

No U.S. Options in War

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The failure of all diplomatic efforts, private and public, to make any progress toward a Vietnam settlement has left the United States with virtually no options that could affect the course of the war, according to U.S. government officials.

These sources acknowledge a likely increase of American air raids against battlefield targets in the South as well as more strategic areas in North Vietnam, but they say these are not expected to be decisive in thwarting the invasion.

You can say the outcome will be determined on the

ground," one official said, and while the American bombing will help morale and perhaps slow the North-erners, "It's not really going to change the outcome."

Although the standard American position is that President Nixon is keeping all options open short of using nuclear weapons and reintroducing U.S. ground troops, the officials said the most likely and immediate actions will be these:

- Intensification of the air strikes against the North Vietnamese units in the South.

- A strong effort to cut the oil and gasoline supply

lines from the North, including a pipeline originating near the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

- "A searching of the woodwork" for any sign of a negotiating possibility.

This last point, was acknowledged by the officials as probably bearing a dead horse, particularly in light of the U.S. assessment yesterday that the most recent negotiating efforts, both at the public table in Paris and in private channels, were entirely fruitless.

It was learned that a try at obtaining Soviet intervention to convince Hanoi to negotiate seriously had ended

with no results, a development that led officials to gloomy assessments of the situation.

If it is true the outcome is going to be determined by the South Vietnamese ability to fight off the attack, the officials were asked, then what are their chances?

The responses varied from complete skepticism to relative optimism that the change in some commands in combination with alleged heavy losses by the other side will change the tide of fighting.

But the widest consensus was that the outcome cannot be predicted and it is now a

matter of waiting, a position voiced by White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler.

One official noted what he described as "the irony of the American position laid out by President Nixon."

"He pledged he would take any action to keep South Vietnam from being conquered, except using the bomb or sending our troops back in. But those are the only things that can now make any difference.

"So, Nixon's pledge can be kept in only two ways — a voluntary halt by Hanoi or a change on the battlefield — events he now has no control over."