

# DRIVE TO STEP UP WAR AID TO SAIGON OPENS IN CONGRESS

**JAN 31 1975**  
**Administration Says Hanoi  
Moves Troops to South  
—Offensive Hinted**

## THIEU WARNS OF DANGER

**He Terms U.S. Proposal for  
\$300-Million 'Minimum'  
Needed for Forces**  
**NY Times**

By **JOHN W. FINNEY**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30—The Administration opened an uphill battle in Congress today for additional military aid for the Saigon Government with a claim that North Vietnam was moving one and perhaps two other combat divisions into South Vietnam.

The suggestion by State and Defense Department officials was that North Vietnam might be getting into position for a major offensive, which South Vietnam would be unable to counter without additional military aid from the United States.

[In Saigon, President Nguyen Van Thieu termed the \$300-million in additional aid requested from the United States Congress "the minimum" that his forces needed to defend themselves against stepped-up Communist attacks. Page 3.]

Until now it had been the generally accepted appraisal within the Administration that North Vietnam, while intensifying its military pressure, was not preparing for a large-scale, countrywide offensive like those in 1968 and 1972. In large measure, this appraisal rested on the fact that the Hanoi Government had not committed any divisions in its strategic reserve in Laos and North Vietnam.

Defense and State Depart-

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ment officials told a House Appropriations subcommittee that the Administration believed North Vietnam would not carry out a major offensive in the next six months. But, according to officials, the recent movement of divisions in North Vietnam's strategic reserve has thrown a new and confusing factor into Administration calculations.

Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham in an unusual public briefing on the military situation in Vietnam, testified that a North Vietnamese division had "moved out of Laos into South Vietnam." He said the division, identified by the Pentagon as the 968th, began the movement about 10 days ago.

General Graham said there was "tentative information" that two other divisions were moving from North Vietnam into South Vietnam.

Philip C. Habib, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, told a reporter after the day-long hearing that the movement of the North Vietnamese divisions was being watched "with some concern" but that the significance remained unclear.

### 3 Explanations Offered

Among the possible explanations offered by Mr. Habib and General Graham were that the movement of the divisions represented a "feint" by North Vietnam, that the divisions would be used to reinforce expanded military activities in South Vietnam and, finally, that North Vietnam was preparing for a major offensive.

Whatever the North Vietnamese intentions, it was apparent that the movement of the divisions would become an important element in the Administration's argument to a reluctant Congress to provide \$300-million in military assistance to South Vietnam in addition to the \$700-million already approved.

The Defense and State Department officials rested their case for additional military aid largely on what they described as the need to prepare South Vietnam for a major North Vietnamese attack.

At no point during the hearing did they contend that with \$700-million in assistance South Vietnam would have insufficient ammunition and supplies to deal with the current or even an intensified level of fighting. Rather, their expressed concern was that if the fighting intensified over the

next six months, South Vietnam's supplies would drop to a level at which Saigon would not be able to counter an all-out offensive.

"A major drawdown in stocks must be anticipated as combat intensifies," Eric F. von Marbod, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, testified. "Continuation of the strict conservation measures will further erode the capability and willingness of the South Vietnamese to defend against enemy initiatives."

"The ensuing loss of territory and resources will undoubtedly encourage enemy aggression, and could encourage an attempt to launch an all-out offensive at a time when South Vietnamese stocks would be insufficient to counter such attack."

In the face of stiff Congressional opposition to the Administration request, the Defense Department went to unusual lengths in making public normally confidential intelligence information to support its case. In addition to the briefing by General Graham, Mr. von Marbod presented aerial reconnaissance photographs of North Vietnamese positions obviously taken by American planes over South Vietnam. He also described an "intercepted message" sent last November by the Communists in South Vietnam.

The message, which was described as "COSVN Resolution 75," was interpreted by Mr. von Marbod as "positive evidence" that the North Vietnamese intended to step up their offensive operations during the com-

ing months. The message as translated by the Defense Department, read in part:

"Enemy air and artillery capability now limited as a result of reductions in U.S. aid. In short the enemy is declining militarily and has no chance of regaining the position they held in 1973.

"On the other hand, our position is improving. We are now stronger than we were during the Tet offensive in 1968 and the summer of 1972. We now

have ample amounts of money, weapons and equipment which makes it possible for us to initiate a sustained attack on a wide front."

From the questioning it was obvious that the predominantly conservative subcommittee was troubled and divided over the Administration's request. Representative George H. Mahon of Texas, the subcommittee chairman, said the issue seemed to boil down to a question of whether the United States was

"honor bound" to provide additional military aid to South Vietnam.

Mr. Habib, who helped negotiate the 1973 Paris peace agreements for Southeast Asia, said Congressional failure to provide additional funds would not "breach any legal or written agreement" with South Vietnam. But he argued that the United States had "a moral obligation" to provide South Vietnam with military equipment to defend itself.