

Raids to slay Hanoi leaders are discussed

WASHINGTON—A backroom controversy has erupted over Secretary of Defense Mel Laird's threat to take "unusual means" to free U.S. prisoners in Vietnam and White House press secretary Ron Ziegler's warning that North Vietnamese leaders would be held "personally responsible" for any retaliation against prisoners.

One idea that has been discussed at the highest levels is to send helicopter commandos into Hanoi to kidnap or assassinate North Vietnamese leaders who are responsible for prisoner abuse.

The idea of dispatching a suicide squad to wipe out Hanoi's top leaders had been considered and discarded earlier. It was decided that the slain leaders would merely be replaced by others even more intransigent. A plot against the Hanoi leadership might also encourage them to organize terrorist attacks upon U.S. leaders. In any case, this wasn't the way Washington wanted to fight the Vietnam war.

But President Nixon is coming around to the view, say insiders, that drastic action may be required to protect our prisoners. He hasn't ruled out the possibility of using commandos to retaliate against the North Vietnamese leaders who sanction the mistreatment of prisoners.

Meanwhile, Laird's hint that unorthodox means—presumably new commando raids—would be used to free American prisoners has caused misgivings in the backrooms. The abortive Son Tay raid, they feel, has now alerted the North Vietnamese who will guard the prison camps against airborne commandos.

Located near Hanoi

Five known prison camps are located in the Hanoi environs. Only Son Tay was sufficiently isolated to make the helicopter raid feasible. The other four are surrounded by too much development. In any case, the prisoners probably will be moved frequently now as a security measure.

There is also concern that the guards may kill the prisoners at the approach of a raiding party. Previous rescue attempts in South Vietnam failed. But a South Vietnamese unit once stumbled accidentally upon a prison camp. Before the prisoners could be rescued, the Viet Cong guards bashed in the heads of the only American prisoner.

Footnote: Some U.S. officials believe the Son Tay prisoners weren't far away when the commandos arrived to rescue them. A close study of the available intelligence has convinced these officials that the prisoners may have been within the grasp of the rescue, possibly in a nearby compound.

Grand Jury probe

A federal grand jury here is investigating charges that the United Mine Workers made an illegal \$30,000 contribution to the

1968 presidential campaign of Hubert Humphrey.

The entire staff of labor's Non-Partisan League, the union's political arm, has been subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury tomorrow.

Although Justice Department officials working on the case would not discuss the specifics, this column was able to learn from other sources the following facts about the investigation:

The \$30,000 was allegedly paid from union funds to the two top officers of the league. They, in turn, allegedly passed it on to the Humphrey campaign by checks drawn on their own bank accounts or those of members of their families.

Campaign contributions from a union treasury are illegal, even if they are funneled through individuals so as to appear to be personal contributions.

Those subpoenaed are James Kmetz, the present league director, Robert Howe, the retired league director who was in charge in 1968, Anna Love Rothwell, the league bookkeeper, and a secretary.

The Internal Revenue Service originally investigated the donation, which was allegedly ordered by union president Tony Boyle. The investigation was impeded, however, when the union was unable to produce the League's books for the period in question.

At the time, Howe, who reportedly has an extra set of books, was out of town. When he returned 10 days ago, he is said to have received a call from union officials instructing him to bring the books to UMW headquarters.

The same night, however, he also received a call from the IRS, which ordered him not to take the books to the UMW. He is said to have received similar instructions from the FBI.

Howe, apparently, will produce the books for the grand jury.

Doctor shortage

The American Medical Association has deliberately sought to hold down the number of doctors in this country so they can continue to charge high fees.

This is accomplished by rigid AMA control of medical schools. Result: only half of the applicants are accepted.

Dr. Neil Soloman, the Maryland public health director, has now arranged with Johns Hopkins University, in defiance of the AMA, to introduce a pilot program to speed up medical training.

Under the program, high school students will begin their pre-med training in their last two years of high school. Then they will take another two years in college, followed by three years of medical school. This shortened seven-year course, if it should be adopted by other schools, could open the medical field to more aspirants and eliminate the doctor shortage.