

Summit Peril As Nixon Risks Armed 'Brink'

By Thomas B. Ross
Chicago Sun-Times

WASHINGTON — Risking direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union, President Nixon ordered a sea and land blockade of North Vietnam, including the mining of all its ports, last night.

Military measures to achieve the blockade were under way as he spoke.

"There is only one way to stop the killing," the President declared. "That is to keep the weapons of war out of the hands of the international outlaws of North Vietnam."

Although most of the weapons are being provided by the Soviet Union and carried there in Russian ships, Nixon insisted that his action was not directed against Moscow.

But his decision, announced in a nationwide television address, obviously placed his planned trip to the Soviet Union later this month in extreme jeopardy, even if the Russians do not take up the military challenge directly.

The President, in effect, offered the Soviet Union the choice of welcoming him to Moscow while American forces were blocking Soviet ships from the port of a friendly nation or canceling the summit conference.

Full Text of President's
Message on Page 7

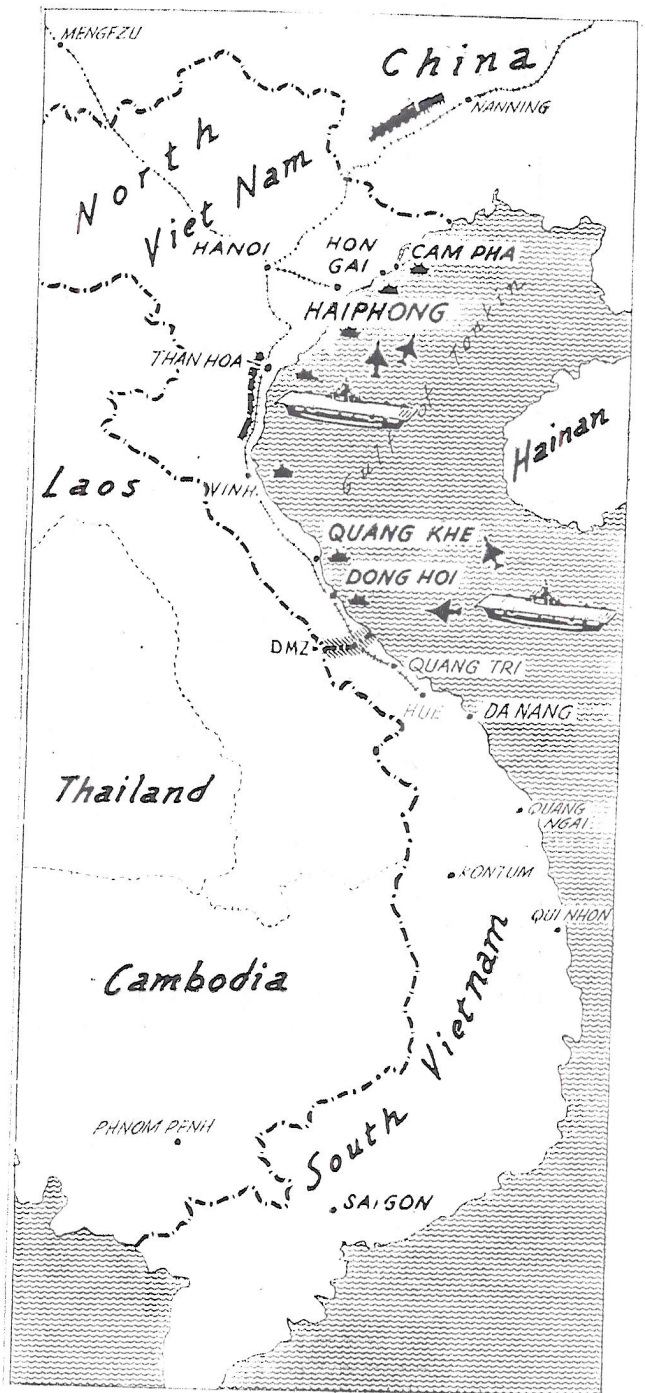
scheduled to begin May 22.

His pledge to seal off the rail lines from China, North Vietnam's second major source of supply, placed a question mark over his fragile new diplomatic opening to Peking.

Nixon coupled his military move, the most serious and dangerous step taken by any President in the war, with the most conciliatory diplomatic offer he has ever made publicly.

