

Thieu Orders Martial Law; Ousts an Area Commander

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, May 10—President Nguyen Van Thieu imposed martial law on South Vietnam tonight.

The announcement of the measure on the Government radio did not include any details about how martial law would be put into effect. It followed a Presidential declaration of emergency last night and appeared to be part of a long-delayed attempt by the Government to instill a sense of urgency in the people of the cities and towns that have not been directly affected by the heavy fighting of the last month.

Most Americans in Saigon . .

In another action, the President dismissed his military commander in the Central Highlands, Lieut. Gen. Ngo Dzu, replacing him with Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Toan. Some diplomats here viewed this too as essentially a move to heighten public awareness of the critical situation, since they consider General Toan to be less competent than General Dzu.

Most Americans in Saigon believe that the most effective military measures now being taken are by the U.S. Air Force and Navy planes that are bombing North Vietnam and

mining the enemy's harbors and their approaches.

The last time President Thieu declared martial law was on Jan. 31, 1968, at the time of the Communists' countrywide offensive, when there were 510,000 American service men here. The introduction of martial law, in a country already largely governed by the military, carries with it the suspension of restraints on police powers of arrest and detention and the possibility of news censorship.

Whether such far-reaching steps would be taken by Mr. Thieu is unknown at this point,

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but he has been under heavy pressure from United States officials here to "get tough" and exercise more visible leadership in this critical stage of the war.

Yesterday, after being briefed by Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and Gen. Creighton W. Abrams on President Nixon's decision to resume heavy bombing of North Vietnam and mine the entrances to its ports, Mr. Thieu went on television to declare that "the country is in danger." But the broadcast was at 10:15 P.M. and no advance word of it was given.

Not even the commander of Saigon's Capital Military District knew tonight of the details of the decision to impose martial law.

Firmer Stand by Thieu

Though President Thieu appears to be making efforts to show firmer leadership and to replace those of his military commanders who have demonstrated weakness—General Dzu was the second corps commander to be ousted, following by a week Lieut. Gen. Hoang Xuam Lam and his subordinate, Brig. Gen. Vu Van Giai, on the northern front after the fall of Quangtri on May 1.

But the palpable feeling among American military officers and some civilian officials here is that President Nixon has again taken the reins into American hands, having followed a policy of Vietnamizing the war for three years but now apparently having lost much of his faith in it.

His adviser on national security, Henry A. Kissinger, said yesterday: "You must not conclude from this decision that we are assuming that the battle



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Lieut. Gen. Ngo Dzu
Replaced



Associated Press

Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Toan
Successor

in the South cannot be stabilized. But we want to be in a position that if our assessment is incorrect, and things should turn out not as well as we hope, that we have some bargaining position left on behalf of the Americans who will then be threatened, and of the Americans who are now prisoners."

President Nixon's speech Monday night included a statement addressed "to the people of South Vietnam" in which he said:

"You shall continue to have our firm support in your resistance against aggression. It is your spirit that will determine the outcome of the battle. It is your will that will shape the future of your country."

According to high American officials here, these remarks were a muted plea to the South Vietnamese Government and military establishment to recover from the dismal failure of leadership and will that was primarily responsible for the loss of Quangtri Province in the north and parts of Kontum and Binh Dinh Provinces in the Central Highlands over the last three weeks.

"The decision to leave Quangtri was an internal crisis of General Giai," one senior American said the other day. "Quangtri wasn't even under ground attack when the army got orders to leave. At first some of the officers in Hue thought there had been a mu-

tiny because it just wasn't under that much pressure when they began to leave."

Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams are thought to have urged President Thieu to be more open with his people and explain to them the seriousness of the crisis caused by the enemy offensive. In recent weeks there has been criticism by lower-ranking Americans here of "obscurantist government," "government from the closet" and other such phases.

And today one officer said: "A lot of people in Vietnam have been waiting for the Government to take action, for some kind of sense of urgency to be generated. Maybe the declaration of martial law will help do it."

President Nixon and Mr. Kissinger gave greater weight to the extensive supplies of advanced weapons, including long-range 130-mm. artillery, heavy T-54 tanks, and surface-to-air missiles, that the Soviet Union has provided the North Vietnamese, and Mr. Kissinger said that these "tipped the balance in the North Vietnamese direction."

But the view here is that it is an unexpectedly small supply of South Vietnamese will and determination rather than an unexpectedly large supply of North Vietnamese equipment that has caused the gravest setbacks.