plan offered by President Nixon still has an incentive

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to hold American prisoners of war as hostages against bombings from warplanes in Thailand or at sea.

Spokesmen for the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia

conceded during a news conference yesterday that this linkage might pose an obstacle to release of POWs even after American forces left South Vietnam itself.

No reporter asked Kissinger about the future role of American airpower based outside South Vietnam during his 74-minute briefing yesterday about attempts to negotiate an end to the war.

The White House press office did point out later that under a cease-fire there would be no bombing of North Vietnam. But Hanoi has focused on the Ameri-

can presence of forces — not intentions

As for presence, the United States has nine squadrons of F-4 and F-105 fighter bombers—about 160 planes—in Thailand as well as 10 B-57 medium bombers, 45 B-52s and some gunships. This compares with two squadrons of F-4s still left in South Vietnam.

In addition, the Constellation and Enterprise aircraft carriers now off Vietnam each carry about 75 attack planes.

Leafing back through what President Nixon said

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about that airpower in Thailand before his television address Tuesday night, one finds this statement made to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16, 1971:

"... The airbases that we have in the area around Vietnam, of course, are here for reasons other than Vietnam. Vietnam is part of the reason. As you know, we have a treaty with Thailand and those air forces are maintained there, in part, in order to sustain that treaty."

In other words, looking

beyond the Vietnam War itself, the President regards airpower "in the area around Vietnam" as forces for implementing the Nixon Doctrine.

The Nixon Doctrine, as enunciated by administration officials, features arm-length U.S. military power—like planes and ships kept at a distance—as opposed to American troops on the ground.

Hanoi propagandists have been strident in recent days about the U. S. military

power based in Thailand. Thailand, said Hanoi in a broadcast on Jan. 19, has been turned "on U. S. orders into the largest logistics and combat base in Southeast Asia serving the war of aggression in Indochina.

"That territory," continued the broadcast, "is a kind of U. S. 7th Fleet on land. It is larger and more dangerous than the 7th fleet and the U. S. strategic air force base on Okinawa."

President Nixon sees a firebreak between fighter-

bombers for the Vietnam War and the Nixon Doctrine, declaring last Nov. that those planes "directly related" to the war could be removed while others stayed.

Hanoi's leaders—at least in public—refuse to make the same distinction.

In that sense, Mr. Nixon's long-range defense doctrine for Southeast Asia is coming with his latest package designed to persuade Hanoi to negotiate an end to the war.