

U.S. SAYS HANOI 'INVADED' SOUTH, KEEPS ALL REPRISAL OPTIONS OPEN; AIR ARMADA PREPARED TO ATTACK



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Refugees passing South Vietnamese armor as North Vietnamese approached Quangtri

NIXON SEES AIDES

Renewed Bombing of North Among Steps Being Weighed

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WASHINGTON, April 3 — The United States accused Hanoi today of launching an "invasion" of South Vietnam and said Washington was leaving open all retaliatory options — including renewed American bombing of North Vietnam.

The justification for such strikes — if they are ordered — was provided by the State Department, which charged North Vietnam with "flagrant violations" both of the 1954 treaty ending the French Indo-China war and of the 1968 understanding that led to the end of systematic American bombing of North Vietnam and the start of what were to be substantive talks in Paris.

Spokesmen for the White House, the State Department and the Defense Department refused, however, to predict what course of action might be taken in coming days.

Some Bombing Foreseen

A senior Pentagon official said privately that he thought President Nixon would order American aircraft to bomb the supply lines and base camps in North Vietnam of those enemy units that have crossed the demilitarized zone in recent days into Quangtri, South Vietnam's northernmost province.

President Nixon spent most of the morning discussing the Vietnamese developments with his top aides. He met with Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He spoke by telephone with Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin A. Laird.

Later in the morning, Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security, presided at a session of the Washington Special Action Group to discuss what tactics to follow. That panel, which includes representatives from the State and Defense Departments, the Central Intelligence Agency and other concerned agencies, meets during periods of emergency. Mr. Kissinger met privately with Mr. Nixon after the session, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said.

Attack Expected, Ziegler Says

It was evident that despite the crisis in South Vietnam, the Administration was seeking to avoid giving an impression of undue concern. Mr. Ziegler referred several times to the current fighting as "the South Vietnamese operation" and said that the attack by North Vietnam had been expected. "Now that it is beginning, our position is to evaluate it day by day," he said.

He cautioned newsmen again

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making any "assumptions at this time" on what would be done, because, he said, the President wants "all options open."

Mr. Ziegler and the Defense Department spokesman, Jerry W. Friedheim, said that the American withdrawal of troops from South Vietnam was continuing on schedule despite the increased fighting. Mr. Nixon has said that troop strength would be reduced to 69,000 by May 1 and has promised a new troop reduction announcement before then. Mr. Ziegler said that this plan was unchanged.

The spokesman also said it was highly unlikely that any of the six United States combat battalions remaining in Vietnam would be engaged in the ground operations. They are committed to guarding United States installations.

In answer to questions, Mr. Ziegler also said that American air power would be used as necessary to aid South Vietnamese forces in combating enemy forces within South Vietnam.

Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman—who had attended the meeting of the Special Action Group—was the Administration's sharpest voice during the day.

'Flagrant Violation' Charged

He said that what had happened in South Vietnam was "a flagrant violation by North Vietnam" of the 1954 Geneva agreement on Indochina and the 1968 understanding between the United States and North Vietnam.

"And by any definition, what has occurred is an invasion of South Vietnam," he said.

Both the 1954 and 1968 accords have been sources of semantic contention between supporters and critics of American involvement in Vietnam.

In essence, the United States has charged North Vietnam with violating the 1954 treaty by infiltrating men and supplies into South Vietnam. Critics, however, have charged that South Vietnam broke the treaty in the middle nineteen-fifties by refusing to hold elections that might have led to Communist control of all Vietnam.

The 1968 "understanding," as made known by the Johnson Administration on Oct. 31, 1968, provided for an end of American bombing of North Vietnam in return for the start of substantive talks on Vietnam, with Saigon and the Vietcong represented at the table in Paris along with Hanoi and Washington. The United States also asserted that it had an "understanding" from Hanoi that the

North Vietnamese would not violate the demilitarized zone and would not shell cities in South Vietnam.

The United States also claimed the right to fly reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam. Hanoi has never acknowledged that it agreed to any restraint, and began in 1970 to shoot at these planes. This in turn led to American air strikes against anti-aircraft emplacements and other military targets in North Vietnam.

Theoretically, under the Americans' interpretation, the abrogation of the 1968 understanding could justify a resumption by the United States of systematic bombing of North Vietnam.

Time Limit Suggested

Such a course would lead to increased tensions with Hanoi's allies, such as the Soviet Union and China, and might even endanger the chances for success of Mr. Nixon's trip to Moscow set for May 22.

It could also lead to unforeseen political problems in this country, with Vietnam again becoming a major divisive issue.

For these reasons, it seemed likely that, barring very large North Vietnamese incursions, American bombing of territory north of the border would be directly linked to the invasion of South Vietnam by the 308th and other North Vietnamese divisions.

A Pentagon official said he expected that, if the decision was made to bomb north of the DMZ, the raids would be limited in time to as long as necessary to get the North Vietnamese units out of South

Vietnam—or to destroy their ability to fight.

The Paris talks on Vietnam have been indefinitely suspended, and the chief American negotiator, William J. Porter, has returned to the United States. Mr. McCloskey said there were no plans for Mr. Porter to return soon to Paris. He will confer with Mr. Nixon later this week.

Mr. McCloskey also said that one factor in the United States decision to suspend the talks had been the build-up of enemy forces for the expected attack against South Vietnamese forces. He said that the United States would not negotiate under the gun of the current offensive.

When he was asked what led him to call the latest offensive an "invasion," Mr. McCloskey said that this was the most serious violation of the 1968 understanding. He said there was a "qualitative" difference as well, because of the heavy artillery, tanks and anti-aircraft weapons used by the attacking forces. It is also the first time that an attacking force has come directly across the demilitarized zone, he noted.

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