

Questions and Answers on How Truce

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WASHINGTON, March 28— Two months have passed since the Vietnam cease-fire agreement was signed on Jan. 27 in Paris. Following are questions and answers on how the accord has affected the situation in Indochina.

Q. Have the terms of the agreement been fulfilled?

A. The results so far have been mixed. According to Administration officials and reports from Vietnam, some aspects of the accord have been carried out virtually without a hitch. Other sections have been carried out only partially or not at all.

Q. Which parts have been carried out?

A. In general the sections dealing with the end of American presence in Vietnam. The 24,500 troops that were present when the accord was signed are being pulled out, and almost 600 American prisoners—including nine in Laos—are being freed by North Vietnam and the Vietcong.

Q. What about the cease-fire itself? Has it been observed?

A. The agreement called for a "standstill cease-fire," to be supervised by a rather complex mechanism of commissions—a four-party one, made up of representatives of the United States, the South Vietnamese Government, the Vietcong, and North Vietnam, and an international one, made up of Canadians, Hungarians, Indonesians, and Poles. So far the cease-fire itself has failed to take hold. Fighting between Saigon forces and the Communists has continued, with almost no let-up, despite clear language in the agreement forbidding it.

Q. Which side has been at fault—Saigon or the Communists?

A. There have been countless charges and countercharges on the question of guilt. Estimates agree that neither side is without fault. Communist forces have tried to seize and hold territory; Saigon's troops have also used force.

Q. But was this not expected when the agreement was signed? After all, the Vietnamese have been at war for more than 20

years. Why should they stop now?

A. There were some skeptics who doubted that the cease-fire would be observed. But top Administration officials were saying privately that they expected only a few days of fighting before it took effect. Now they are saying that they have been disappointed by the continued conflict.

Q. Is there any chance that the United States might again get involved in the fighting in Vietnam as a result of the current violations of the cease-fire?

A. This is possible but appears extremely unlikely. At the present level of hostilities, Saigon seems more than a match for the Communist forces in the South, and there appears no need or desire for the United States to get involved directly now.

Q. At what point would President Nixon order, for instance, renewed American bombing in Vietnam?

A. This is a question that the Administration refuses to answer for fear of tipping its hand to Hanoi. But Administration officials suggest that if North Vietnam mounted an all-out offensive, such as it did last spring, and Saigon seemed unable to deal with it, American planes might go to the aid of Saigon.

Q. There have been reports of increased infiltration by Hanoi of men and equipment into South Vietnam, in violation of the agreement. How extensive and how dangerous is this infiltration?

A. This question is in dispute in Washington. While it seems clear that about 30,000 troops were sent via the Ho Chi Minh Trail network through Laos into South Vietnam in the last two months, along with many tanks and much equipment, the intelligence community is divided over the significance of all this.

Some Pentagon analysts believe that Hanoi plans to mount a quick offensive to seize territory between now and the start of the rainy season in June. Others, primarily in the State Department, believe that the infiltration has been sharply reduced in recent weeks, indicating that the troops were sent into South Vietnam to replen-

ish the Communist forces that were sharply depleted during the fighting last year.

