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# NIXON TO PULL OUT 150,000 FROM VIETNAM IN A YEAR; SAYS HANOI BLOCKS PEACE

## SPEECH TO NATION

### Withdrawal Rate to Be Much the Same as That So Far

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Special to The New York Times

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., April 20—President Nixon announced tonight that he planned to withdraw 150,000 more American troops from Vietnam over the next year.

In a nationally televised address from his office in the western White House, Mr. Nixon declared that the progress in training and equipping South Vietnamese forces had "substantially exceeded our original expectations last June."

This progress, he said, made possible a long-range plan that would reduce the authorized ceiling on American troops in Vietnam from the present level of 434,000 to 284,000 by next spring.

At the same time, however, he said he could report absolutely no progress on the negotiating front. He fixed all of the blame on the enemy.

#### Hanoi 'Blocking' Peace

"It is Hanoi and Hanoi alone," he said, "that stands today blocking the path to a just peace for the peoples of South-east Asia."

The new withdrawals, while large, will proceed at essentially the same rate that has prevailed since the withdrawal program began last June—about 12,000 men a month.

Officials here insisted that there would be significant withdrawals in the early months of the 12-month period, which begins in May, but conceded that the program was sufficiently flexible to allow for smaller withdrawals at the beginning and larger increments at the end.

#### Allegiance To Saigon

On the diplomatic side, the President reaffirmed his allegiance to the present Saigon regime but said that his fundamental objective was a "political solution that reflects the will of the South Vietnamese people."

This could be achieved, he indicated, either through free elections or through some other settlement that reflects "the existing relationship of political forces" in South Vietnam.

"We will abide by the outcome of the political process agreed upon," he said. "President Thieu and I have repeatedly stated our willingness to accept the free decision of the South Vietnamese people, but we will not agree to the arrogant demands that the elected leaders of the Government of Vietnam be overthrown before real negotiations can begin."

Mr. Nixon's withdrawal announcement was consistent with the latest speculation from

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Washington about what he would do. Most observers had predicted that he would continue to withdraw troops at a rate of 12,000 a month. What was unexpected in his announcement was his decision to adopt a long-range schedule of withdrawals and to commit himself to the removal of 150,000 men over that period.

It was disclosed ten days ago that the Joint Chiefs had pleaded with Mr. Laird to intercede with the President and obtain a delay of as much as 60 days in any further announcements of withdrawals. Their basic argument was that recent enemy thrusts in Laos and Cambodia had introduced new elements of uncertainty into the war. They further contended that defensive positions in some areas of South Vietnam would become dangerously thin if two or more combat divisions were pulled out over the summer.

Mr. Laird rejected their

year starting July 1. Mr. Laird felt that his position was strengthened by a three-week inspection trip by an Administration team of Vietnam planners last month. The survey resulted in generally favorable reports on the progress of the South Vietnamese military force and on the extension of Government control into the countryside.

Yesterday, there were reports in Washington that the Administration was considering a new troop-reduction formula that would serve as a compromise between Mr. Nixon's civilian and military planners.

According to the report, the compromise called for the President to announce withdrawals of 45,000 to 50,000 men over four months—consistent with the existing pull-out rate of 12,000 men a month.

#### Private Instructions

At the same time, military commanders in Saigon would be given private instructions to increase that total by 10,000 to 20,000 men toward the end of the summer, if it then appeared that potential problems in Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam were not materializing.

The President's speech tonight went through at least 10 drafts, and he was still working on its contents late this afternoon. The basic drafts were written by Raymond K. Price, Jr., a presidential speechwriter.

Mr. Price was one of a handful of aides who accompanied the President on his trip to

Houston and to Honolulu, where he awarded the Medal of Freedom to the three Apollo 13 astronauts.

The trip has given the President and his staff a visible lift. Beset as he has been with domestic political difficulties over the last several weeks—caused largely by the fight over the nomination to the Supreme Court of G. Harrold Carswell—Mr. Nixon seemed to

relish the opportunity to take an active public role in the ceremonies marking the completion of the Apollo 13 mission and to return, as he did tonight, to the complexities of diplomacy and foreign affairs. Difficult and trying as his diplomatic problems are, Mr. Nixon has always appeared to feel more at home with them than with his domestic difficulties.

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