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Indochina Cease-Fire:

Once again in Vietnam, President Nixon has a challenge confronting him. The North Vietnamese violations of the cease-fire accord are becoming just about as gross and flagrant as Hanoi's violations of the Laos treaty negotiated by Gov. Averell Harriman in 1962.

The whole subject is being played down by the American press — which was a great mistake in 1962, joined in by this reporter. On that occasion, Hanoi's representatives promised Gov. Harriman to withdraw their troops from Laos, and to cease using Laos as a corridor to supply the war in South Vietnam. Hanoi began cheating, however, the day Harriman and others were proudly photographed signing the treaty that "solved" the problem of Laos.

In 1962, as a token of "withdrawal," a couple of dozen North Vietnamese troops were paraded "withdrawing," in front of international observers and photographers. The other thousands remained in Laos, and were heavily reinforced over time. The use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, as the main supply route to the South, was also continued, was much better organized, and was enormously increased.

In the present instance, the warning signal is the immense new increase in the movement of North Vietnamese replacements and supplies over the Ho Chi Minh Trail to South Vietnam. It is not a bad estimate that the troop

movement is currently at the rate of 30,000 men since Jan. 1—or equal to the highest figure reached in preparation for Hanoi's unsuccessful 1972 offensive.

The movement of supplies is proportional to the movement of troops, with special emphasis on armor for offensive purposes. In a sense, to be sure, these movements over the Ho Chi Minh Trail are decidedly reassuring.

It has been an article of faith with American leftwing thinkers that Hanoi could always win any straight political contest with Saigon, if Saigon did not have decisive U.S. military support. The troop and supply movements plainly mean one thing, and one thing only. Hanoi believes Saigon will win any such political contest, unless the odds are militarily weighted in favor of Hanoi.

That does not alter the central fact, however. The fact is that President Nixon and Dr. Henry A. Kissinger have to decide what to do about these gross violations of the cease-fire accord they negotiated. It is 1962 all over again.

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Here, to be sure, one must make a distinction. The North Vietnamese will not violate the cease-fire accord by just being in Laos, until 90 days after the recent Laos cease-fire. At that point, they are obligated by the accord to withdraw from Laos, lock, stock and barrel — as they were obligated more immediately by the treaty signed with Gov. Harriman. But that point after the Laos cease-fire has not come yet.

For the long term, the total North Vietnamese withdrawal from Laos is Hanoi's key commitment in the cease-fire accord. Maybe President Nixon is waiting for this big issue to present itself. Maybe, also, he is waiting to make harsh choices until the last of the admitted U.S. prisoners have been sent home from Laos and North Vietnam.

The ugly truth still has to be faced, however, that gross violations of the cease-fire accord are already being committed. Secretary of State William Rogers was publicly cock-a-hoop because Hanoi's Soviet SAM-II missiles have now been removed from Khe Sanh airfield, inside South-Vietnamese territory. No one but a public relations

man can believe, however, that these newly introduced missiles are not still illegally present, though less visibly present, in the jungles near Khe Sanh.

Worse still, the troops and supplies coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail are being pushed into South Vietnam at a high rate; and this is an undoubted violation of the cease-fire accord. Some troops and some supplies are being positioned along the border. Yet many more are being sent straight into the first, second and third corps area of South Vietnam. This is treating the cease-fire accord as no more than another "scrap of paper."

President Nixon's aid program for both Vietnams is already in deep trouble on Capitol Hill. Obviously, he will not persist with aid for North Vietnam if the accord is being treated as a scrap of paper by Hanoi. Yet there is more that he can do than just abandon the unpopular North Vietnamese aid project.

He can resume U.S. bombing, by B52s and other planes based outside South Vietnam, within the territory of South Vietnam. He can even resume the bombing and blockade of North Vietnam. This should be enough; the President has only one problem, in fact. In the U.S. Senate, especially, there are too many people who want to prove themselves right by finally losing this American war, in which the U.S. has spent so much blood and treasure.

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'It's 1962 All Over Again'