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Nixon Policy

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Won't Send GIs Back In

WASHINGTON — (AP) — President Nixon has ruled out for now the reintroduction of U.S. ground forces to repel the enemy thrust into South Vietnam. But he is holding open his option of sending waves of American war planes against North Vietnamese targets.

The President's stance was reported by reliable sources after Nixon and his top advisers held an urgent round of conferences yesterday to ponder ways of countering the strongest Communist push since Tet of 1968.

As the strategy sessions continue, Administration spokesmen are stressing that turning back the Communist offensive is a "South Vietnamese operation."

Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler used that phrase twice at a briefing where he reported Nixon was "watching the situation very closely."

Ziegler also cited as "totally reflective of the overall Administration view" a statement by State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey that the North Vietnamese attack was an invasion across the Demilitarized Zone in violation of the 1968 "understanding" between the United States and North Vietnam.

That 1968 understanding — although never acknowledged by North Vietnam — led President Johnson to suspend bombing raids deep into North Vietnamese territory.

The McCloskey - Ziegler statements seemed to leave open the possibility of re-

suming U.S. air strikes well inside North Vietnam — a possibility later reinforced by disclosure of Nixon's position.

The sources' use of the word "reintroduction" in relation to U.S. ground forces apparently would allow Nixon to order remaining American combat troops to repulse any Communist attack on U.S. installations.

Nixon declared months ago that the U.S. ground combat role had ended, and his reluctance to send U.S. troops into battle now fits with his expressed confidence that South Vietnam is prepared to withstand the long-expected Communist offensive.

Pentagon officials said seven U.S. combat maneuver battalions — totaling about 10,000 men — are still in Vietnam but are committed to the security of U.S. installations there.