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Gen. Abrams Sworn In-- Ordered Back to Vietnam

Washington

General Creighton W. Abrams became the Army's 26th chief of staff yesterday and was immediately ordered back to Vietnam for a new assessment of the war.

Abrams, who will study U.S. and NATO activities in Europe after he finishes his Vietnam visit, was sworn in as the Army's top-ranking soldier by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird during ceremonies on the Pentagon's parade ground.

"Secretary Laird has asked General Abrams to make an on-the-scene evaluation of Vietnamization progress," Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said.

Abrams left Saigon in June after serving four years as the U. S. commander in Southeast Asia. Friedheim said Abrams would remain in South Vietnam for about a week. After reporting to Laird, Friedheim

said, Abrams would spend another week in Europe.

The Pentagon spokesman said Laird would use Abrams' report on his European trip to prepare for the annual NATO defense planning committee meeting in December.

Yesterday's swearing-in ceremony came almost four months after President Nixon nominated the stocky, cigar-smoking general to replace retired General William C. Westmoreland.

Much of the delay resulted from Senate hearings which concluded Abrams had no knowledge of U. S. bombing raids early this year which violated President Nixon's orders limiting U. S. bomber attacks over North Vietnam.

Before administering the oath of office, Laird presented Abrams with the Distinguished Service Medal for "exceptional meritorious service" in Vietnam. He called Abrams "a brilliant combat leader and a versa-

tile officer of faultless dedication and loyalty."

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