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'Odds Are Against' North Viet Assault

Washington

Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger said yesterday "the odds now are against" a major North Vietnamese military offensive in South Vietnam.

Schlesinger told the National Press Club there has been "a substantial diminution" in the danger of such an offensive in recent months.

He credited the South Vietnamese forces with giving a better account of themselves than many had predicted.

At the same time, Schlesinger said, the U.S. would be falling down on what he called "a normal obligation" to South Vietnam if it failed

to continue to support the army with military hardware and ammunition to replace its losses.

"We should pay the small price of supplying the munitions that are necessary," Schlesinger said.

The Pentagon is having difficulties getting Congress to approve an increase in the \$1.1 billion Vietnam aid authority.

The Defense Department has said the increase is needed to offset inflation-caused price increases for military equipment and because combat activity in South Vietnam has been higher than expected when the peace agreement was signed in January, 1973.

Associated Press