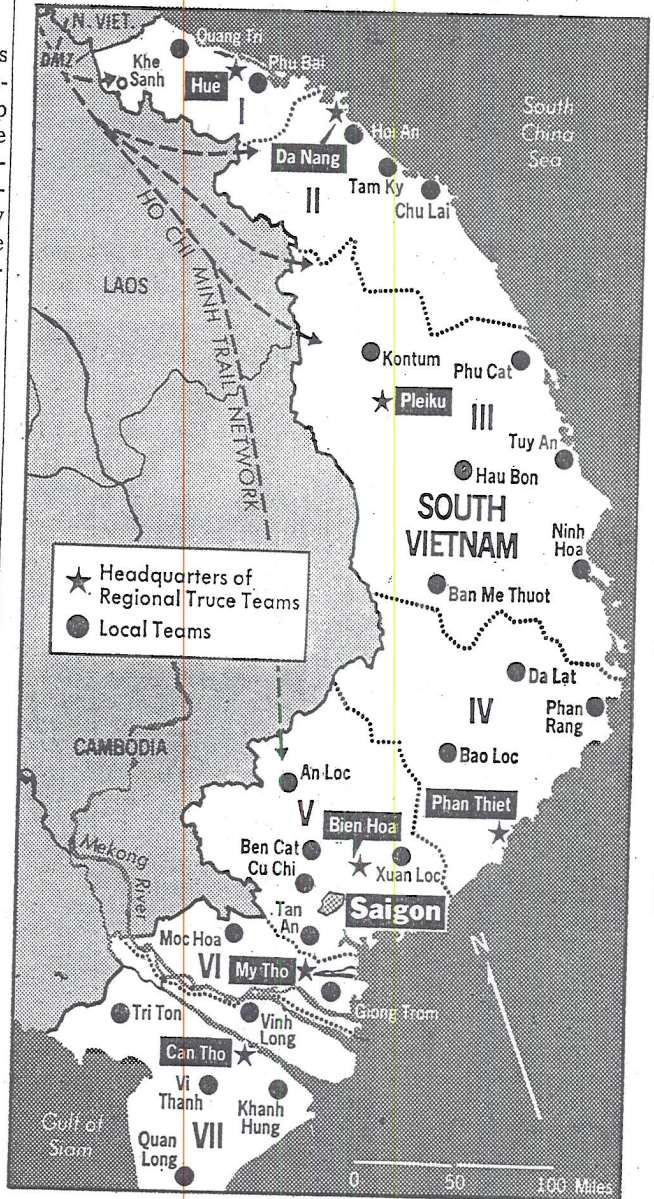
Q. But if the North Vietnamese do not plan an offensive, why did they bother sending in the additional men and equipment?

A. One theory is that this was done to deter the Saigon Government from trying to wipe

out the Communist forces in the countryside.

Q. With the American combat forces now out of South Vietnam, what Americans are left?

A. About 8,000 American civilians remain in South Vietnam, the State Department estimates. About 5,000 are so called "contract" employ-



Map marks the 7 regional and 26 local headquarters that the two truce commissions were supposed to staff. I.C.C.S. did, but has been paralyzed by disputes. The Joint Military Commission, which had main responsibility, failed to staff more than fraction of the sites.

The New York Times/March 29, 1973

Accord Has Affected Indochina Situation

hired by private American companies working for the South Vietnamese Government. These include a large number of Americans involved in the upkeep and maintenance of advanced military equipment such as jet planes and high-speed communications equipment given to Saigon just before the cease-fire agreement.

About 1,200 civilians will be attached to the 80-man military attaché's office in the embassy, supervising the continuing military aid that is permitted on a one-for-one replacement rate. There will continue to be large economic aid missions as well as a bolstered embassy staff.

Q. Has the International Commission of Control and Supervision done its job adequately?

A. By all accounts, the four-nation group has bogged down badly in disagreement and inaction. This had not been unexpected by the Nixon Administration, which knew that the make-up of the commission—two Communist nations (Hungary and Poland), and two non-Communist nations (Canada and Indonesia)—would inevitably lead to splits. Unanimous votes are necessary before the commission can act, but the cease-fire agreement does allow any of the four nations to make its own statements, and Washington has been pleased by the willingness of Canada to criticize violations—thereby bringing some pressure on the parties to comply with the rules.

Q. But if the International group does not do its job, what is there to prevent an outbreak of heavy fighting?

A. The hope here is that Moscow and Peking will prevail on Hanoi and that Saigon will heed American pressure to settle major questions through discussion, not arms.

