

Fact-Finding Trip to Indochina

McCloskey War Mission

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Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr. (Rep-Calif.), the 43-year-old Marine combat veteran who says he is prepared to run against President Nixon next year, will leave tomorrow on a personal fact-finding trip to Indochina.

McCloskey will spend 11 days in South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand searching for answers to politically sensitive questions about what the United States is doing there.

Another Californian, Democratic Representative Jer-

ome R. Waldie, and four aides will accompany him.

So far, McCloskey's plan to apply political pressure to the Nixon Indochina policy has been fueled mainly by a disenchantment with that policy and a personal conviction that Vietnamization cannot end American involvement in the war.

PRESSURE

But McCloskey says he needs hard facts, personally gathered and vouched for, with which to lobby effectively among his fellow congressmen for a cutoff of funds to fight the war the route he thinks offers the best immediate prospect of getting the

United States out of Southeast Asia.

If that doesn't work, he is determined to pursue his threatened candidacy.

He has laid out these objectives for his trip:

- Examination of the refugee situation in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, including questioning of refugees about why they have left their villages — to escape Communist domination and terror or to escape American air power.

- A survey of American air activity in Indochina through questioning of pilots who have flown bombing missions from bases in South

Vietnam and Thailand and from Navy carriers.

- Examination of the prisoner-of-war situation in South Vietnam and the treatment of political prisoners by the Saigon regime, including visits to prisons to determine whether any more "tiger cages" exist.

- Exploration of internal political activity in South Vietnam in advance of this fall's election to determine whether factions opposed to the Thieu-Ky regime are being given a fair competitive chance.

- Examination of the state of troop morale among Americans through extensive interviewing of junior officers.

McCloskey said he is well aware that even as his trip gets started, the President, by announcing tomorrow night a planned withdrawal of all ground troops, could remove much of the immediate reason for not only his trip but also his challenge to Mr. Nixon.

ISSUE

But if McCloskey is a one-issue candidate, he has made clear he feels there are many sides to the issue. Failure of Vietnamization, which he has predicted for a year, continued bombing or serious questions about the honesty of the October elections in South Vietnam — all or any of them would in his view bring his challenge to the President alive again.

McCloskey is frustrated and champing at the months of fruitless efforts to get answers to his questions from the White House and the Pentagon.

between McCloskey and Mr. Nixon. LETTER

A letter from the congressman to the President is March, 1969, urging him to change his Vietnam policy, ended thus: "Regardless of any disagreement on this issue, it is an honor to serve under your leadership."

What really turned him around on the President, McCloskey says, were two visits of Republican congressmen to the White House last year one in the spring and one in the fall, before the November elections.

At the first one, he says, "the President gave us a long dissertation on getting elected. He said, 'The importance is timing.' He drilled that into us. He said, 'Don't worry about Vietnam. Timing is everything in politics. August, September, October are the months you build.' He said, in effect, 'Stick with me and you'll be re-elected.'"

The second occasion was in September. "He briefed us on how we should campaign," McCloskey recalls. "He said, 'Of all the issues in the polls we have taken, it is not Vietnam and the economy but crime in the streets and campus unrest' — if we wanted to be re-elected, campus unrest was what was bothering people most.

"And then he said, 'Of course, I don't suggest you demagogue this—' and he paused and grinned. This is really when I turned the corner on him," McCloskey says.

He shows visitors long letters he has written to the President, the Air Force, the Army and Navy asking for specific information about American activities, to which he has received perfunctory replies.

AGNEW

He speaks with particular alarm at the charges of Vice President Spiro Agnew and others in the administration that the news media are distorting the Indochina story. He argues instead that Mr. Nixon is being "almost criminally deceptive" in saying he has cut back the war, because use of air power has been increased greatly.

There is a growing personal element toward Mr. Nixon in McCloskey's opposition. It is clear as he talks with visitors that he is convinced that the President looks at Indochina strictly as another political problem.

"It's his philosophy," McCloskey tells callers about the President. "He's willing to kill people in order to save face ... to save himself politically and to save face around the world."

It was not always this way