

Agnew Says Hanoi's at End of Rope

Associated Press

Washington

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew said yesterday he thinks the North Vietnamese forces are overextended, "debilitated and decimated" and unable to continue their fight in South Vietnam and neighboring states.

"They have 67,000 troops in Laos right now, they have 40,000 troops in Cambodia," he said.

"They're trying to fight a war in Vietnam. They've been in a war for years and years and they're quite debilitated and decimated and I don't think they're capable, with any kind of resistance, to continue this fight."

DIMINUTION

To a newsman who questioned that statement, Agnew said, "You would admit, I believe, there has been a great diminution in their capability and their activity in recent years."

"You mean 'light at the end of the tunnel'?" he was asked.

Agnew paused, smiled and said, "Yes. Exactly."

Agnew was interviewed on CBS' "Face the Nation."

He reiterated the Administration position that U.S. in-

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cursions into Cambodia are necessary to ensure that U.S. forces can continue to withdraw from Vietnam without danger of attack from Communist sanctuaries.

He said the policy of withdrawal is not in question.

"We know we can't win a land war in Southeast Asia, that's perfectly obvious," he said. "Vietnamization is the proper course to pursue to disinvolve American fighting men from this war while at the same time preventing the Communists into areas where the people don't want them."

Agnew said as far as he knows reported U.S. air attacks on North Vietnam were in accordance with the long-established American policy of protecting unarmed reconnaissance planes from antiaircraft fire.

O'BRIEN

Almost immediately after the broadcast, Lawrence F. O'Brien, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, asserted that Agnew's comments and the Administration's moves "mean, in effect, that the American policy of disengagement has ended."

O'Brien said in a statement that Agnew "made it clear that the Administration intends to consolidate its territorial gains. This means the establishment of a new front in Cambodia in the prolonged ground war which the vice president himself admitted we cannot win."

Agnew said those who dissent violently should be "put down."

"The lawbreakers always like to attribute their illegal and criminal actions to some cause that will gain sympathy for them," he said.

'OUTRAGEOUS'

"I don't think many are really honestly sincere about the cause. I think they're simply utilizing this as a vehicle to continue their antisocial, outrageous conduct, and I think when the war is over they'll find something else to use as an excuse for throwing firebombs . . ."

Agnew, reminded that President Nixon once promised "a lowering of voices," defended his own strong statements.

"When a fire takes place a man doesn't run into a room and whisper, 'please get the water.' He yells 'fire.' And I'm yelling 'fire' as I think 'fire' needs to be called."