

A Commitment

How Kissinger Defines U.S. Indochina Role

Washington

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger says that the 1973 Paris agreement, bringing a cease-fire to Vietnam, committed the United States to South Vietnam where "no bilateral written commitment" exists.

Stating that the U.S. has invested "great human and material resources" to give South Vietnam the right to self-determination, Kissinger said that "we have thus committed ourselves very substantially, both politically and morally.

"While the South Vietnamese government and people are demonstrating increasing self-reliance, we believe it is important that we continue our support as long as it is needed."

Kissinger explained U.S. policy toward Indochina in a document prepared at the request of Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.), chairman of the Senate subcommittee on Refugees.

Kennedy responded to the Kissinger policy statement released yesterday by calling it "a welcome but disturbing clarification" of U.S. policy.

"I am distressed that the secretary's statement seems to propound a new rationalization for our continued heavy involvement in Indochina," Kennedy said.

"Apparently the administration now views the Paris agreement on ending the war and restoring the peace as creating new American commitments to South Vietnam."

The Paris cease-fire agreement was signed Jan. 27, 1973, by the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

Kissinger's policy statement contains criticism of North Vietnam for cease-fire violations. Although military casualties since the cease-fire have fallen to one-third the level of before the agreement, Kissinger said, "It is unfortunately evident that significant violence continues to occur and that the cease-fire is far from being scrupulously observed."

North Vietnam, he continued, "has persisted" in infiltrating South Vietnam, sending more than 100,000 troops and "large quantities" of heavy equipment into the south.

Beyond this, Kissinger said in another section, North Vietnam has failed to live up to the agreement's terms on cessation of military activities in Cambodia and Laos, and the accounting for U.S. missing in action.

Kissinger declined to provide the dollar amounts of U.S. economic assistance in Vietnam, Cambodia and

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Laos for the current fiscal year and for the one to begin July 1.

But Kennedy said that all U.S. spending in Indochina totals \$3 billion for this fiscal year, a figure about \$1 billion higher than official estimates, according to Dale S. de Haan, counsel to Kennedy's subcommittee.

De Haan said that the Kissinger document, and several reports being prepared by the General Accounting Office, may provide the basis for holding subcommittee hearings in the future.

He termed the Kissinger statement one of the most comprehensive on U.S. Indochina policy Kissinger has made in several months.

Kennedy sent Kissinger a list of nine questions on March 13 and the secretary of state, now on a honeymoon in Mexico, replied March 25.

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In Laos and Cambodia, as in South Vietnam, there are no formal commitments with the United States, but national interest dictates U.S. support, Kissinger said.

Laos is "the bright spot in Indochina where the fruits of our efforts to assist and support the Royal Lao government are most clearly seen," Kissinger said.

A cease-fire has endured for more than a year, he added, and "a coalition government may not be far away."

The "real progress" Kissinger described in Laos was made "partly because of our assistance."

However, the secretary of state was less optimistic about peace prospects in Cambodia. He said a "broadened political base, a

new prime minister and a more effective cabinet offer signs of improvements in the civil administration. The enormous dislocation of the war, destroying production, producing over a million refugees and encouraging spiraling inflation, face the leaders of the Khmer Republic with serious problems."

Nonetheless, he said, "we are convinced that with U.S. material and diplomatic support the Khmer Republic's demonstration of military and economic viability will persuade their now intransigent opponents to move to a political solution of the Cambodian conflict."

Talks on U.S. reconstruction aid to North Vietnam were suspended last July. Kissinger told Kennedy that the administration position is that the U.S. "cannot at this time move forward" on such a program.

Should North Vietnam

stop military activities and "demonstrate a serious compliance with the agreement," the U.S. would be prepared, with the approval of Congress, to proceed on the program, Kissinger said.

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