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Explain Buildup, Nixon Told

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WASHINGTON — (AP)— With the United States sending ships and planes to Southeast Asia, 17 Senate and 45 House members have expressed concern to President Nixon over what they said “appears to be a major re-escalation of U.S. involvement in the war.”

In a letter to the President they asked him for a full report on the size, purpose and cost of contemplated U.S. military action in Indochina.

More Casualties

“If news reports are accurate, our country is now assembling in Southeast Asia one of the largest air armadas in military history,” the Members of Congress for Peace Through Law told Nixon.

“The use of such a force would certainly add not only to the destruction our bombing has already brought to the people and land of Indochina, but also to the number of American casualties and prisoners of war.

“We believe,” their letter

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said, “the American people should be fully informed if such a major new commitment of lives and resources is, in fact, being made in Southeast Asia.”

The United States has sent more than 160 war planes to Southeast Asia in the past 10 days for the air counterattack against North Vietnam's spring offensive.

All 16 Strategic Air Command B52 bombers stationed at March Air Force Base at Riverside, Calif., departed for Southeast Asia, families of crewmen there said today. An airbase spokesman declined comment.

Families said Col. Glenn Sullivan, SAC wing commander, conducted two briefings for families of B52 Stratofortress and KC135 Stratotanker crewmen yesterday to explain that the men would be gone for at least 30 days and families would be unable to write or telephone the men while they were gone.

On the East Coast, cloaked in secrecy, the destroyer Mullinix and a guided missile frigate, the Biddle have left Norfolk, Va., for an undisclosed destination. Reliable sources say that the ships are going to Vietnam.

The flight of two squadrons numbering 36 F4 Phantom fighter-bombers from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., to Thailand was

the latest move reported by defense sources.

This increased the number of Air Force and Marine F4 reinforcements sent to Vietnam and Thailand to at least 90 planes, according to information from Pentagon sources.