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Nixon Rules Out Gen. Lavelle Trial

WASHINGTON —(CST)— President Nixon has ruled out a court martial for Gen. John D. Lavelle, who bombed North Vietnam in violation of orders.

The President also supported the military establishment in its demands for new bombers and missiles, despite the arms limitation agreement he negotiated at the Moscow summit.

Without the additional weapons, he warned, the Soviet Union would be able to "seriously jeopardize the security of the United States" by the late 1970's and there

would be "no chance" for further arms accords.

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird has called for \$25 billion in added spending for a new supersonic bomber, the B-1, and a longer-range, missile-carrying submarine, the Trident.

He told the Senate Armed Services Committee Tuesday that he would urge the scrapping of the summit agreement unless Congress approved the new weapons.

Nixon, at a quickly summoned press conference yesterday at the White House, did not go so far. He supported Laird's justification

of the weapons as "sound." But he did not link the weapons to the agreement, which he said should be considered on its own "merits."

"I would not have signed those agreements," he declared, "unless I had believed that, standing alone, they were in the interest of the United States."

On the other hand, he argued that it was vital that Congress approve the weapons after endorsing the agreement.

"The SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement) important as it is, by itself, does not deal with the total defense posture of the

United States. By itself it is in the interest of the United States and it stands on its own.

"But by itself, without a continuing offensive program, we can be sure that the security interests of the United States would be very seriously jeopardized and the chances for a permanent offensive agreement would, in my opinion, be totally destroyed."

Nixon commented on the Lavelle affair in response to a question as to what he intended to do about demands that the general be court martialled.

He replied that Laird had taken the "appropriate decision" in relieving Lavelle as Air Force commander in Indochina, demoting him and retiring him on a pension of \$30,000 a year. He was "not going beyond that," Nixon declared.

Lavelle admitted, in House testimony last week, that he had ordered as many as 20 unauthorized bombing raids late last year within days of the breakdown of secret peace talks between the North Vietnamese and National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger.

Several members of Congress have demanded a court martial for Lavelle, arguing that failure to punish him would set a precedent for further insubordination.

But the President's comments on the case, as well as on the weapons controversy, made it clear he does not intend to get into a fight with the military in this election year.