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## U.S. Policy

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# Answers to the War

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### Washington

Of all the many questions raised here in recent days about the current United States role in the Vietnam war, perhaps a dozen best summarize the major concerns of Congress and other critics.

The answers suggested below are what appear to be the government's composite replies drawn not from any single source but rather from the general testimony of Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and from the private comments of other top administration officials.

**A**  
**News**  
**Analysis**

**Q.—What is the justification for any continuing American involvement in the Indochina war?**

**A.—**To redeem an already costly American commitment to protect South Vietnam against military conquest; to protect the program of gradual American withdrawal so the Saigon government can survive under a political system of the South Vietnamese people's choosing; to force the return of American prisoners of war, and, through such a generally "honorable" end of the involvement to demonstrate the fidelity of American commitments to other allies and dependent nations.

**Q.—What is the purpose of intensified American bombing in South and North Vietnam?**

**A.—**To protect the remaining American troops in the war zone; to protect the program of troop withdrawals; to help the South Vietnamese resist a major frontal attack; to render more difficult or even impossible further onslaughts in the months to come; to retaliate for violation of a 1968 "understanding" forbidding troops to cross the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam; to demonstrate the continuing

### Saigon

North Vietnam's offensive pushed Vietnamese casualties last week to their highest level since the 1968 Tet offensive, while American losses were the highest in six months.

The allied commands reported 12 Americans, 1002 South Vietnamese and 7117 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong killed in action, plus 63 Americans and 2656 South Vietnamese wounded.

Another ten Americans were missing, presumably

in air crashes, while six Americans were reported dead from nonhostile causes.

This raised the total number of American, South Vietnamese and enemy troops reported killed since January, 1961, past the million mark.

The enemy total was the highest since May 11, 1968, when 8786 were claimed killed. That same week 562 Americans were killed, the highest total of the war, but in this offensive the only Americans in combat are airmen and advisers to

South Vietnamese ground units.

The number of American combat dead last week was the same as the week before, but the other casualties raised the total to the largest number since last October.

The number of South Vietnamese killed last week was the highest since the week of Feb. 4-10, 1968, when 1152 dead and 3349 wounded were reported, along with 13,118 of the enemy killed. They were the highest weekly casualties in the war.

Associated Press

American power that can be applied in the war, and to neutralize some of the more advanced equipment supplied to Hanoi by the Soviet Union.

**Q.—Why bomb Hanoi and Haiphong at this time, and why will the bombing of North Vietnam be more**

# Quiz

effective now than it was between 1965 and 1968?

A—Because the current, highly mechanized North Vietnamese attack differs from past enemy offensives; because the tanks, personnel carriers, mobile missiles and other weapons and carriers are more dependent on fuels and replacements that could be moved quickly to the southern front areas, and because raids against the main supply depots in the major cities inflict the greatest damage on those essential items.

Q — Why was Congress not consulted on the escalation?

A — Because the President alone determines tactics and needs surprise when he strikes.

Q — Why not protect all American troops by withdrawing them immediately?

A — Because air support and other logistic and advisory services are still needed by the south Vietnamese; because some combat troops are still needed to protect the American bases, and because the presence of some troops will be used to negotiate the release of American prisoners of war.

Q — If "Vietnamization" is working, why do the south Vietnamese need such massive American airpower while the North Vietnamese fight without anything comparable?

A — The first objective of Vietnamization was to relieve Americans of the high casualties resulting from ground combat operations. Now the South Vietnamese are beginning to assume logistic and tactical air power,

but this gives them a capacity to fight only inside their own half of Vietnam and not reach up to the supply routes and centers in the North. But the Russians have equipped the North Vietnamese for offensive operations far from home base.

Q — Does "Vietnamization" provide for the end of American strategic and tactical air attacks?

A — The Saigon government is to assume tactical air responsibilities on an unrevealed schedule but massive American air attacks against enemy troop concentrations and supplies will be conducted whenever the Saigon forces appear to need help. For the time being, nothing is ruled out except the increase in American troop strength and the use of nuclear weapons.

Q — What would happen if the United States stood aside and let North and South Vietnam fight it out?

A — Current estimates are that South Vietnam's forces would suffer serious reverses, perhaps even a rout, particularly in the region around Saigon and in the Central Highlands. American air power has been less directly necessary (or useful) in defending northern sectors of South Vietnam.

Q—Do the diminished number of American troops really need protection?

A — It is thought that major North Vietnamese breakthroughs would cause American bases to be overrun, but in any case the protection of American troops is the only constitutional authority available to the pres-

ident for the military operations he is conducting.

Q — Why is the administration taxing the Soviet Union with the responsibility for Hanoi's offensive?

A — Because Moscow

should bear some responsibility for offensives made possible by its arms, even if it does not plan them; because a policy and counsel of Soviet restraint may still be necessary to diminish the fighting and negotiate an end of the war; and because the United States and the Soviet Union cannot expect to profit from detente and agreements in some areas while they induce military challenge to each other and their allies elsewhere.

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Q—How serious are the American threats of mining Haiphong harbor or otherwise blockading North Vietnam against Soviet and other foreign supply ships?

A — Those measures are recognized as extreme steps that would have only long-range effect on the battle in South Vietnam while immediately confronting the Russians and other naval suppliers with a direct American challenge. But they have not been ruled out and will not be ruled out until there is evidence of greater "restraint" in Hanoi.