

Nixon Indirectly Criticizes Soviet Arms Aid to Hanoi

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WASHINGTON, April 10 — In a clear allusion to the Soviet Union's military aid to North Vietnam's forces, President Nixon said today that the big powers had a special responsibility to discourage others from mounting attacks on neighbors.

Although no nation was named, Mr. Nixon's remarks were seen as part of the Administration's effort to focus attention on the Soviet Union's aid program, which has provided Hanoi with tanks, artillery and missile. In Washington's view this aid has made possible the offensive against South Vietnam.

Every "great power," the President said, must follow the principle that it should not encourage, "directly or indirectly, other nations to use force or armed aggression against its

neighbors."

In a news conference Friday, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird criticized the Russians for placing "no restraints" on Hanoi's use of Soviet equipment outside North Vietnam. The State Department had said earlier that the attack could not have been made without Soviet equipment.

Mr. Nixon, who had not previously spoken, even indirectly, about the offensive, couched his comments today in diplomatic language unlikely to offend the Russians publicly or jeopardize plans for his Moscow trip next month.

He spoke at ceremonies at the State Department marking the signing of a United Nations convention that bars the

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Moscow's Military Aid to Hanoi Is Indirectly Criticized by Nixon

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development and production of biological and toxin weapons and calls for the destruction of stocks of such weapons. Similar ceremonies were held in Moscow and London.

At about the time these ceremonies were taking place, Mr. Laird was asserting at the Pentagon that additional American air and naval forces would be sent to Southeast Asia to show "the determination" of the United States to counter the North Vietnamese offensive.

Mr. Laird, reflecting the Administration's fairly optimistic appraisal of the battlefield situation, said that Saigon's forces were performing well and had "destroyed over 100 of North Vietnam's tanks," in Quangtri Province alone.

Mr. Nixon, in hailing the prohibition of biological weapons, said that the treaty would allow the world's scientists to "devote their entire work toward the end of disease." But he said that the treaty was only a "means to an end"—an end to the threat of war.

"Insofar as that goal is concerned," he said, "we begin with one proposition, and that is, that each nation of the world must renounce the use of force, the use of aggression against other nations."

"We must also recognize another proposition," he continued, "and that is, that a great responsibility particularly rests upon the great powers, that every great power must follow the principle that it should not encourage directly, or indirectly, any other nation to use force or armed aggression against its neighbors."

Administration officials, who asked later whether Mr. Nixon was directing his remarks specifically to the situation in Vietnam, said they were "not related" to Vietnam, but stressed that they also had wider application.

The Administration has regularly said that Moscow seeks to take advantage of tense situations, such as the recent war between India and Pakistan, in which Moscow backed the Indians. Mr. Nixon has stated that he hopes to discuss with Soviet officials in Moscow the possibility of an agreement on joint restraint by the two largest nuclear powers to avoid conflicts between other countries.

Despite some harsh words directed toward Moscow by Mr. Laird, the Administration has not sought to dwell on the Soviet involvement in Vietnam, and, the State Department said, no diplomatic approaches have

been made during the current fighting to get Moscow to use its influence on Hanoi to stop the offensive.

Administration officials, however, would not rule out the possibility that Mr. Nixon might contact Soviet leaders in coming days to repeat his belief that Moscow should urge some restraint on North Vietnam.

Diplomatic and military tactics were discussed again this morning at a meeting of the Washington Special Action Group, made up of representatives from Government agencies, which meets regularly during crisis situations. The group is headed by Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security.

The Defense Department reported that so far 12 of North Vietnam's 15 known divisions were engaged in the fighting outside its boundaries. This conflicted with an earlier report that all divisions were committed, and with one that 13 divisions were engaged.

Mr. Nixon has authorized statements pointing up the role played by Soviet military aid in the fighting to dramatize that the North Vietnamese were now using modern, conventional weapons.

The Administration has justified the stepped-up use of American sea and air power in part as a response to the "qualitatively" different kind of attack by the North Vietnamese. State Department and Defense Department officials have stressed that the North Vietnamese were using Soviet-made long-range artillery and anti-aircraft missiles for the first time in South Vietnam.

The Administration has been careful to avoid accusing the Russians of inspiring the North Vietnamese offensive, and officials have said there was no evidence of any recent dramatic increase in Soviet arms shipments to North Vietnam.

The general intelligence estimate here has been that the Soviet Union, to demonstrate support for Hanoi's cause, has given North Vietnam as much military equipment as it has asked for, and has not placed any strings in its use. Most experts also assume that the Soviet Union—which last month sent a high-level military mission to Hanoi—was not unaware of North Vietnam's plans.

In the past, the United States had sought Soviet help in ending the Vietnam war, but the Administration has come to the conclusion that Moscow has refrained out of fear that North Vietnam might turn to China and possibly accuse Moscow of lack of support.