

Tough U.S. Reply to Hanoi

Washington

The United States made public yesterday a sharply worded reply to Hanoi's charges of cease-fire violations, accusing the North Vietnamese of "direct and inexcusable" breaches of the three-month-old Vietnam accord.

Washington was responding to a note of April 16, addressed to the nations that participated in the Paris conference on Vietnam, in which North Vietnam contended that the "U.S. and the Saigon government had 'brazenly and systematically violated many 'essential provisions' of the cease-fire agreement.

The American note was sent over the weekend to all participants of the international conference on Vietnam, with the exception of the Viet Cong, and detailed Washington's claims that Hanoi had violated the agreement.

GROUNDLESS

The U.S. said it rejected "as utterly groundless the accusations of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and views this note as an ill-disguised attempt by the DRV to divert attention away from its own numerous and extremely serious violations of the cease-fire."

Among the statements made by the U.S. were the following:

- North Vietnam was accused of "illegal movement" of equipment and supplies into South Vietnam, via Laos and Cambodia. The U.S. said that more than 400 tanks and armored vehicles, 300 artillery pieces, and vast amounts of ammunition and supplies were included. About 27,000 tons of military supplies have been moved across the demilitarized zone since the cease-fire was signed, it said, and 26,000 tons were moved into Laos.

New U.S. Threat On Bombing

Ft. Hood, Tex.

Defense Secretary Elliott Richardson warned yesterday the U.S. may resume bombing in Vietnam if the other side continues what he called "flagrant" violations of the cease-fire agreement.

But he ruled out the possibility that American ground troops would be sent back. Richardson's comments came at a press conference.

Richardson charged that

About 17,000 military truck movements were sighted going from North Vietnam into Laos, and 7000 across the DMZ.

- Hanoi was charged with "an intention to persist" in violations by seeking to "upgrade the road system" in Laos and South Vietnam. The only "logical use" of such road would be as "a clandestine supply highway into the central coastal regions" of South Vietnam, the U.S. said.

- In what the U.S. called Hanoi's "most serious violation," more than 30,000 North Vietnamese troops were said to have moved through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam since the cease-fire.

- North Vietnam was accused of having put up anti-aircraft guns in South Vietnam since the cease-fire and of having ringed the Khe Sanh airfield complex in the northern part of South Vietnam with anti-aircraft missiles of the SAM-2 type, "which clearly were not present prior to the cease-

fire." the Vietnam "cease-fire agreements have been flagrantly flouted from the outset."

Richardson said he was "categorically ruling out the reintroduction of ground troops" into Vietnam.

But, he said, "with respect to air action, we're not in a position to rule out the use of air power, depending on the degree of action on the part of the other side."

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fire."

- North Vietnam was accused of having launched attacks on hamlets, villages and South Vietnamese government military outposts "in unequivocal violation" of the agreement's "fundamental purpose."

In its note, the Hanoi charged the U.S. and the Saigon forces with numerous violations. The U.S. sought, in its note, to rebut them. The charges, and the American responses, included the following:

- The Saigon forces, backed by the U.S., were charged with having failed to observe the cease-fire and with having launched "tens of thousands" of military operations to encroach on Viet Cong areas. The U.S. said, in response, that instead of "backing" such acts, it had concentrated on observing the cease-fire "scrupulously." ● The U.S. was accused of not having withdrawn its arms and equipment as it pulled its last troops out. In its note, Washington said it had "fully complied" with

the agreement, and any arms left behind had been transferred to Saigon before the signing of the cease-fire.

- North Vietnam charged the U.S. with having supplied new arms and munitions in violation of the agreement, but Washington said that all arms given since the accord were on the one-for-one basis allowed by the accord, and therefore permitted by the terms of the agreement.

- North Vietnam charged that the U.S., "in withdrawing its troops, 'has left behind over 10,000 military personnel disguised as civilian advisers.'" The U.S. said that this charge "has no basis in fact." It said that in addition to the 200 military men attached to the embassy, there are no other American military men in South Vietnam. The U.S. did acknowledge "less than 9000" civilian personnel, most of whom are filling logistics and maintenance functions for the South Vietnamese army.

- The U.S. also denied that its bombing of Laos and Cambodia was in violation of the accord. It said the raids were the result of Hanoi's combat violations in those countries.

In its note, Hanoi also accused the U.S. of having delayed completion of the minesweeping operations in North Vietnamese waters.

Since the distribution of Hanoi's note, the U.S. has announced that it is suspending the minesweeping because of violations by North Vietnam.

In addition, the U.S. has resumed reconnaissance flights, also banned by the agreement.

The U.S. note said this was "justified as a response to the numerous material breaches of the agreement" by Hanoi.