

U.S., IN WARNING, ANNOUNCES HALT IN MINESWEEPING

APR 20 1973

Also Recalls Official From
Paris Aid Talks—Truce
Violations Charged
NYTimes

By WILLIAM BEECHER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 19—

The United States announced today the suspension of all mine-clearing operations along the coast of North Vietnam and the recall of the chief American official in the Paris negotiations on possible reconstruction aid to the North.

Defense and State Department officials charged that Hanoi was violating the cease-fire and said the moves were aimed at persuading the other side to live up to the agreement.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers told a meeting of business leaders that "we are going to use every possible method, every diplomatic device possible," to see that the cease-fire agreements are complied with.

Brief Suspension Recalled

Administration officials appeared to be ambiguous on whether the suspension of minesweeping was meant to threaten the possibility of mining of North Vietnamese ports.

One senior official, for example, noted that there had been a brief suspension of minesweeping late in February as a protest over a delay in the release of American war prisoners. He added that if the United States wanted to drop new mines it would first have to remove American ships from the areas.

The first word of the suspension of sweeping operations came in a Hanoi broadcast protesting the move as a violation of the Paris accords. At 4 A.M. today, Jerry W. Friedheim, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, issued a statement confirming the suspension, ascribing it to "the failure of the other side to abide by the agreements and assurances of Paris."

Later, at a Pentagon news briefing, Mr. Friedheim said the "temporary" halt in sweeping activities had come within

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

the last few days. He declined to be more specific, citing diplomatic considerations.

Pentagon sources said that all of the 18 or so ships in the mine-clearing task force had been pulled far from the coast and that at least two of the ships had gone to Hong Kong.

Asked whether the United States had the means in the vicinity to drop new mines by air he said that two aircraft carriers were in the immediate area and two more within easy sailing distance.

The recall of Maurice J. Williams, who has been in Paris discussing aid for Hanoi, was announced by Charles W. Bray 3d, the State Department spokesman. He said that Mr. Williams would be in Washington for consultations and added, "I cannot now say how long his stay will endure."

The Paris accords must be observed in full, Mr. Bray said. "North Vietnam and its friends," he said, "cannot reasonably expect to pick and choose as between those portions they wish to observe and those portions they wish to disregard. That is the basic purpose to our recent reactions to their selective observance of the agreement."

Asked whether the United States, by suspending minesweeping and by bombing in Laos, was also violating the accords, Mr. Bray said: "I'm looking forward to the day when North Vietnam will be as scrupulous as we have been."

Rogers Warns on Aid

Secretary Rogers, striking a similar note, said: "We did not sign the Vietnam agreements with the thought that North Vietnam could act as it wished once our troops were withdrawn. We expected the agreements to be observed."

The accords, he continued, were designed to "end military warfare in favor of political action."

"We are committed to the full implementation of that agreement," he said, "including the provisions on withdrawal of foreign forces from Laos and Cambodia and the cessation of infiltration activities."

He warned that the Administration would not ask Congress to provide reconstruction funds for the North unless the Paris accords were fully adhered to.

It was not clear how much of a problem for North Vietnam the suspension of minesweeping would create. Military sources said today that of the 26 freighters trapped in Haiphong harbor, the principal port in the North, after the first mine-laying last May 8, all but two Polish vessels had sailed through clear channels.

About 15 vessels, the sources said, have in recent weeks moved into Haiphong, mostly with food cargoes.

Mr. Friedheim said that Haiphong was not considered by the United States to be safe for normal traffic and that the warning to mariners had not been lifted.

North Vietnam has said that only three mines have been detonated during American sweeping operations.

Pentagon officials said that most mines were designed to neutralize themselves after a pre-set time interval. On the chance that this feature may have malfunctioned in some cases, the sweeping was considered a necessary precaution.

Meanwhile, Pentagon officials were puzzled over indications that portions of one or more North Vietnamese divisions recently moved from the northernmost province of South Vietnam into the North.

A headquarters element of the 308th Division is believed to have moved across the demilitarized zone within the last two weeks, well-placed sources said. Elements of one or two other divisions may also have moved to the North, they said.

Asked about reports of movements, Mr. Friedheim said there had been much movement north and south lately and information was inconclusive on what units might have moved out of South Vietnam and for what purpose.

Hanoi Sees 'Sabotage'

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, April 19—The North Vietnamese delegation here today denounced the United States suspension of economic talks as "sabotage."

At today's meeting, it said, the United States gave notice that both formal and technical meetings were being halted and refused to set any new dates. The North Vietnamese said the United States must end "its sabotage" and continue negotiations.

Hanoi Made Disclosure

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 19 (AP)—The initial disclosure that the United States had halted the sweeping of mines came from the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry. A statement carried by Hanoi's official press agency said the action was taken two days before.

The Foreign Ministry said the suspension was evidence of a "premeditated" plan to prolong the blockade of North Vietnam.

"The government of the United States," it said, "has deliberately retarded this work and until this day it has exploded only three mines of the tens of thousands it was responsible for neutralizing."

The statement added that the action coincided with what it termed a step-up by the United States of the war in Cambodia and renewed air strikes in Laos.

Continued on Page 6, Column 1