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# Truce: A Jigsaw Puzzle

## Seen From Saigon, Nixon Cease-Fire Plan Raises Complicated Questions

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 9—South Vietnamese and American officials are puzzling over the kind of truce President Nixon has suggested for Indochina.

"The closer you look at it, the more complicated it gets," said one United States official.

Would a standstill cease-fire mean, diplomats and military

News commanders are asking, that the enemy units would get to keep the

Analysis areas they were occupying? Could they fly their flag there?

Would all enemy forces, including underground Communist leaders, have to emerge and identify themselves?

### Question of Supplies

If enemy units had to remain in place, could the North Vietnamese send down supplies for them or would the South Vietnamese Government have to feed them?

Would Hanoi be held responsible for any terrorist attacks that violated a cease-fire?

"A cease-fire means only what it's negotiated to mean," a qualified American official cautioned. "Don't form any preconceptions of how it might work."

As described here, the cease-fire proposed Wednesday night by President Nixon as part of his five-point peace initiative did not have to precede the talks and could embrace any conditions the parties saw fit to include.

Administration officials have acknowledged that the proposal was intentionally worded ambiguously to increase its acceptability to the other side.

If the President's proposals ever reach the discussion stage with the other side, the question of what to do with the enemy forces in South Vietnam is expected to be one of the toughest—not to mention the similar questions that would arise in Cambodia and Laos.

If a cease-fire were declared immediately in South Vietnam, who would be holding what, and where?

According to the latest official American figures, the accuracy of which has sometimes been challenged by critics, 92.8 per cent of South Vietnam's 18 million people are considered to be living in hamlets under generally secure Government control. This is the highest percentage in the figures since the United States became involved in the fighting.

The percentage of the population living in hamlets under the control of, or easily accessible to, the Vietcong is now put at 6.5 per cent. In January, it stood at more than 10 per cent and at the height of enemy influence, in February, 1968, more than 40 per cent of the country's 11,000 hamlets were rated as more or less controlled by the Vietcong.

The figures, compiled each month by the military command from questionnaires filled out by United States advisers in all districts, may help to explain why United States commanders have dropped their strenuous objections to a cease-fire.

Territorially, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese occupy much of the desolate, mountainous country in the west of the northernmost military quadrant, Military Region I, jungled western portions of Region II to the south, jungle in Region III north of Saigon and near the Cambodian border, and isolated mountain and forest enclaves in Region IV, the Mekong Delta.

### Enemy Put at 240,000

In terms of percentage, the ground the enemy holds is somewhat greater than the population it controls but in this kind of war, allied commanders say, holding deserted jungle is a poor substitute for control over the populated lowlands, rich in food, that the Government enjoys.

United States officials estimate the total enemy forces "targeted" against South Vietnam at somewhat more than 240,000 including enemy troops in border regions.

The figure officially is broken down as follows: 100,000 North Vietnamese, 40,000 regular Vietcong troops and 100,000 administrative officials and guerrillas.

Infiltration from the north this year is reported running at an average of 5,000 to 7,000 men a month, half the rate of last year.

The obvious decline in enemy activity, officially described largely as a consequence of the Cambodian operation, appears to account for the willingness of Pentagon officials to withdraw their objections to a cease-fire.

President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam has repeatedly pledged not to cede an inch of South Vietnamese territory to the Communists—as in any "leopard spot" solution of letting the enemy forces permanently control the areas they occupy at the time of any agreement.