

# PRESIDENT SEES HANOI AID BACKED BY THE CONGRESS

MAR 3 1973

## He Says Funds Would Not Cause Further Cuts in Domestic Budget

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 2—President Nixon promised today that postwar aid to North Vietnam, if approved by Congress, would be financed from existing defense and foreign aid funds, not from further slashes in "the domestic side of the budget."

Although he conceded that there was "considerable opposition" to such aid, Mr. Nixon predicted that Congress would eventually support it "in the interest of creating lasting peace and stability in the area."

"The costs of peace are great," he said, "but the costs of war are much greater."

Speaking at a surprise news conference, his first in a month, the President appeared to be trying to mollify Congressional critics of assistance to North Vietnam, many of whom have summed up their opposition to it with the phrase, "We ought to rebuild American cities before rebuilding Hanoi." [Question 2, Page 12]

### Confident on P.O.W.'s

Mr. Nixon also announced during the 37-minute session that his meeting with President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam would be held on April 2 and 3 at San Clemente, Calif. [Opening Statement] He also defended the Laos and Vietnam cease-fire agreements [Question 1] And Mr. Nixon expressed confidence that American prisoners of war would be released on schedule this weekend [Question 5].

Standing before the blue velvet curtain in the briefing room in the west wing of the White House, the President responded to questions with calm, measured phrases. His voice was noticeably lower than usual, and his replies showed no antagonism toward his Congressional and political adver-

saries.

In discussing aid to North Vietnam, which by some estimates has no more than a dozen supporters among the 100 members of the Senate, Mr. Nixon drew on his own experiences in the days after World War II.

"The opposition to aiding Germany and aiding Japan," he said, "was very substantial."

Mr. Nixon said he voted for

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the aid bill even though it showed that 80 percent of my constituents opposed it. I did it even though I was supported by a Democratic President, because I was convinced that the chances of lasting peace in Asia and the chance for having peace in Europe would be increased.

The clear implication of his remarks was the hope that they in the Democratic-controlled Congress would do likewise.

### Argues for Aid

Aid to North Vietnam was first promised in the Paris cease-fire agreement. Mr. Nixon said he did not argue that unless the North Vietnamese could be persuaded to part through help in rebuilding that their future did not lie in war, there would never be peace in Southeast Asia.

Asked whether the cease-fire could ever work, given the continuing violations, the president replied:

"The number of violations, the intensity of the fighting, has been reduced. It is not zero, yet I doubt if it will become zero at any time in the foreseeable future because of the fact that a guerrilla war having been fought for 25 years, off and on, is not going to be ended by one agreement, not in one month, not in two months, but the main point is, it is going down and we expect adherence to the agreement from both sides." [Question 12]

The President refused to discuss in any detail how the United States had managed to extract from the North Vietnamese this week the promise to resume prisoner releases almost immediately, in view of Hanoi's earlier intransigence.

### Denies Pressure on Saigon

But he labeled as "completely wrong" suggestions that "what brought about the P.O.W. return was some assurance on the part of the United States that we would do something with regard to getting

better compliance with the cease-fire." [Question 5]

It had been suggested in Paris that Hanoi agreed to return the prisoners in exchange for American pressures on Saigon to provide better protection for North Vietnamese representatives in South Vietnam.

The funds to pay for aid to North Vietnam, sources in the Office of Management and Budget said, will have to come at the expense of some other program—possibly foreign aid payments to other countries, including South Vietnam, as well as weapons procurement.

But the heavy expenditures, presuming that they are authorized by Congress, would not come until fiscal year 1975, still more than a year away. So no substantial distortion of the budget for fiscal year 1974, which is currently under consideration is expected.