He said he would pull out

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Not only Haiphong, but Cam Pha, Hon Gai, Quang Khe, Vinh, Than Hoa and Dong Hoi are blockaded. Map also shows rail lines from China.

—Examiner Map

—From Page 1 U.S. prisoners of war.

all U.S. troops from Vietnam within four months of an internationally supervised cease - fire and the return of

Dr. Henry Kissinger told a news conference today that Nixon realizes his latest Vietnam moves "will create

short-term difficulties for Soviet leaders" but he fully hopes to proceed with the Moscow summit talks May 22.

Kissinger, the President's assistant for national security affairs, said the United States has received no indication from Moscow as to whether the Soviets will want to proceed with the summit.

He said "it will probably be a day or so" before formal reaction is received.

Admits Risks

Responding to questions, Kissinger said the Nixon moves involve "some risk." He added:

"The judgment was that it did not involve an unacceptable risk."

But he conceded that "only events will prove" whether the presidential strategy will work.

While saying Nixon's attempt to block receipt of Soviet war supplies to North Vietnamese ports presents Moscow with difficulties, Kissinger said the Soviets "permitted a situation that posed massive difficulties for us."

Nixon's decision to blockade North Vietnam brought the United States to the brink of a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Cuba Move Recalled

There was a parallel to the late President Kennedy's decision to blockade Cuba in 1964. The Soviets backed down in that crisis and removed the missiles they had installed secretly.

But the conditions are less favorable for the United States in the present circumstances, because the blockade is being undertaken halfway around the world rather than in nearby waters.

The Soviet Union also has a much larger fleet than they did in 1962 and has achieved equality with the United States in nuclear weaponry, making it considerably less susceptible to military pressure.

The President gave the Soviet Union and other nations "three daylight periods" in which to get their ships out of North Vietnamese ports before U.S. mines become active.

Deadline

The Pentagon said the mines were timed to become explosive at 4 a.m. (PDT) Thursday.

The President shrank from describing his action as a blockade, which is universally considered an act of war. Officials explained that vessels entering Haiphong harbor will not be stopped and searched.

But they run the risk of being sunk by mines, and, as one official summed it up, it is a distinction without a difference.

Nixon did not explain how he expected the blockade to

affect Hanoi's current offensive in view of the general assumption that the North Vietnamese already had enough supplies on hand before launching the attack.

He urged the Soviet Union not to let "Hanoi's intransigence blot out" the prospects for a new era of harmony with the United States.

"Let us not," he appealed, "slide down the dark shadows of a previous age."

"We are prepared to continue to build this relationship. The responsibility is yours if we fail to do so."

Warns Soviet

The President said he respected the Soviet Union as a great power and recognized its right to "help your allies" for defensive purposes. But he said he could not tolerate the introduction of offensive weapons into North Vietnam.

Kissinger met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin just before Nixon's televised address.

Nixon appealed to the American public to give him "the same strong support you have always given" the presidency in times of national crisis.

He said the "world will be watching you," implying that any display of dissent from his action might doom it to failure.

'No Choice'

He argued that he had no other choice but to order the blockade.

He said the North Vietnamese had met all U.S. diplomatic concessions with "insolence and insult," and he contended that an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces would lead to the imposition of a Communist government on the South Vietnamese people, against

their will and to a reign of "terror."

He said the "sole purpose" of his action was to protect the remaining 60,000 U.S. troops and to block a take-over by a "brutal aggressor."

Nixon said that in their current offensive the North Vietnamese have shown "wanton disregard for life" and have killed more than 20,000 civilians.

Saigon In Peril

He conceded for the first time that the offensive has "increased" the danger that the Saigon government will fall and said it also threatens the lives of the remaining U.S. troops.

In effect, he conceded without really saying so that "Vietnamization" is doomed.

In recent secret talks with the North Vietnamese, the President said, they have refused to enter any serious negotiations and have "simply read previous public statements."

He contended that their terms amounted to an "ultimatum that the United States impose a Communist regime on South Vietnam."

He argued that politically, a decision to withdraw all U.S. troops immediately would be "an easy choice."

World Peace Peril

But he contended that such a decision would not result in the return of American prisoners of war while it would place "world peace in grave jeopardy" by encouraging "aggressors" to prey on neighbors in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere.

To have done otherwise than to take strong military action, he declared, would have been to "betray the trust of the country."