

Thieu Says \$300-Million Is Minimum Saigon Needs

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 30 — President Nguyen Van Thieu said today that the \$300-million in additional aid requested for his Government by the Ford Administration was "the minimum" that his forces needed to defend themselves from stepped-up North Vietnamese and Vietcong attacks.

Asked at a breakfast interview with a group of foreign journalists whether his side might "collapse" in 1975 if the United States Congress refused the extra assistance, Mr. Thieu said that "certainly '75 is too fast." But he added that "the situation will be very dangerous in 1975" if enough military aid is not provided.

Earlier this week, Mr. Thieu began granting interviews to foreign journalists, starting with those whose organizations have taken sympathetic editorial positions on the question of aid to South Vietnam.

Though he did not say so today, the quite evident intention of this renewed visibility is to improve the chances for the Ford Administration's \$300-million supplemental military appropriation request for Mr. Thieu's Government.

Speaks in English

The 51-year-old President, dressed in a blue business suit, seemed confident and at times even jovial as he spoke to the journalists in an upstairs dining room in Independence Palace. Mr. Thieu, who speaks good French, spoke in English, which he speaks pungently but with occasional problems with syntax and grammar.

The President said that after the American Congress last year halved the Ford Administration's \$1.4-billion request for military assistance to Saigon, the morale of troops here began to drop.

"Every time I go into the field to visit the field commanders," he said, "the only complaint is not to have enough ammunition, not to have enough mobility, not enough air support."

"We are fighting now a more cruel war," he said at another point, "with no B-52, with no tactical air, with no heavy artillery like we have before. We have consequently more wounded."

Mr. Thieu said "it is not yet time" to say that the United States has "betrayed" South Vietnam. But he said that "most of the people of South Vietnam" were beginning to believe that the Americans, who "lured" them into the struggle, were now abandoning them.

If Congress does not supply any more assistance, Mr. Thieu said: "We will continue to fight with what we have on hand."

Discussing his relations with the American Government

since the Jan. 27, 1973, Paris agreements, Mr. Thieu expressed considerable disenchantment with what he portrayed as the failure of superpower diplomacy and pressure to reduce the intensity of the war.

"Now if on the one hand," he said, "you can convince Russia and China to cooperate with you to maintain peace and stability like everyone believes when we sign the Paris agreement, like Dr. Kissinger have promised me, and if on the other hand you let us not to let the Communists to break up the balance of forces, certainly North Vietnam will not be a giant forever to attack indefinitely South Vietnam."

Mr. Thieu said he could confirm that Mr. Kissinger had twice declared that "Russia and China will be cooperative with the United States to restrain the supply of war provisions to Hanoi and to encourage Hanoi to abide by the Paris accord and to reach a political solution in South Vietnam."

The first such statement, the President said, came at the time of the signing of the Paris agreements, and the second during the Thieu visit to President Nixon at San Clemente, Calif., in April, 1973.

Mr. Thieu painted a picture of minimal American diplomatic intervention—or even interest—in Vietnamese affairs since the moribund cease-fire. In response to a question, he said: "There has not been any pressure from the United States Government to me to concede any way politically to the Communists."

Asked whether it would be "helpful" if Mr. Kissinger approached Hanoi, directly or through Moscow or Peking, to resume the political discussions with the Saigon Government that were broken off last year, Mr. Thieu replied: "I understand that Dr. Kissinger has no intention to do that and after the Paris agreement it is much better to let the Vietnamese parties talk to themselves and solve their problems."

U.S. Move Recalled

"But in saying so," he added, "I never object to any effort from anyone to encourage the others to come back to the peace table."

On Jan. 13 the United States called on the Soviet Union, China and other to persuade North Vietnam to resume the political talks with the Saigon Government. In a note to eight countries and Secretary General Waldheim of the United Nations, all guarantors of the Vietnam accords, the United States said that North Vietnam must accept the full consequences of its actions in "turning from the path of negotiation to war."