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Westmoreland Urges Aid to Vietnam

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CHARLESTON, S. C., March 28—Gen. William C. Westmoreland, the former commander of United States Forces in South Vietnam, said today that the American people had incurred a "moral obligation" to see the Indochina war through to the end, though he called United States involvement the "inevitable" result of an "overextended" policy of containment.

The 61 year old general, who retired here in 1973 and now is recovering from a mild heart attack, said Congress should authorize the shipment of more military materiel to the hard-pressed Saigon Government so that the current North Vietnamese assault could be repulsed.

As a military man, he said, he believed the country should finish its fight and honor its commitments. But then, seemingly tempering some of his noted hawkishness, he added: "Since World War II, we have stuck tenaciously to a strategy of containment of expansionism by others that has caused us to overextend ourselves politically, psychologically and militarily.

"After Korea, we should have reappraised, figured out some priorities. There should have been some wise men who said, 'Stop! We're overextended.' The Kennedy years were the worst."

Was American involvement in Indochina part of the overextension?

#### 'The End of the Era'

The general, who is writing a book about his tour in Vietnam during the 1965 to 1968 build-up, answered: "Vietnam was inevitable, given the policy. And Vietnam was the end of the era. It's turned around now."

General Westmoreland added that in implementing the containment policy, the United States fell into a pattern of "small wars, gradualism, creeping escalation and other partial commitments that were militarily unsound." He said that this would be continued and the United States would lose the confidence of its allies if more aid were not sent to Southeast Asia soon.

"Such niggardly refusal marks a low point in the conduct of our affairs," he de-

clared during a lengthy conversation in his home in Charleston's historic old section.

"For the life of me, I can't understand why the people of the United States are not incensed about Congress and the mockery Hanoi has made of the Paris peace accords, why we Americans don't see our moral obligation."

Both the House and the Senate have refused to grant a White House request for more than \$500-million in assistance for South Vietnam and Cambodia.

The general said it was "regrettable" that President Ford could not order American planes to resume the bombing of the North Vietnamese, whom he labeled "international outlaws" and "the Prussians of the Orient."

"It's moot to talk about recommitment now that Congress has swung the pendulum back too far and hamstrung White House initiative," he said. "But we never have committed enough force in this war, and that's the only thing those people understand.

#### 'End to the Whole Thing'

"I never recommended it when I was involved, but who knows, when the total history is written it must show that the use of several small-yield nuclear weapons at some early point conceivably could have put an end to the whole thing and caused less suffering in the short run than subsequently was caused in the long run."

The general, who served a tour as Army Chief of Staff before retiring, said that the South Vietnamese retreat from the Central Highlands and

down the coast of the South China Sea, was a "strategic necessity" because the Saigon high command did not have enough ammunition or equipment to hold those areas.

"Besides," he continued, "those areas contain only about 30 per cent of South Vietnam's people and wealth."

General Westmoreland said he had been "frankly disappointed" at the ragged manner in which the withdrawal was carried out, but he hastened to add:

"A withdrawal maneuver is the most difficult of all military moves. Done correctly, it requires great tactical ability and smooth handling of the psychological affects on the men involved. "It becomes even more difficult when the army carrying it out is as young as the South Vietnamese Army."

The general also said that the withdrawal order had not been issued soon enough or with enough advance warning. He called the delay inexcusable because the presence of an overwhelming enemy force had been common knowledge.

As for the long-term outlook, the general said he was optimistic that Congress would eventually authorize more aid and that the South Vietnamese would be able to us it to halt the enemy in an arc above Saigon.

"At that point," he added, "The North Vietnamese supply lines will be greatly extended and vulnerable. The South Vietnamese should start exacting their toll. And if it is high enough, perhaps some new agreement can be reached between the two sides though it probably will involve a smaller South Vietnam."