

APR 2 1972

Nixon Is Watching Closely

SF Examiner
WASHINGTON — (UPI)

— President Nixon was reported yesterday to be closely watching North Vietnam's long-awaited major offensive as a test of the success of his Vietnamization program to shift the burden of the war effort to South Vietnam.

"We were aware that the enemy had a capacity for increased activity," said deputy White House press secretary Gerald L. Warren as reports reached Washington of Hanoi's invasion of the northern provinces of South Vietnam across the demilitarized zone.

"We are confident that the South Vietnamese army can cope with the enemy threat," said Warren, adding that Nixon was "watching the war very closely."

There was no indication that the United States was prepared to intervene in Saigon's behalf or change Nixon's goal of reducing U.S. forces to a level of 69,000 men within the next month.

Nixon, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and Secretary of State William Rogers have been predicting just such a major Communist offensive for many weeks, and have been uniformly optimistic that despite anticipated reversals, the South Vietnamese even without strong American support would prevail.