

APR 11 1975

Ford Asks Authority For U.S. Troops to Evacuate Americans

Washington

President Ford asked Congress last night to appropriate nearly \$1 billion in emergency aid for South Vietnam, including \$722 for military supplies to defend against the continuing onslaught from the North Vietnamese army.

In a gloomy assessment that held out minimal hope for the survival of the Saigon government, he warned that a "half-hearted action would be worse than none" and urged the Congress to act on a series of emergency requests by April 19.

At the same time, Mr. Ford virtually wrote off the survival of the U.S.-supported government in Cambodia, telling a joint session of Congress gathered in the House chamber, "In January, I requested food and ammunition for the brave Cambodians. I regret to say, as of this evening, it may be too late."

He asked lawmakers to clear up uncertainties in existing law enabling him to use American forces in the evacuation of not only Americans remaining in South Vietnam but also of South Vietnamese whose lives would be greatly endangered by the fall of the government.

As he began his radio-television address following a standing ovation from Congressmen crowded into the Chamber, Mr. Ford said, "I stand here before you tonight after many agonizing hours of very solemn prayers for guidance by the Almighty."

But Mr. Ford put his appeal before a Congress that ranged from skeptical to deeply hostile toward his request for military aid, although there seemed to be a general readiness to support a humanitarian assistance program.

Administration officials who gave reporters a background briefing on the President's decisions and requests painted the outlook in even more pessimistic terms.

They indicated that a

Back Page Col. 1

From Page 1

strong factor in the President's decision to request the massive aid was the fear that no military aid plan, or only a small assistance plan, could bring about a South Vietnamese collapse so sudden that evacuation plans could not be carried out.

In setting the figure for the request to Congress, the President followed the recommendations of General Frederick C. Weyand, the Army chief of staff, who returned from Saigon last week.

"He feels that if there is to be any chance of success for their defense plan," the president said, "South Vietnam needs urgently an additional \$722 million in very specific military supplies from the United States.

"In my judgment, a stabilization of the military situation offers the best opportunity for a political solution."

"Assistance to South Vietnam at this stage," he added, "must be swift and adequate. Drift and indecision invite far deeper disaster. The sums I had requested before the major North Vietnamese offensive and the sudden South Vietnamese retreat are obviously inadequate. Half-hearted action would be worse than none.

parent, the administration asked \$300 million in emergency aid for Saigon. Though the request has not been acted upon, votes in the House and Senate caucuses and congressional committees made it certain that no more than a fraction of that amount would be approved.

An administration official said a decision by the President to ask no more military aid would "lead to the immediate collapse of the situation under the most chaotic conditions imaginable."

"A degree of stability of the military situation," he said, "seemed an objective he had no right to reject." Having reached that conclu-

More Indochina news
on Pages 10-12

We must act together and decisively."

The President said he had essentially four options to consider in responding to the South Vietnamese military disaster: to do nothing more, to ask Congress to approve the reintroduction of U.S. combat forces, to stick with an earlier request for \$300 million in emergency military aid, or to ask sufficient funds to give the South Vietnamese a chance.

The last option, and the one taken, he said was to "increase my requests for both emergency military and humanitarian assistance to levels which by best estimates might enable the South Vietnamese to stem the onrushing aggression, to stabilize the military situation, permit a chance for a negotiated political settlement between the North and South Vietnamese."

The aid level, he added, would "at least allow the orderly evacuation of Americans and endangered South Vietnamese to places of safety."

Last January before the scope of the North Vietnamese invasion became ap-



UPI Telephotos

Tran Kim Phung, the Saigon ambassador to the U.S., listened to Ford's speech

sion, he said, there was "no sensible figure" other than the recommendation from Weyand, that "any other figure would have the status of a guess."

Officials said one possibility was to ask the Congress for \$300 million, wait and see if it produced results, then ask for more money. But they said Mr. Ford rejected such an approach because he did not wish to see the Vietnam debate drawn out and renewed periodically.

Mr. Ford departed from his prepared text to sternly warn against any dismantling of the Central Intelligence Agency, now facing congressional investigations for alleged violations of its charter.

He declared that the CIA has been of "maximum importance" to him and previous presidents and "could be of maximum importance to some of you in this audience who might become President at some later date."

"I think it would be catastrophic" if Congress or anyone else destroyed the usefulness or dismantled the intelligence agency, Mr. Ford said, contending that national security "rests so heavily" on its operations.

Administration sources, portraying Mr. Ford as unusually tense and somber as he worked on the speech in recent days, said he considered it one of the more important messages he would deliver as President.

It came not only at a time of calamity in Southeast Asia, but in the wake of unusual reversals for U.S. foreign policy in other areas of the world: the breakdown of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's efforts to negoti-

ate peace in the Middle East, friction between the United States and Turkey resulting from the Greek-Turkish conflict in Cyprus, the leftward swing of the government of Portugal, and the energy crisis.

The President touched on all of these other problems and he soft pedaled criticism of Congress which has grown out of the administration's inability to influence events.

Administration officials said Mr. Ford sought basically in the so-called State of the World speech to deal with management of the Vietnam problem, but more than that he strove to direct the country toward its longer range foreign policy interests.

He announced he will join in a summit meeting of leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the near future and that he has scheduled a round of meet-

ings with leaders in Asia and the Pacific, including a visit to China this year.

He called upon Congress to lift the arms embargo it imposed upon Turkey as a result of the Cyprus dispute, and asked for changes in the 1974 Trade Act, which he said discriminate against friendly nations.

The trade bill blocks preferential trade status to members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Mr. Ford told Congress "this punished two old South American friends, Ecuador and Venezuela, as well as other OPEC nations such as Nigeria and Indonesia, none of which participated in last year's oil embargo."

He also criticized the congressional amendment to the Trade Act, which required an easing of Soviet emigration policies before granting Russia most favored nation trade status. The provision led the Soviets to shelve participation with the United States under the act.

"As a result," the President said, "Western Europe and Japan have stepped into the breach. They have extended credits exceeding \$8 billion in the last six months. These are economic opportunities — jobs and business — which could have gone to Americans."

He urged Congress to adopt "remedial legislation" to eliminate the emigration provision the Soviets found offensive.

On the Middle East, Mr. Ford said the United States will not accept "stagnation or stalemate" after the collapse of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy between Israel and Egypt.

Los Angeles Times