

## Viet Press Briefing Expose

# Taylor Rips Mask Off Khanh

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SAIGON.

American Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor said today that South Viet Nam is facing the most serious political situation since he arrived here five months ago, according to reliable sources.

At a special press briefing, Gen. Taylor described the current crisis resulting from last weekend's purge-coup as a fight on four fronts:

The council of Vietnamese generals headed by Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh vs. the government of Premier Tran Van Huong.

The generals against the ambassador (himself).

The Buddhists vs. the ambassador.

The generals vs. the Viet Cong Communist guerrillas.

Reliable sources indicated Gen. Taylor said he was not sure the Vietnamese generals were fighting the Viet Cong so well. He said many of the generals on the 20-man Armed Forces Council have been in Saigon for the last three days, "but the captains are carrying on" the anti-Communist war.

In describing the generals on the council—who dissolved the High National Council, one of the three components of the civilian government, and arrested most of its members and other politicians—Gen. Taylor reportedly said "some are bordering on being nuts," some are first class.

Gen. Taylor made these comments at a specially convened background briefing to a group of eight American correspondents, and said the contents of the briefing were not to be attributed to him personally or to American officials.

This correspondent was the only American reporter not invited to special background. On Wednesday, the Herald Tribune carried an exclusive interview in which Gen. Khanh, Armed Forces commander in chief, sharply criticized Gen. Taylor for activities "beyond imagination."

Gen Taylor reportedly said at the briefing today that at a conference last Monday Gen. Khanh asked him whether it would be helpful if Gen. Khanh "ceased to be commander in chief."

Gen. Taylor told the Vietnamese military leader that it would, according to reliable sources.

On Tuesday morning, Gen. Taylor reportedly told the American correspondents, Gen. Khanh said he might step down from his post as commander in chief and asked the ambassador if the United States would defray his expenses for a trip to the United States and other countries, along with several other generals.

Gen. Taylor said no final decision was taken at that time.

The Ambassador reportedly said that Gen. Khanh, feeling the Americans were against him, is the center of an anti-American camp of generals and is whip-

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# TAYLOR AND KHANH'S MASK

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ping up a hard core of five or six young generals.

But Gen. Taylor is said to have predicted that Gen. Khanh would not win, for two reasons: No Vietnamese group stays together for long, and hence in a few days the Armed Forces Council will fall apart; secondly, Gen. Khanh is not very popular with the young generals.

The Tuesday conference with Gen. Khanh took place two days after the Armed Forces Council staged its coup. of the young generals involved and told them in "soldier-to-soldier blunt terms" that he disapproved of what they had done.

Gen. Taylor reportedly explained the American view that the generals could not intervene in the government whenever they chose and then return to military affairs. He was also said to have told them that although they were patriotic they could not "break the crockery and have others pick it up."

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The U. S. has hinted strongly that it would cut off promised boosts in aid to South Viet Nam unless the High National Council is restored to power. But Gen. Khanh and the other generals of the

Armed Forces Council thus far have refused.

On Tuesday, Gen. Khanh asserted at a meeting of the Armed Forces Council that South Viet Nam could get along without American aid, which is being poured into the country at the rate of \$1.5 million a day to help the fight against the Viet Cong.

Later that same day, in an order of the day broadcast to his troops, he denounced U. S. efforts to restore South Vietnamese political stability. No progress has been made in finding a way out of the deadlock that poses the worst threat yet to the U. S. position in this vital Southeast Asian country.

Gen. Taylor is also said to have described 63-year-old Premier Tran Van Huong as being physically afraid of the military and hesitating to tangle with them because he thinks there is an even bigger threat from the Buddhists. The Buddhists have been attempting to overthrow his civilian regime, and he feels he must have the support of the military in the fight against the Buddhist political priests.

The American Ambassador reportedly told his press briefing today that he had advised Mr. Huong it would be difficult for the U. S. to work with him if he chose to stay in office by making concessions to the military. This would place the real power in the hands of the generals, Gen. Taylor was quoted as telling the Premier, and there is no value for the U. S. to negotiate with a "facade government."