

# SEE U.S. RAIDS AS BASIS FOR STABLE VIET

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SAIGON.

The recent American bombing raids against Communist North Viet Nam, like the ones in August during the Bay of Tonkin crisis, probably will create the proper political climate to form a strong, stable government in South Viet Nam.

The gamble is that attempts to form the government will not fail, as they did in August, because of mistakes such as those by American officials in Saigon and by then-Premier Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh.

Many Vietnamese and some Western diplomats believe the creation of this favorable climate was the real reason for the raids.

While this is a matter of conjecture, it is certain that the final solution to the long political crisis is seen as a stable government with power tightly centralized in the hands of the anti-Communist Armed Forces—and more specifically in the hands of a de Gaulle-type president, Gen. Khanh, now the strongman and Commander-in-Chief.

This solution was attempted following the Bay of Tonkin raids, when Gen. Khanh seized the Presidency.

But he hesitated to name his new government, U. S. officials in Saigon were in a state of immobility, a power vacuum ensued, and Buddhist street demonstrations brought Gen. Khanh's temporary downfall.

If Gen. Khanh's new effort fails, hopes of defeating the Communist Viet Cong militarily or politically will virtually evaporate. But since August the political circumstances have changed, and chances for success are much greater.

Many observers believe that the U. S. used the Communist attack at Pleiku as a pretext—not a reason—for bombing North Viet Nam. The bombing plans had been decided upon at least a year before and had not been used in

response to the Red attack on Bien Hoa airfield last Nov.

1. The timing of the strikes, the observers believe, coincided with the needs of internal political developments.

U. S. Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor for months in public statements had made a strong government in Saigon a prerequisite for bombing North Viet Nam. The argument was that bombing was only a half-solution and that a strong government was needed to prosecute the war effectively.

Now Gen. Taylor's statements must be interpreted only as an appeal for a stable government. For the recent raids were launched when Saigon was between provisional governments. His reversal of policy implies that the bombing of North Viet Nam is a necessary condition for forming a permanent government rather than vice versa.

The new provisional government of Dr. Phan Huy Quat will serve until the National Congress, scheduled to be popularly elected March 21, names a president and ratifies a Constitution with power resting in the president's hands. He in turn will name a new and, hopefully, permanent government.

The provisional government's structure, with five super-ministers overseeing the Cabinet, is vaguely that of the future permanent government; in an imprecise sense, it is "the Khanh government without Khanh."

If American blunders and Gen. Khanh's indecisiveness were contributing factors to the political chaos following the August bombing, the political climate before, during and because of last week's bombings is perhaps a mark of the quiet success of U. S. officials in Saigon and of Gen. Khanh.

The most important factor is that American policymakers are more decisive than after Tonkin, when they could not afford a political crisis—and bloodshed in the streets of Saigon—before the U. S. Presidential election.

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