

U.S. Air, Sea Power Doubled Off Indochina

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The United States has doubled its air and sea power in Southeast Asia to carry out President Nixon's goal of helping South Vietnamese forces repel North Vietnam's big offensive.

Two squadrons of F4 fighter-bombers, due to leave Florida soon for Thailand, are the latest units to be ordered to the war zone in a buildup that began in February when officials expected the start of the offensive. According to the latest in-

formation available, the Navy has deployed about 55 ships off Vietnam compared with the nearly 30 that were operating there before the buildup.

55 Vessels

The fleet in the battle zone includes four carriers, three cruisers, 25 destroyers, a helicopter carrier loaded with about 1500 Marines, and a variety of others, ammunition vessels and replenishment craft supporting the fighting ships.

These vessels are manned

by about 39,000 Navy men, more than twice the 18,000 sailors and officers on station in January.

The 55 naval vessels deployed off Vietnam in the present crisis is roughly the same number as were there in 1968, before the Nixon administration began winding down U.S. involvement in the Indochina war.

Meanwhile, two more aircraft carriers, another cruiser and some destroyers are enroute across the Pacific

and the Atlantic and Persian Gulf areas to Southeast Asian waters. Officials say some of these will replace ships now on station.

As for air power, the dispatch of the two F4 Phantom squadrons totaling 35 planes will raise the American air strike force in Thailand, South Vietnam, Guam and aboard Navy carriers over the 750 mark.

Back to Vietnam

Before the buildup began in February, there were

about 380 American strike planes in the war.

American military manpower in Thailand, from which much of the air war operates, has risen in the last month or so from 32,000 to 34,000 men with the arrival of air units from the United States and the Philippines.

Two squadrons of Marine F4 fighter-bombers with their ground support were returned to Vietnam from Japan, adding 1000 Marines

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to the number of Americans in-country while Gen. Creighton Abrams, the U.S.

commander, was withdrawing principally Army troops back to the United States.