

# Mining Impact on War May Not Be Immediate

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## Washington

Pentagon analysts say the mining of Haiphong and other harbors of North Vietnam, ordered last night by President Nixon, may have a negligible effect on the war over the short run, but substantial impact over the long run.

Over the short term, the analysts concede, even

effective denial of outside war supplies probably would not cripple enemy offensive abilities in the south for several weeks.

To be really effective, they note, mining probably should be accompanied by a persistent bombing campaign to cut traffic over the two rail lines and eight roads from China.

## DENIAL

But over the longer term, these analysts believe, deni-

al of large quantities of gasoline, artillery, ammunition and tanks would make it quite difficult for North Vietnam to mount counteroffensives aimed at driving the enemy from captured territory.

Well-placed military sources said the B-52 raid on the Haiphong area about three weeks ago so disrupted unloading and storage facilities that in recent days North Vietnam has diverted freighters en route from Canton and Hong Kong for Haiphong to the secondary port of Hon Gay, about 20 miles north.

At the time of the mining operation, defense sources say, about 37 freighters and oil tankers were in Haiphong harbor and its estuary. Most were from the Soviet bloc and Cuba; about eight to ten were from Hong Kong and Britain.

Another 30 ships appeared to be en route to North Vietnam.

In his televised address to the nation, Mr. Nixon said the mining operation was under way as he spoke, but that the mines would not be activated until three "daylight periods" had elapsed in order to allow ships now in port to leave.

Thereafter, he said, any ships entering or leaving any of the ports of North Vietnam would do so "at their own peril."

Military sources said these four types of mines are available for dropping by naval aircraft to block

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## MINES

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the entrances to such ports as Haiphong, Hon Gay, Campha and Thanh Hoa:

**Anchored mines:** These are buoyant mines which are anchored by a cable to the seabed, the mines placed at different depths below the surface to intercept different types of vessels.

**Magnetic mines:** These mines, normally used in shallow water, sink into the mud and explode when a large metallic object, like the hull of a ship, passes overhead.

**Acoustic mines:** These are keyed to explode when they pick up the sounds of a vessel's propellers.

**Pressure mines:** These mines are triggered when the passage of a large ship overhead increases the water pressure on the mines.

Military sources said that modern mines are very difficult to sweep with mine-sweepers. "It's become a much higher risk business than ever before. The mines have all kinds of devices to thwart such efforts," one Pentagon official said.

## BLOCKADE

The President did not use the word blockade at any point, but one passage in his speech, and in a letter informing the United Nations of American intentions, raised a question whether some sort of naval blockade was involved.

Mr. Nixon said Saigon and Washington are "advising their respective naval and air forces to take appropriate measures within the internal and claimed territorial waters of North Vietnam to prevent the delivery of seaborne supplies to North Vietnam."

Daniel Z. Henkin, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, insisted in answer to questions that "a blockade involves the stopping and searching of ships; this was not indicated in the President's words tonight."

## LIGHTERS

Other Pentagon sources said that the President's reference was aimed at the possible use by North Vietnam of inter-coastal lighters (small cargo vessels) trying to move supplies along the coast of North Vietnam. These would be subject to air and sea attack, they said.

The Soviet Union, China and other Communist nations do not attempt deliveries in anything but large oceangoing ships, they said.

If any third country attempted to deliver supplies along the coast of North Vietnam with small lighters, at a place that was not mined, would these be subject to air or sea attack?

## REPLY

A defense official said: "I won't speculate on what might happen in that unlikely situation."

Military analysts said that a full scale blockade or even a quarantine, in which U.S. naval vessels attempted to turn away or stop and search Soviet, Chinese or other ships, under threat of sinking them if they failed to stop, would have raised a major risk that the U.S. wishes to avoid.

"If they chose to try to run our minefields and are sunk, they've been forewarned," one administration official said.

"That's fundamentally different than signaling a Soviet vessel to turn back or be shot out of the water by us."