

Legion Chief Supports U.S. On Vietnam

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By Eric Blanchard

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Backing President Johnson in language as well as philosophy, the national commander of the American Legion said last night the new U.S. military tactics in Vietnam were "essential" to helping end the war there.

"We were pleased to note" the President's announcement of river mining and artillery and naval shelling, National Commander John E. Davis said.

Destruction of selected military targets in the north, interdiction of supply and infiltration routes and elimination of Cambodia as a snactuary for the enemy also are steps which should be taken to cut American and allied losses and speed the end of the fighting, Davis said.

The Legion leader also disputed the claim that the new military measures mean an escalation of the conflict.

He spoke at the national commander's dinner at the Sheraton-Park Hotel. Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R-Ill.) was given the annual American Legion Award for Distinguished Public Service.

The Illinois Senator is a veteran of World War I, a life member of a Legion post in Pekin, Ill., and a one-time district commander.

Davis described Dirksen as a "living symbol of Americanism."

Davis said the operations the President announced Monday "are some of the things" the Legion believes can be done "to hasten the fighting to a successful conclusion."

He said the "frantic" efforts of North Vietnam to resupply its forces during the recent truce periods "provide ample evidence of what we may expect if such pressures are relaxed."

"Nobody ever heard of the word escalation in connection with the Normandy and Anzio landings of World War II, nor was it applied to the island-hopping in the Pacific," Davis said.

"All of these actions were seen in their proper perspective . . . essential steps to victory."