

Agnew Celebrates the Holiday on Flight to Singapore

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SINGAPORE, July 4—Vice President Agnew raised a glass to both friends and critics as he celebrated July 4 some 5,000 feet above the South China Sea en route from Seoul to Singapore.

Lifting a glass of champagne with his staff and traveling newsmen, Mr. Agnew said:

"Most of us understand the course our country has embarked on over the years, and prove of it. We may find fault with some specificities of certain actions, but certainly each of us is a patriot in his own way, and we try to serve

our country within our understanding of what should be done.

"In honor of this occasion, which is creeping up towards 200 years of the history of a great nation—Ladies and gentlemen, to the country."

Mr. Agnew then drank a toast and began slicing into a cake brought aboard by his staff to mark Independence Day.

Earlier, a relaxed Mr. Agnew held a brief on-board news conference with reporters, during which he asserted that President Nixon would like to speed up troop withdrawals from Indochina if it could be accomplished without weakening South Vietnam's chances for survival.

"I'm certain from my conversations with the President and his advisers that it is his desire to accelerate the withdrawals," he said, "if it can be done, without jeopardizing the objective of leaving South Vietnam in a position to defend itself. Now that doesn't mean that we must underwrite fully forever the Thieu Government. They must take over their own defense in due course. It does mean that they must have a fighting chance to survive under conditions that we went in there to protect."

Senior officers of the Pacific command who briefed reporters in Korea yesterday voiced the strong opinion that the present rate of withdrawals,

which averages about 14,000 men a month, and which will reduce authorized troop strength in Vietnam to 184,000 men by Dec. 1, was the maximum feasible level of troop reductions. Any faster rate, they said, would seriously jeopardize South Vietnamese security and Mr. Nixon's program of Vietnamization.

Singapore Is Second Stop

Mr. Agnew's comments came as Air Force Two, the Vice Presidential Jet, prepared to land here for the second stop of his 10-nation tour of the world. In the next three weeks, he will also visit Kuwait, Ethiopia, Spain, Morocco, and Portugal.

The trip is essentially an old-fashioned goodwill mission designed to touch base with various countries friendly to the United States. No substantive discussions of major importance are apparently planned, although Mr. Agnew had hoped to discuss high-level matters in Seoul, which he left this morning after a week's stay. He did not do so, he asserted at the news conference, because President Chung Hee Park of Korea "considered my appearance to be a ceremonial one" and apparently preferred to deal with other United States civilian and military officials on specific issues.

Tomorrow, the Vice President will pay a courtesy call on Dr. Benjamin Sheares, President of the Republic of Singapore, meet with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at lunch, and golf in the afternoon.