

# WORLD

## Decision near on Viet aid

By William Theis  
Examiner Correspondent

PALM SPRINGS — President Ford began an agonizing assessment yesterday of whether America can do anything to save South Vietnam — with a decision to come by Thursday.

Secretary of State Kissinger announced the President's timetable following the first of two meetings attended, also by Gen. Frederick Weyand, Army Chief of Staff just back from Saigon.

Kissinger made clear that while the United States had a moral obligation to help South Vietnam defend its freedom, there was no legal commitment for added military aid in the Paris peace accords.

The President conferred with Kissinger and Weyand for 90 minutes on the general's assessment of the Communist sweep that Kissinger said had brought all but three of Hanoi's combat divisions into South Vietnam.

Kissinger told a news conference that "no decisions will be taken while the President is at Palm Springs. Ford is to leave for Washington tomorrow.

Kissinger disclosed that Ford has ordered a meeting of the National Security Council for Tuesday or Wednesday so Weyand and his team of Vietnam experts can report to its full membership. At the same time, he said, the President has ordered the NSC staff under Kissinger's direction to "develop a statement on the various options before us."

Despite South Vietnam's disintegrating military strength and the reorganization of the Thieu government, Kissinger said he believed "it is possible for the South Vietnamese military forces to stabilize the situation."

The next question, he added, is what it would take and for how long such stabilization could last.

Kissinger emphasized there is a "moral question" for America — whether an ally that "wishes to defend itself" should have its decision determined by the withholding of supplies by the United States.

Congress has refused to provide an additional \$300 million in military aid for South Vietnam and President Ford has promised not only to push for this but perhaps to ask for more.

Asked if there was reason to believe that Democratic members of Congress would now be more likely to support such assistance, the secretary said the President had not been in touch with the leadership because Congress had been in recess the past week.

Kissinger was asked what Ford meant in San Diego Thursday when he spoke of "solemn commitments" for continued American military aid to Saigon under the Paris peace accords.

Kissinger said Ford was "not talking of a legal commitment, he was talking of a moral commitment."

He said he felt South Vietnam had "every reason to

Kissinger indicated the President might announce public Gen. Weyand's Vietnam report. And whatever decision the President reaches on policy for Vietnam and the Middle East probably will be revealed in his

He said Hanoi had sent "almost its entire army" — 15 divisions — into South Vietnam, leaving only two or three divisions in the North.

Faced with an unfavorable military situation, Thieu ordered ARVN troop withdrawal from the Central Highlands and the Communists swept to the coast and south towards Saigon. Ex-

Kissinger repeatedly charged North Vietnam with "flagrant violations" of the Paris accords, which banned the introduction of foreign troops into South Vietnam but permitted a one-for-one replacement of military equipment in the South.

maintaining Thieu's government, Kissinger said:

"If they stood, they were going to be defeated piecemeal. If they retreated, they ran the risk of disintegration of the units that were retreating, which is in fact what happened."

Kissinger declined to respond in kind to Thieu's charge that if the U.S. did

not honor its pledges of aid it would earn the label of "traitor." Kissinger said Thieu's words were "those of a desperate man in great anguish."

He said Thieu's withdrawal decision "made a lot of sense" in terms of strategy, but that its execution "was not planned with sufficient care." This was compounded by the mass exodus of

soldiers' families, which he said in part he saw.

Kissinger was told a Paris report that the President would try to implement the Vietnam accords, hoping to achieve a new settlement and to aid in refugee assistance. The secretary said he hadn't received any such proposal but this country would welcome any such help.





**Flanked by Gen. Weyand and Secretary of State Kissinger, President Ford signals an end to picture taking at Palm Springs retreat.**

—AP Photo