

# U.S. Denies Navy Headed For Vietnam

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Washington

President Ford was described yesterday as being concerned about the increased fighting in South Vietnam and is "watching the situation closely," according to his press secretary, Ron Nessen.

But spokesmen for both the Pentagon and the White House insisted that the sailing of a Navy task force, headed by the aircraft carrier Enterprise, from the Philippines Monday night was "not connected with anything going on in South Vietnam."

William Beecher, the Pentagon spokesman, denied that the six ships that left Subic Bay are headed toward South Vietnam.

While declining to discuss the ultimate destination of the ships, both Beecher and Nessen said that the Navy force is heading in a southwest direction toward the Strait of Malacca, near Singapore.

Nessen said the administration has no intention of violating a congressional ban on U.S. military activity in or near Indochina.

"The United States and the President certainly are going to live up to the law," Nessen said.

Asked if the President is reviewing any contingency plans concerning South Viet-

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nam, Nessen said, "We never talk about contingency plans," but he added: "I'm not aware that he is."

Nessen also said that the meeting between Mr. Ford and Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger yesterday was to discuss "routine matters" and he quoted

Schlesinger as saying he did not plan to bring up the subject of Vietnam.

At the Pentagon, Beecher said the Navy task force consisted of the carrier Enterprise, the nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser Long Beach, two destroyers, an oiler and a support ship. He said the sailing date had been moved forward "at

least a couple of weeks ago," but gave no reason.

"I would not characterize it as an urgent mission," he said. He added that U.S. aircraft carriers have been in international waters off South Vietnam "from time to time" since the end of U.S. military involvement there.

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