

NYTimes AUG 18 1973  
**U.S. Pledges Air Support  
To Saigon if Hanoi Attacks**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 17 — Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger called Hanoi "the fountainhead of insurrection" in Southeast Asia today and said that the United States would support South Vietnamese forces from the air in the event of overt North Vietnamese aggression."

At a news conference in the Pentagon, he added: "It would be ill-advised for Hanoi to miscalculate."

His remarks, in reply to newsmen's questions, were cast in much the same vein as President Nixon's comments at the end of the United States bombing of Cambodia on Wednesday.

#### Forces to Be Reduced

Dr. Schlesinger said that the United States would be negotiating a reduction of its forces in neighboring Thailand, but added that "we will leave sufficient air support in Southeast Asia." He said that even after cuts, American air arms, strategic and tactical, stationed in the region "could be reinforced."

A joint United States-Thailand statement issued in Bangkok today said that the two coun-

tries had agreed on early discussions to reduce American forces in Thailand.

The joint statement was issued after a two-hour meeting between Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn and the American Ambassador, Leonard Unger.

#### 45,000 Men in Thailand

The two Governments reaffirmed their intentions that this reduction be gradual and related to the security requirement of Southeast Asia. Some 45,000 American troops are stationed at seven bases in Thailand, the largest United States military presence in Southeast Asia.

In his news conference, Dr. Schlesinger said that recent events in Indochina and in the United States "may have encouraged the North Vietnamese to think they could have a free ride in Southeast Asia." This was erroneous," he said.

He emphasized repeatedly his belief that "the Congress and the American public" would respond to a Presidential appeal for permission to order fresh support for the Saigon

Continued on Page 5, Column 3

#### Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

Government in the event of new aggression from the North.

The Defense Secretary cited the support given to Mr. Nixon in May, 1972, when there was a "clear invasion" of South Vietnam by North Vietnamese regular forces. He said Congress and the public again "would respond against that type of aggression," should it occur.

Additional reasons for such support, he said, could be found in the expenditure of \$140-billion and the lives of many American servicemen "for the survival of South Vietnam."

Moreover, he said, renewed aggression would constitute "overt, gross and monstrous violation of the cease-fire" negotiated in Vietnam at the beginning of the year. Since that cease-fire was negotiated in part by the United States, he said, there is a United States commitment to it.

Dr. Schlesinger specified that in keeping with the orders of Congress, future American actions in Indochina would be

restricted to the use of air and sea power, "but no ground forces."

He said the United States would continue to give supplies to the Cambodian Government under a military assistance program and would also respond to "legitimate noncombat requests of Laos."

American officials said the Schlesinger and Nixon statements renewing the American commitment to maintaining stability in Southeast Asia could be seen as an action stemming from the relative weakness created by Congressional limitations. "By talking about air power in the event of new aggression we're using one of the few levers we've got left," one official remarked.