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Nixon's TV Report On War

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President Nixon announced last night the United States will withdraw another 20,000 troops from Vietnam during May and June but that air and naval attacks on the north will continue until Hanoi stops its offensive.

Speaking over television and radio from his White House office, the President said the North Vietnamese have failed to win politically and that General Creighton Abrams, U.S. commander in South Vietnam, believes they will fail militarily.

Then, in obvious response to demands by some for a complete and immediate U.S. pullout, Mr. Nixon said:

"There one remaining hope is to win in the Congress of the United States, and among the people of the United States, the victory they cannot win among the people of South Vietnam or on the battlefield in South Vietnam.

RATE

The withdrawal rate announced by the President is less than half the pace at which American soldiers have been leaving South Vietnam for the past three months.

However, Henry A. Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, said the slowdown in the withdrawal was not the result of the massive offensive launched by North Vietnam in March but instead was in line with plans formulated late last year.

At the end of last week, the U.S. had 76,500 ground troops in South Vietnam with the number scheduled to drop to 69,000 by next Monday.

The additional withdrawal
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announced by the President will reduce the troop level to 49,000 on July 1, still short of the residual force of 25,000 to 35,000 which the President has indicated he will leave in Vietnam until U.S. war prisoners are released.

With the number of ground troops coming down, the Navy alone could soon have more personnel involved in the offshore war than the U.S. has stationed inside South Vietnam.

Nearly 40,000 sailors are on ships off the coast now, and several more ships are on the way.

Mr. Nixon did not mention a date for further withdrawals, as he has in previous statements about the troop level. There was no indication when or whether another such date might be set.

PLEDGE

Speaking about Vietnam for the first time since the North Vietnamese launched their invasion through the demilitarized zone the day before Easter, the President said, "We will not be defeated and we will never surrender our friends to Communist aggression."

The President's announcement came 24 hours after the U.S. announced it will return today to the Paris peace talks that were suspended last month after the U.S. charged the negotiations were being used for propaganda purposes.

"We are not resuming the Paris talks simply in order to hear more empty propaganda and bombast from the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong delegates," the President said, "but to get on with the constructive business of making peace."

"We are resuming the Paris talks with the firm ex-

pectation that productive talks leading to rapid progress will follow through all available channels. As far as we are concerned, the first order of business will be to get the enemy to halt his invasion of South Vietnam, and to return the American prisoners of war."

REJECTION

Mr. Nixon had, as he put it, "flatly rejected" the Communists' proposal that the U.S. agree to stop bombing as a condition for getting the peace talks re-started.

"They sold that package to the United States once before, in 1968," he said, "and we are not going to buy it again in 1972."

Kissinger said the return to the peace table does not mean the U.S. will talk indefinitely in the absence of some progress. It should be determined by the time Mr. Nixon goes to Moscow May 22 whether a Vietnam settlement is possible, he said.

Kissinger said the U.S. position still requires enemy troops to be withdrawn through the demilitarized zone into North Vietnam.

Mr. Nixon said more than 120,000 North Vietnamese troops are now involved in the fighting in the south.

OUTCOME

Although battlefield reports indicate the outcome is still in doubt, particularly in the central highlands, the President said, "The South Vietnamese are fighting courageously and well in their self-defense, and inflicting very heavy casualties on the invading force, which has not gained the easy victory some predicted for it three weeks ago.

"General Abrams predicts that there will be several more weeks of very hard fighting in which some battles will be lost and others will be won by the South Vietnamese.

"But he is convinced that, if we continue to provide air and sea support, the enemy will fail in its desperate gamble to impose a Communist regime on South Viet-

nam, and that the South Vietnamese will then have demonstrated their ability to defend themselves on the ground against future enemy attack.

PLANES

Nevertheless, there were reports yesterday that the U.S. is sending an additional 36 F-4 fighter-bombers to join the air buildup in Vietnam, bringing to about 200 the number of bombers and fighter-bombers added by the Air Force since the Communist invasion.

The President made no reference in his speech to the numbers for Americans involved in the air and naval war. But he said, "Our air strikes have been essential in protecting our own remaining forces and in assisting the South Vietnamese in their efforts to protect their homes and their country from a Communist takeover."

The air and naval attacks launched in response to the invasion, the President said, have served three purposes: To protect American forces still in South Vietnam, to permit U.S. withdrawals to continue, and to prevent imposition of Communist rule on the South Vietnamese.

He said these attacks "will not be stopped until the invasion stops."