

U.S. Criticism of Soviet's Role In Vietnam Renewed by Rogers

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BRUSSELS, May 5—Secretary of State William P. Rogers told the Atlantic alliance today that the United States believes the Soviet Union "bears a responsibility" for North Vietnam's invasion of South Vietnam and that President Nixon will raise this matter with Soviet leaders during his forthcoming Moscow visit.

In a formal, two-hour presentation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization council, Mr. Rogers also called on the European allies to support Mr. Nixon's determination to stand by American commitments to Vietnam.

He warned that if the United States pulled out of South Vietnam precipitately, this would inevitably lead to questioning of the solidity of the United States' commitment to NATO.

Officials who were present during Mr. Rogers' strongly worded remarks on Vietnam said that none of the representatives from the other 14 NATO countries commented publicly, one way or the other, about Vietnam in the discussion period that followed.

By reviving public objections to the Soviet Union's refusal to restrain the North Vietnamese, Mr. Rogers ended a two-week pause in which Washington had refrained from such criticisms on the Russians as it sought Moscow's aid in getting North Vietnam to halt the offensive and begin productive negotiations.

Comments on Negotiations

But these diplomatic efforts—dramatized by the secret mission to Moscow by Henry A. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's national security adviser, from April 20 to 24—have so far produced no results. The United States and Saigon yesterday announced an indefinite suspension in the Paris talks, and Mr. Rogers today said that North Vietnam had shown "no willingness" to settle the war at the negotiation table.

He contrasted Hanoi's attitude with what he called the flexibility of the United States' approach to negotiations. He reaffirmed that the United States stood ready to negotiate a combined military and political solution of the war or simply a military one if that was preferred by Hanoi. He repeated, however, that the United States would continue to use whatever force was necessary and for as long as necessary to turn back the North Vietnamese invasion.

Mr. Rogers left the impression with some people at the meeting that the United States might consider the bombing of civilian targets in retaliation.

In his remarks—as summarized and made available to newsmen by a United States official who was at the session held at NATO headquarters here—Mr. Rogers stressed that Hanoi's Soviet-made heavy artillery was being used to damage and in some cases destroy civilian dwelling areas and terrorize the civilian population in the South.

Mr. Rogers said that the United States "intends to use its air and sea power in North

Vietnam as well as in the South."

The juxtaposition of those remarks suggested that Mr. Nixon might be threatening attacks on civilian areas as part of the psychological pressure being put on North Vietnam to halt its invasion of the South.

Mr. Rogers was asked by a member of the NATO council what the United States meant by the frequently uttered remark—made in London again yesterday by Mr. Rogers—that Mr. Nixon would take whatever military action was necessary to stop North Vietnam.

In response, Mr. Rogers said—according to the American official—that he excluded only the use of nuclear weapons and the reintroduction of United States ground forces.

"We do not intend to say more than that," he said. United States officials have always insisted that the bombing in North Vietnam is limited to military targets. Mr. Nixon himself last week ruled out raids on North Vietnam's dikes because the released floods would cause civilian casualties.

But the mood surrounding this trip by Mr. Rogers, who is making an official eight-nation, eight-day swing through Western Europe to inform Allied officials about Mr. Nixon's Moscow talks, has become extremely dour whenever the subject of Vietnam has arisen.

Effect of Crisis Considered

Some Western officials have asked Mr. Rogers whether the Vietnam crisis might lead to a postponement or cancellation of the Moscow visit, set to begin in 17 days. But Mr. Rogers, as he again did today, has insisted that so far the evidence is that the Russians want the trip to go ahead and the United States does also. He refuses to rule out the possibility that events may so develop that the trip will be called off.

The Vietnam situation, however, has already seemed to affect the atmosphere of the Moscow meeting in advance.

The NATO officials were told by Mr. Rogers today, for instance, not to expect any dramatic changes in Soviet-American relations as a result of the trip. Except for an anticipated first-stage agreement on the limitation of strategic arms, Mr. Rogers does not expect any landmark agreements to emerge.

In a very busy day Mr. Rogers also met with Belgian officials and with officials of the Common Market. He left late in the day for Luxembourg, the fourth stop of his visit.