

Nixon Adds Conditions to Viet Pullout

By Lewis Gulick

WASHINGTON — (AP) — President Nixon has added a new and potentially controversial element to the Vietnam situation by linking his proposed U.S. residual force to the Saigon government's ability to defend itself.

Hitherto Nixon has pictured American troop withdrawals generally as geared to what he terms Vietnamization, or the capability of South Vietnam increasingly to take over the combat burden.

He has proclaimed a goal of complete U.S. withdrawal

themselves, to take over from us the defense of their own country, a capacity that they rapidly are developing, we will have forces there."

Nixon additionally specified for the first time that the residual force would include air power.

'Retain Air Power'

"We must retain that air power, as well as residual forces, as long as we have the prisoner problem and as long as there is still a time needed for the South Vietnamese to develop the capability of self-defense," he said.

Nixon's linking of a residual force to South Vietnam's defense capability could disappear as an issue if, in the course of future pronouncements, he declares Vietnamization has succeeded to the point where American forces do not have to stay on for that reason.

On the other hand the Washington debate between supporters and opponents of Nixon's policy is focusing increasingly on what force, if any, should remain and how it would be used.

The President's next troop pullout announcement is slated for next fall. By then the

number of GIs remaining in South Vietnam is slated to have dropped below 200,000, compared with around 300,000 now.

At the rate the withdrawals are proceeding, American military contingents left in Vietnam could be down to near the zero point late next year — except for those kept on as a residual force.

News Analysis

while saying a residual force will be kept on as long as North Vietnam holds U.S. prisoners.

Talk to Editors

Speaking to an American Society of Newspaper Editors' panel Friday night, Nixon repeated his intention to retain a force in South Vietnam as a bargaining weight for freeing the hundreds of prisoners held by the North.

But he added a second reason for a residual force:

"As long as the South Vietnamese have not yet developed the capacity to defend

