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Nixon Aides

Opposed

Bombing

SF Examiner

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Most of President Nixon's close advisers counseled him against bombing Hanoi and Haiphong because they feared it could cost him the November election, a high Administration official says.

Reporters present were pledged not to reveal the official's name, but CBS, which did not attend the meeting, said it had learned from independent sources that the official is Treasury Secretary John B. Connally.

The official said Nixon decided to escalate the U.S. response to North Vietnam's Easter Week ground offensive because the President was convinced he would not have a "viable foreign policy" unless he did.

Cool, Calculating

"If I don't do what I should do to protect the future of this country then it is questionable whether I could have a viable foreign policy even if I were re-elected," the official quoted Nixon.

"If by doing what I think I must do, it means the election of someone else, then at least it will give him a chance to have a viable, credible foreign policy in his administration." Nixon was quoted as saying.

Nixon was described as cool, calm, calculated and detached in reaching the decision to intensify the use of airpower to meet the Communist offensive.

Only one or two of Nixon's advisers advocated the

--From Page 1

course the President eventually chose, the official said. The rest advised against it.

After Nixon decided to do whatever is necessary to repel the North Vietnamese offensive, he set few limits on possible action. The official said the response could go beyond bombing Hanoi and Haiphong although he declined to spell out details.

Planned Response

Nixon began at least three months ago to plan his response to the expected offensive, the official said, and he met secretly with small groups of advisers.

Although administration spokesmen have said the reason for the use of U.S. airpower is to protect remaining American troops, seek return of prisoners of war and prevent a Communist conquest of South Vietnam, the official said Nixon had a broader purpose.

He said the U.S. position as military and political leader of the free world is at stake.

Nixon was said to believe that if he ordered bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong that the leaders of other governments, although they might criticize him in public, would say in private: "By God, he will stand up."

Nixon has said frequently that if Democratic presidential candidates try to make a major issue of the war, "they will have the rug pulled out from under them." The official conceded that the war may now be a potent issue to use against Nixon.

—Turn to Page 2, Col. 7