

Wk Post Feb 27 1973

# Study of Invasion Of North Revealed

FEB 27 1973

2/27/73

By Michael Getler  
Washington Post Staff Writer

An invasion of North Vietnam at some point during the war would have been "a desirable move from a strictly military viewpoint," in the opinion of Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But "there were many, many political complications that the United States struggled with in connection with this war . . ." which "was not fought in accordance with basic military principles alone," Moorer added.

Moorer's views were expressed during questioning before two House Appropriations sub-committees behind closed doors on Jan. 9\* and 18, in the aftermath of the heavy U.S. bombing raids in December but before the peace agreement was announced later in January. The testimony was made public by the committee yesterday.

Questioned about prospects for an invasion by Rep. Clarence D. Long (D-Md.), Moorer said such a move had been "considered . . . on occasion," initially using U.S. troops prior to 1969 and then with South Vietnamese troops.

But at another point, Moorer said that the Joint Chiefs had actually "recommended" a flanking movement that would have involved a land invasion of the North, though the time frame of such a move was not clear from the testimony.

Long referred to the large concentrations of North Vietnamese troops just below the Demilitarized Zone in South Vietnam and asked Moorer

"Why could we have not gotten the South Vietnamese to invade the North? Why could we have not conducted a flanking operation?" Long then asked if the Joint Chiefs "have advocated a land invasion there?"

"Yes sir," Moorer answered, "on occasion we have recommended the flanking movement you talk about."

Publication of the Pentagon Papers and other documents chronicling the war through early 1968 indicates that the United States always had contingency plans for almost any action, including invading the North, and there were also indications that a quick movement of U.S. amphibious forces around the North Vietnamese supply hub of Vinh were being considered more seriously in the 1966-'68 period to help shut the supply route off.

But there have been few if any public references to an actual "recommendation" to invade the North with sizeable forces, presumably using Saigon's troops, by the Joint Chiefs.

While Moorer said he didn't see any useful purpose in critiquing what happened in the past, it seemed from his testimony that he disagreed with the principle of gradualism. "I come back to the point that this war—there was a time when we did not even call it a war—was conducted . . . initially on the principle of gradualism."

At another point he said

\* NY TIMES  
10 JAN 73  
FILED PONS

"the objective, as I understand it—the policy followed by those that were making the decisions in years gone by—was to do everything they could to contain the war in the smallest sense possible. But I do not think I am one to pass judgment."