

VC prefers negotiations to attack on Saigon

Examiner News Services

SAIGON — The Viet Cong said yesterday it had decided to attack Saigon and win a military victory if there was no move toward negotiations soon.

Their negotiation demand that South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu be removed has been met by Thieu's determination to fight all attempts to oust him.

The Viet Cong also have demanded that U.S. military involvement in South Vietnam cease.

After announcing the Viet

Cong's decision to attack Saigon if necessary, spokesman Col. Vo Dong Giang said, "I'm sorry I cannot in advance give the date."

The order to prepare for the final assault on Saigon city was issued April 4, he said. But Communist forces have held back, waiting "on their assessment of the

— Turn to Pg. 16, Col. 1

—From Page 1

chance which they consider best."

When the attacks come, Saigon will be in deep trouble. Ten divisions — 100,000 soldiers at full strength—of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers face six divisions of government regulars.

The latest reinforcement to move within 45 miles of Saigon for what could be the last battle of the war is North Vietnam's elite 325th Infantry Division.

The 325th fought at Dienbienphu and Khe Sanh among the more famous Vietnam battles and is considered the best in the Hanoi army.

The Communist contingents now ranged on four sides of Saigon include six infantry divisions, a commando division, a tank division, an artillery division and an anti-aircraft division.

Most of them are close to full strength. They have not been in severe fighting for several months.

On the South Vietnamese side, the picture is bleaker. Field reports indicate three of the six defensive divisions lost about one third of their men in recent battles.

There are 50,000 or more militiamen in the general Saigon area, but the ragtag militia has yet to be tested in battle.

Viet Cong spokesman Giang told a news conference yesterday the Communists would prefer to end the

Communists would prefer 'to end the war politically'

war politically.

A Communist diplomat in Saigon put it another way: "The last thing (the Viet Cong) want is a victory march down Tu Do Street," Saigon's main street. "They want to take over the government as a superior moral and political force"

The Viet Cong's demands for negotiations are the ouster of President Nguyen Van Thieu and the end to U.S. military involvement in

South Vietnam.

Thieu has indicated he will fight any attempt to unseat him by constitutional means or by a coup d'etat. The Ford Administration has given no sign of ending military support for Thieu.

The Chicago Tribune reported in a Washington dispatch that the State Department had rejected what a South Vietnamese government expert called "promising" signs that Thieu would

step down to help bring about a negotiated settlement.

Because of the administration's reluctance to encourage Thieu's resignation, a handful of congressmen have decided to pursue the matter on their own, the Tribune said in its early Sunday editions.

But state department officials said yesterday the United States did not believe that any one personality stood in the way of a peaceful settlement and did not deny reports that this country was seeking the ouster of Thieu.
