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# Marine Landing in Vietnam 'Possible'

N.Y. Times Service

## Washington

The Defense Department held out a possibility yesterday that United States Marines might be landed in South Vietnam to protect withdrawing American forces.

While Pentagon officials said that this is not planned at the moment, the statement was a distinct modification of recent administration pledges that American

ground troops would not be reintroduced into South Vietnam under any circumstances.

There are 5000 U. S. Marines aboard American warships stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin off the Vietnamese coast.

When Jerry W. Friedheim, the Pentagon spokesman, was asked at a briefing whether these troops might

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be sent ashore to help evacuate a threatened American unit, he replied:

"I would not want to preclude anything that General (Creighton W.) Abrams might do to protect withdrawing Americans." Abrams is the commander of U. S. forces in South Vietnam.

But Friedheim quickly added that no major reintroduction of American forces is contemplated, despite the current enemy offensive.

"It is not our intention to resume ground combat responsibility," he said. "We are going to meet the President's goal of reducing American strength in Vietnam to 49,000 men by July 1."

## PROPORTION

Within that ceiling, however, he said the proportion of combat units providing security around the major American installations might be increased.

"General Abrams might decide to replace a company of cooks with a rifle company," another defense official said, "if the situation gets bad enough."

Six battalions, something less than 6000 men, are providing the security. Friedheim made it clear that these units would continue performing that role and might be relieved, if necessary, by a rotation force from outside of South Vietnam.

He also said that the United States is reactivating the Takhli Air Force Base in Thailand to accommodate the warplanes that have been sent to the war zone in recent days. In the latest increase, 50 or more fighter-bombers were ordered to Indochina Thursday, raising the total American air strength to nearly 1000 combat aircraft.

The Takhli base, one of six the United States has developed in Thailand since 1965, was closed last year after several squadrons of American planes were withdrawn.

The continuing build-up of American air strength in Indochina, combined with the negotiating stalemate that appears to have deepened in recent days, had led many observers here to expect an imminent intensification of the bombing of North Vietnam.

Speaking privately many government officials expressed the view that such raids would be carried out soon, perhaps over the weekend.

At the White House, Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler acknowledged that Presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger met secretly in Paris Tuesday with Hanoi negotiator Le Duc Tho, just two days before the United States and South Vietnam suspended peace talks there.

## PUBLICITY

Ziegler said the United States had suggested at the outset that Kissinger's trip be acknowledged publicly. But, he reported, the Nixon administration did not do so because, as Ziegler put it, the North Vietnamese "urgently requested" that the fact of the meeting and the content of the discussion remain completely private.

The White House spokesman said: "I would just say this is another example of their (Hanoi's) bad faith."

Meanwhile, a spokesman at the State Department denied again that the United States had proposed either a limited cease fire or a coalition government in Saigon as elements in a peace agreement.

It was the second time this week that the Nixon administration had denied reports that Washington and Hanoi were approaching agreement.

Yesterday's denials came in response to questions about a report from the Washington correspondent of France-Soir published in the mass-circulation Paris daily. It said that secret negotiations are under way between the United States and North Vietnam.