

JAN 11 1973

# Broader War Goal Stressed

## Richardson Hits Pullout Without Peace

By Michael Getler

Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of Defense-designate Elliot L. Richardson told Congress yesterday that the United States could end its role in Vietnam now if the prisoner issue were settled, but that such a pullout "remains unsatisfactory in that peace in the area is not achieved."

Richardson's explanation of why the United States continues bombing and negotiating—even though outgoing Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird says the South Vietnamese are now fully capable of defending their own country—came during the second day of his confirmation hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Richardson's comments yesterday, made under pointed questioning by freshman Sen. Sam G. Nunn (D-Ga.), 34, were in marked contrast to Richardson's general reluctance the day before to engage in any detailed explanation of what the United States was trying to achieve at the Paris peace talks by its present military policy.

In some respects, it appeared that the White House had taken the wraps off the articulate would-be Pentagon boss to make the administration's war-aims case more strongly in the wake of the apparent popularity that Laird achieved Monday.

At that time, Laird told Congress that while he was hopeful about a negotiated settlement, his Vietnamization program to turn over the war to the South Vietnamese was finished and that "the complete termination of American involvement in the war" was

now possible, contingent only on the safe return of prisoners and an accounting of men missing in action.

"Do you agree with Laird's position," Nunn asked.

"Yes, I do," Richardson answered.

"Well," Nunn continued, "I'm neither a hawk nor a dove, but I'm having trouble understanding the difference between this (Laird's) position and those (in Congress) who want to cut off funds for the war. It seems everyone is saying the same thing."

Richardson countered that a congressional cut off could be interpreted by Hanoi as some-

See DEFENSE, A4, Col. 2

thing that would undermine the strength of the U.S. negotiating position, and that this was what the White House was concerned about.

Even so, Nunn continued, if Laird says we can leave militarily, "then there must be other aims."

"We clearly do have other objectives," Richardson said.

"If we are forced to rely only on a successful Vietnamization program (as opposed to a broader negotiated settlement), we would just be turning over military responsibility for a continuing war... there would be a continuing threat to Laos and Cambodia... continued killing and more fighting. So we also want a cease-fire... to extend to Laos and Cambodia, and lay the foundation for peace... and stability... in the entire area."

"In effect then," Nunn concluded, "Vietnamization is not a satisfactory course, taken to its end."

"That is true," Richardson answered. "Vietnamization leads to a point where the United States is justified in removal of its own forces. So it is satisfactory for the United States. On the other hand, it remains unsatisfactory in that peace in the area is not achieved."

After Laird's testimony Monday, there had been speculation that the administration was setting the stage for a pullout based on a Hanoi-Washington settlement that might let the Vietnamese just fight it out.

Richardson's remarks yesterday made it appear that the United States is still committed to a much broader solution.

The two congressional appearances by Laird and Richardson also symbolize the dif-

fering assessments that seem to exist within the government and the country.

A true settlement in Vietnam would undoubtedly lend stability to the area and be helpful to Mr. Nixon in his second term. Yet others are skeptical of the value of documents signed in Paris, as opposed to the military and political realities in Vietnam and fear the political repercussions in this country if the U.S. role in the war goes on much longer.

The prospect that Richardson may quickly get caught up in this battle also emerged yesterday when Sen. Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) told Richardson he would vote for his confirmation in committee but possibly against him on the floor, strictly as a means to stop the workings of government and force an end to the war.

Asked by Sen. Harry F. Byrd (Ind.-Va.) if he favored or opposed the recent heavy bombing raids, Richardson said it was "more accurate to say I support it."

"I can certainly see in this situation... a set of factors which would in my view justify the decision the President made. It must have been an agonizing decision," he said.

"If there is no agreement, would you support new bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong?" Byrd asked of the man who— if confirmed— will be in office Jan. 20. Richardson considered such a question "too speculative," adding that "the breakdown of negotiations is one (question) transcending just military considerations."

Asked by Byrd if South Vietnam can defend itself without U.S. air power, Richardson said "as far as I have information, the answer is yes, subject to enough economic and material aid."

On Monday, Laird also said Saigon's air force could handle its own interdiction of enemy supplies, not by bombing the North but by hitting these supplies as they moved into the South.

On other points, Richardson said he was opposed to U.S. troop cuts in NATO because mutual East-West troop negotiations would start soon, the savings would be small and it might even cost more money to develop a capability to move them back quickly in an emergency.

Later in the hearings, Richardson back-tracked some when committee chairman John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), who

is known to favor some cuts of excess NATO personnel, suggested it might be wise not to come into the job with his mind made up.

Richardson said he thought prosecution of those accused of leaking the Pentagon papers to the press was justified, and also that the defense budget, in dollar terms, would no doubt keep rising, though it would be reduced in proportion to the total federal budget.

Richardson also said the United States "as a matter of policy" should not take steps to develop weapons which could be construed as "first-strike" weapons for nuclear war, though he pointed out that there are weapons which could be used for such a strike even though not intended for that purpose.

Richardson was brought sharply back to the Vietnam question and congressional unease by Sen. William B. Saxbe (R-Ohio).

Saxbe told Richardson that it seemed the President "was not limited by anything but his own conscience" with respect to "unlimited bombing... If he wanted to drop the bomb, who is to say no? This is the thing that Vietnam points out," he said.

Today, the committee will turn its attention to Texas oilman William P. Clements Jr., the White House nominee to become Richardson's principal deputy secretary.