

U.S. Seeking Viet Accord Without GI Use

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High-ranking military and civilian officials said yesterday that the United States is working to bring about compliance with the Vietnam cease-fire agreements in every way short of further U.S. military involvement.

From a purely military standpoint, Pentagon analysts expressed the view that North Vietnam's buildup in the south and the continued fighting in Cambodia, while serious violations of the cease-fire, did not pose a threat to South Vietnam's survival that was large enough or apparent enough at this time to require a renewal of U.S. bombing.

On the other hand, White House annoyance with Hanoi for its actions in the South and Cambodia is such that no official would predict whether President Nixon might eventually involve U.S. airpower in retaliation for the cease-fire violations.

In general, however, high-level Pentagon observers tended to play down the prospects of a U.S. military response.

They indicated that some step-up in the continuing U.S. air attacks in Cambodia was a possibility, as was the prospect that South Vietnamese gunboats and planes might escort some supply convoys to the beleaguered Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh.

The prospect of a sizable South Vietnamese ground attack in Cambodia, however, was viewed as unlikely among military analysts who expressed doubts that Saigon's troops could break a siege by scattered and small Cambodian Communist units without getting bogged down for a long time outside their own borders.

Several factors go into the Pentagon's overall military assessment of the situation facing Saigon.

While the Defense Department on Wednesday confirmed that Hanoi has rebuilt its strength in South Vietnam to levels at least as high as before last spring's big offensive, military officials say the movement of heavy artillery, tanks, anti-aircraft guns and troops has tapered off sharply since March.

Supplies continue to move into the south, but mostly by trucks believed to be carrying food, fuel and ammunition for stockpiling.

Most of the buildup is completed, in this estimate, and Hanoi would probably have to add considerably to its estimated 160,000 to 170,000 man force in the south to effectively handle much more armor or artillery.

While force levels are restored, Pentagon estimates are that it would still take Hanoi from four to eight months more before it could effectively integrate its new equipment, men and units in the south to work as well as the invasion force of last spring.

This factor, in combination with the approaching May-October monsoon season, leads many analysts to believe that a new major offensive could not come before next December, if Hanoi is planning such an offensive—a point on which there is no agreement.

The situation in Cambodia is bad, but officials point out that eastern Cambodia has always been a Communist sanctuary. Militarily, a crumbling in Cambodia would increase the feeling of isolation of Saigon's troops and might reopen the supply port of Kompong Som to the Communists. But South Vietnam's navy, Pentagon analysts suggest, could probably keep that port closed.

If another offensive does come, it will be between two forces somewhat different than those that met last

spring. Generally overlooked, say U.S. officials, is the improvements made in Saigon's forces. But Hanoi's armies have a different look, too.

According to a more detailed Pentagon assessment, Hanoi has between 300 and 400 long-range 122-mm and 130-mm artillery guns in the south, about 100 more than last spring. A few dozen are deployed for the first time in the military region that includes Saigon.

The number of tanks and armored vehicles is placed at more than 500, about 100 more than were ever actually engaged last year. The 1,100 or so anti-aircraft guns to protect supply bases, are several more than moved into the south to support the spring offensive.

U.S. officials concede that the North Vietnamese built up their forces faster than was anticipated. They say it is still uncertain how much in supplies is hidden in the south or stockpiled in the north, although these are "soft" estimates which reportedly indicate that most of the war material stockpiled in the north has been moved southward.

Some supplies, though not necessarily tanks or guns, are still arriving from the Soviet Union and China. The United States is pressing to get Moscow and Peking to halt arms deliveries and to pressure Hanoi not to send what it still has stockpiled southward, as well as to end the fighting.

But estimates of Moscow's leverage with Hanoi vary, and some officials suggest the Communist superpowers have to keep some supplies coming to retain whatever leverage they do have with North Vietnam.