

NIXON TOLD THIEU U.S. WOULD REACT TO RED OFFENSIVE

White House Says Private
Pledge Was Also Reflected
in Public Statements
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RESPONSE TO JACKSON

Statement Asserts Promise
Was Made Before '73 Ban
on Military Operations
NYTimes

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WASHINGTON, April 9—
The White House said today
that President Richard M.
Nixon privately assured the
Saigon Government in 1973
that the United States would
react vigorously to a major
Communist violation of the
Vietnam cease-fire agreement.

A statement, issued in re-
sponse to charges of "secret
agreements" leveled by Sena-
tor Henry M. Jackson, said the
assurances, which also included
pledges of aid, did not differ in
substance from what Mr. Nixon
and others were saying publicly
at the time.

It was the first time the
American public was told that,
as part of an effort to enlist
Saigon's support for the cease-
fire accord, Mr. Nixon had
privately assured President
Nguyen Van Thieu that the
United States would not pas-
sively watch another Commu-
nist offensive.

Assurances Became Moot

The White House said the
private assurance as well as
public warnings issued by Mr.
Nixon were no longer valid
because of the Congressional
ban on American combat ac-
tivity in Indochina imposed in
August, 1973.

The Saigon Government was
informed of the Congressional
action, which in effect made
any assurances moot.

Ronn Nessen, the White
House press secretary, said
there had been letters between
Mr. Nixon and Mr. Thieu as
part of an exchange surround-
ing the signing of the cease-
fire in Paris on Jan. 27, 1973.

A senior aide to Secretary
of State Kissinger said that
Mr. Nixon, in one letter before
the signing, promised that the
United States would react to a
major Communist attack simi-
lar to the 1972 spring offen-
sive. The official said Mr.
Nixon was not more specific
about the nature of such
reaction.

The question of assurances
has been under discussion here
because of efforts to induce
Congress to live up to unspeci-
fied commitments made to
Saigon.

When questioned about the
commitments, President Ford

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and Mr. Kissinger have re-
ferred to moral obligations. In
a news conference on March
26, Mr. Kissinger acknowl-
edged that the Nixon Adminis-
tration had told Saigon that if
it cooperated with the cease-
fire, Congress would probably
appropriate needed aid funds.
But no mention was made of
assurances about reaction to a
Communist offensive.

The question of a possible
assurances in case of a Com-
munist offensive was raised
when the Ambassador Tran
Kim Phuong of South Vietnam
said on television last week
that the United States had
promised that "it would not
stand idly by" in case of a new
conflict, but was doing just
that.

When the State Department
was asked whether the United
States had promised to inter-
vene militarily, the State De-
partment said "there was no
such specific commitment."
There is no record of Mr. Kis-
singer's being asked about such
a pledge.

The entire development
seemed to have more political
than diplomatic ramifications.
The White House seemed de-
termined to demonstrate that
Mr. Jackson's charges of "se-
cret agreements," with the im-
plication of deception, were
unfounded.

Mr. Ford was reported to
have told Congressional leaders
today that there were no secret
agreements.

Representative John B. An-
derson, Republican of Illinois,
said after the meeting:

"We were assured that there
are no private, off-the-record
assurances on the part of this
Government to the Government
of South Vietnam."

Mr. Anderson said that Mr.
Ford had told the group there
were "no hidden chapters yet
to be revealed."

Accusation by Jackson

Yesterday, on the Senate
floor, Mr. Jackson, Democrat
of Washington and a leading
contender for the 1976 Demo-
cratic Presidential nomination,
said:

"I have been reliably informed
that there exist between the
governments of the United
States and South Vietnam se-
cret agreements which envision
fateful American decisions yet
whose very existence has never
been acknowledged."

Mr. Jackson said he did not
actually know the details of the
agreements but had been told
of their existence in recent
days by a highly reliable in-
formant. He demanded that the
White House make them public
and that Secretary of State
Kissinger, if necessary, be sum-
moned under oath to testify.
He repeated that demand today.

After consultations with Mr.
Kissinger, Mr. Nessen issued
the following statement:

"Assurances to the Republic
of Vietnam as to both United
States assistance and United
States enforcement of the Paris
agreement were stated clearly
and publicly by President
Nixon.

"The publicly stated policy
and intention of the United
States Government to continue
to provide adequate economic
and military assistance and to
react vigorously to major viola-
tions of the Paris agreement re-

flected confidential exchanges
between the Nixon Administra-
tion and President Thieu at the
time.

"In substance, the private ex-
changes do not differ from what
was stated publicly. The law of
1973, of course, ruled out the
possibility of American military
reaction to violations of the
agreement."

Documents Not Released

In answer to questions, Mr.
Nessen said he would not make
the private assurances public
because such documents are not
usually released.

Mr. Jackson said in his Senate speech that Mr. Ford had only just learned of the "secret agreements," but Mr. Nessen said the assurances were made known to President Ford "a day or so after taking office."

Mr. Nessen was pressed for the exact wording of the secret documents, particularly as they might relate to American military involvement, but he insisted that there was no difference between what was said in public and in private in early 1973.

Although the White House statement fell short of confirming that there were actual secret agreements, Mr. Jackson clearly felt his original charge had been vindicated.

At a news conference today, he said the White House should make public the communications to President Thieu.

Mr. Jackson said that if they were just a reiteration of what Mr. Nixon had said publicly, wouldn't have waited until today to engage in what I call a confession."

He repeated his call for a Congressional investigation, contending that the White House statement cast doubt on its whole Indochina policy.

Mike Mansfield, the Senate Majority Leader, said that there should be an investigation by the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees.

A review of public statements made by President Nixon in 1973 supports the White House contention that the United States had pledged continued aid to Saigon and had left open the possibility of military involvement. There was no record of any private assurances to President Thieu.

Mr. Kissinger, then President Nixon's adviser on national security affairs, began cease-fire negotiations with Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam in Paris in October, 1972. With an accord in sight, Mr. Kissinger flew to Saigon to persuade President Thieu to accept the accord.

From all accounts, Mr. Kissinger assured Mr. Thieu that the United States would keep air and naval forces in the area to be pressed into service in case of a new conflict.

Mr. Thieu refused to go along with the accord and this delayed an agreement until January, 1973, after the United States had bombed Hanoi over Christmas.

In that period, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., then Mr. Kissinger's deputy, went to Saigon with further assurances. This was the time when President Nixon's letter was delivered.

Accord barred U. S. Role

The Paris accord barred all combat activity by the United States, but allowed military aid on a one-for-one basis to replace equipment. There was no ban on economic aid.

In a news conference after the initialing of the accord, Mr. Kissinger said on Jan. 24, 1973, that aid would be sought for Saigon, but he refused to answer a "hypothetical question" on what the United States would do in case of a new offense. ✕

The first threat by the United States to use force against North Vietnam occurred in Mr. Nixon's news conference on March 15, 1973. Alarmed by reported infiltration into the South, Mr. Nixon said:

"We have informed the North Vietnamese of our concern about this infiltration. I would suggest that the North Vietnamese should not lightly disregard such expressions of concern.