

N. Viet Harbors to Be Swept**U.S. Ready to Clear Mines**

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By George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Navy is putting together a special task force of helicopters and ships to remove mines from North Vietnamese harbors, military sources said yesterday.

Part of the Navy's only helicopter squadron specially designed for sweeping mines has already begun leaving Norfolk in giant C-5A transports.

The amphibious assault ship *Inchon*, used as a landing platform for the mine-sweeping choppers of Helicopter Mine

Counter-measures Squadron 12, was slated to leave Norfolk yesterday for Vietnam waters.

In advance of the *Inchon's* arrival, her sister ship *Okinawa*, already in the Pacific, may be used for the mine-sweeping task.

Helicopters flying off the decks of ships like the *Inchon* and *Okinawa* can drag a number of special devices to destroy mines.

One such device, for instance, makes the kind of noise that sets off acoustical mines—mines that blow up at the

sound made by certain sizes of ships.

The U.S. Seventh Fleet lying off Vietnam has conventional minesweeping ships that are expected to play a role in the clearing operation.

The timing on when the mine-sweeping task force goes to work depends on the progress in the peace negotiations with Hanoi.

President Nixon, in an attempt to keep war goods out of the hands of enemy soldiers fighting in South Vietnam, de-

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ecided to try to close North Vietnamese ports and some inland rivers to ship traffic by mining them. The mining started May 8.

The Navy refused to comment on the ship movements other than to confirm that the *Inchon* was to sail yesterday for the Pacific.

Helicopter Mine Counter-measures Squadron 12 is believed to be the only one of its kind in the world. It went through a training exercise in the Mediterranean. About 12 specially rigged choppers are attached to the squadron.

Pentagon specialists said the modern mines dropped from the air into North Vietnamese waters are "virtually unsweepable" by conventional mine-sweeping ships. This may be why the Soviet Union made no apparent effort to clear the harbors.

While the helicopters drag devices through the still-active mines from their safe distance above the water, U.S. Navy ships could clear out mines that are no longer lethal be-

cause they had been timed to go dead after a certain period.

The United States is believed to have dropped both "bottom" mines that lie on the bottom of shallow waterways and "moored" mines that float from a steel cable at different depths in deep harbor channels.

Mines can be selective—that is, they are set to blow up only when a certain amount of pressure is exerted on them. Such mines could be safe for a sampan passing overhead but lethal to a cargo ship.

The Nixon administration considered minelaying less provocative than an out-and-out blockade where U.S. Navy ships would have to challenge Russian ones.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff long had recommended that North Vietnam's harbors, especially Haiphong, be sealed off to cut the supply of war goods moving south. Without such a seal-off, the chiefs argued, the bombing of traffic on the move would have only limited success.