Q. What are the political provisions of the cease-fire agreement and have they been carried out?

A. In brief, the accord obliges both Saigon and the Vietcong to negotiate such problems as the release of Vietnamese prisoners, the demobilization of their armies and the establishment of the so-called National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord that is to

write ground rules for general elections in the country. So far the two sides have met three times outside of Paris, apparently without accomplishing more than exchanges of polemics. There are reports, however, that the two sides are also holding secret talks that are making more progress.

Q. Are the talks important and is it conceivable that they will achieve any success?

A. If the Vietnamese are unable to solve their problems over the conference table they will be tempted to resume all-out war, as the talks are considered crucial. The chances for success do not appear to be very good, however, given the recent past.

Q. What about Laos and Cambodia? How long will American military involvement there last?

A. There is a formal cease-fire in Laos, reached about two and a half weeks after the one in Vietnam. At present the government of Premier Souvanna Phouma is attempting to work out a settlement of political differences with the Pathet Lao. Eventual peace probably rests on whether Hanoi decides to fulfill its commitment to withdraw its forces from Laos. In Cambodia the military situation has worsened in recent weeks, and, according to Cambodian and foreign military experts, American air strikes are to keep President Lon Nol's regime alive. The White House says that the bombing will continue as long as requested, and until a cease-fire is achieved in Cambodia.

Q. Does the Vietnam cease-fire not rule out military activity in Laos and Cambodia by "foreign forces"?

A. Yes, but it does not say when involvement must cease. Washington says there is an understanding with Hanoi that it will stop when there is a cease-fire.

Q. On March 2, the international conference on Vietnam endorsed the cease-fire agreement? What did that accomplish?

A. It put the major powers, particularly the Chinese and Russians, on the record as supporting the provisions of the accord. This would allow the

United States, in case of major fighting, to seek joint action with Moscow and Peking to halt it.

Q. Would Moscow and Peking actually take public steps against Hanoi? And would the United States rebuke Saigon?

A. Washington would probably be uneasy about drawing attention to Saigon's infractions just as Moscow and Peking would not want to antagonize Hanoi. The purpose of the joint action would not be a public effort, but rather to use private pressure to prevent a major conflict, or to stop one if it began.

Q. Mr. Nixon has talked about aid to Hanoi as an investment in peace. What is the status of possible aid, particularly in the light of reported Congressional opposition?

A. In Paris, American and North Vietnamese members of a so-called joint economic commission have been discussing a variety of subjects, including possible aid programs. But such aid depends on Congressional approval. The Administration, aware of Congressional doubts, has said that no request would be made until May and that any appropriation would come from Defense or Foreign Aid budgets. Mr. Nixon hopes that if North Vietnam becomes engaged in joint economic programs, it would lose interest in military pursuits. That is similar to the view that once the Soviet Union became interested in consumer goods it posed less of a threat to the West because it would have more to lose in a war.

Q. Will there be aid to

South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia too?

A. Yes. Aid to Saigon will be conditioned in part on its adherence to the cease-fire. The total, not yet set, may come to about \$1-billion a year.

Q. The cease-fire agreement called on the United States to remove the mines it placed in North Vietnam's waterways. Has this been completed?

A. No. The operation was slow in getting started and has proved more complicated than the Pentagon first thought. But a channel has been cleared at Haiphong, the principal port, and ships from the Soviet Union and other Communist countries have arrived with supplies for the first time since last May, when the first mines were laid.

Q. On the whole has the cease-fire agreement been worth it?

A. So far, according to Nixon Administration officials, the agreement has served the American interest despite the repeated violations of the truce because it has provided a viable framework for the release of prisoners and an orderly withdrawal of the last troops, which were militarily unimportant at the end, anyway.

Whether it is in Hanoi's interest, or in the interest of Saigon or the Vietcong, remains to be seen. The Communists are clearly hoping to use the agreement as a stepping stone to eventual Communist control of South Vietnam and union with the North. Saigon is hoping that the agreement will allow it time to increase its stability and thereby discourage the Communists from seeking to take over.