

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20--The Senate Majority leader, Mike Mansfield, strongly criticized today what is viewed here as a deepening split within the Administration on policy toward Vietnam.

The Montana Democrat, a former university professor of Far Eastern History, told the Senate in a speech that the United States would be "face-to-face with a disaster" unless all agencies of the Government obeyed the President and Secretary of State in carrying out policies in Vietnam.

He addressed himself primarily to affairs in Saigon, where, he said, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge is "not securing" the full cooperation of all United States agencies. However, his remarks also applied to divided counsel within the Administration in Washington.

It has been widely known in official quarters here for nearly two weeks that the Administration is split on whether selective cuts in aid to the Saigon regime should be ordered as leverage to force it to alter its political attitudes.

President Kennedy himself is on record as saying that the South Vietnamese war against the Communist guerrillas cannot be won unless there are policy and personnel changes in the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem so it can regain popular support.

This support has been waning, in the opinion of the White House and State Department, since the South Vietnamese Government embarked a month ago on repression of Buddhist leaders and other opponents.

Initially, the United States hoped to encourage the Vietnamese military to carry out a coup d'etat that would at least remove Ngo Dinh Nhu, the President's brother, from power. The Administration regards Ngo Dinh Nhu as the man responsible for the repression.

U.S. Shifts Tactics

When that effort failed, the Administration turned again to persuasion, and Mr. Lodge was instructed last week to convince President Ngo Dinh Diem gently that his brother's temporary departure from the scene would greatly help matters.

It is believed that the State Department had hoped to instruct Mr. Lodge to use the threat of a selective cut in the \$500 million annual aid to South Vietnam as a telling argument in his interview with the President. But informants said, because the Administration could not make up its mind that this was the policy it actually proposed to follow, Mr. Lodge could do no more than warn that raising Congressional pressure might bring aid cuts.

President Ngo Dinh Diem rejected the suggestion that his brother be dismissed. Since then, United States policy has been largely in suspense as a result of the Administration's unresolved internal differences as to how to proceed.

The belief here is that the State Department and the United States Information Agency are in favor of selective aid cuts. There are indications that Ambassador Lodge is in agreement with their views.

Army and CIA Object

According to highly placed informants, however, this policy is forcefully opposed in Saigon and Washington by the United States military and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Their opinion, it was reported, is that the principle aim in Vietnam is to fight the Communist guerrillas and that nothing should be done to damage this effort.

Military and CIA officials disagree with the White House and State Department estimate that the Saigon regime has lost popularity and that, as a result, the conduct of the war is endangered.

Because of this profound difference in basic evaluations, according to informants here, all other estimates of the Vietnamese situation have been affected and have become largely subjective.

Thus, it is said, the military and the intelligence agency contend that the anti-Communist war is going well. The political reports from the United States Embassy in Saigon are much less optimistic.

The most recent argument involves the relative success of the strategic hamlets, fortified villages designed as the back-bone of anti-guerrilla defense.

The military and the CIA are reported to believe that the strategic hamlet program, which is largely directed by Ngo Dinh Nhu, is eminently successful.

On the other hand, some civilian experts, including non-Americans, believe that Ngo Dinh Nhu has moved too fast and inadequately with the program, presumably for political reasons. They say that the available resources, mostly from the United States, have been spread too thin and that the Vietnamese have been lax in screening the defense personnel in the hamlets.

Assessment is Difficult

In the overall policy dispute it has been impossible to determine ^{to} what extent the divisions in Saigon affect the divisions in Washington and vice versa.

In commenting on Senator's Mansfield's charges, State Department officials said Ambassador Lodge enjoyed operational authority in South Vietnam. They admitted privately, however, that he faced deep differences in opinion among the heads of United States agencies represented in Vietnam.

Senator Mansfield did not mention any of the agencies directly, but he urged that the 15,000 Americans in Vietnam act as "a unit" in responding to policy modifications emanating from President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

He said that if certain persons should be removed to obtain a unified policy, then "the

Page 3, NYT 9/21/63, article re Mansfield speech

sooner they are removed the better."

This remark was believed to refer to a senior CIA official in Vietnam who, according to press reports, had favored the continuation of full-scale aid to the Saigon regime's Special Forces, which Ngo Dinh Nhu controls and which raided Buddhist pagodas Aug. 21.

Long before the Buddhist crisis erupted, Senator Mansfield warned that the undemocratic practices of the Saigon regime could endanger the outcome of the anti-Communist

(cut off here)