

See also story by Terence Smith, and excerpts from news conference, NYTimes 16 Jun 71, filed Nix Ad.

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U.S. Condition for Pullout Deadline

Washington

The United States will announce a deadline for total withdrawal from Vietnam "when we think it's in our national interest," Secretary of State William P. Rogers said yesterday.

But, he told a press conference, "We don't think it's in our national interest now" and "we are not going to make any such announcement until our policy is implemented, until we are sure that the prisoners are going to be released." Hanoi is holding them for "ransom," he said.

Later he said that "the reason we are not telling exactly what is going to happen in the future" is that "We don't know exactly."

During the question-and-answer session Rogers said flatly that "We will have a residual force there" as "long as we need to try to get our prisoners of war released." The United States, he also said, expects to give both military and economic aid to the Saigon government after the American withdrawal.

AID

On how long such aid would be given, Rogers declared that "We can't say. We plan to do it consistent with our policy. We spent a great deal in terms of American lives and resources, and others, and we are not going to change our policy abruptly because the policy that the President is following is working." Congressional support for such aid will be sought, he added, and "We expect we will get that."

Asked whether "it is a basic principle of this government, as it has been on previous administrations, that South Vietnam must remain independent and non-

Communist and that this non-negotiable," Rogers replied:

"To the extent that we want to prevent the North Vietnamese from overrunning South Vietnam militarily, yes; the answer is yes. That is one of the purposes of our foreign policy in both administrations and all administrations."

CLIFFORD

The Secretary was answering these and other Vietnam questions against the backdrop of former Defense Secretary Clark M. Clifford's proposal for a December 31 troop withdrawal deadline, coupled with prisoner release, and the growing row over publication of secret war documents from the Johnson administration.

Rogers said Clifford's comments—that he "had reason to believe" such a plan would be acceptable to Hanoi—had "no validity." Later, in describing his belief that Hanoi is holding the prisoners "to try to achieve political objectives," in "effect for ransom payments," he cited the June 8 Washington Post interview with Hanoi's top man at the Paris peace talks, Xuan Thuy.

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