Viet Strongman Defies U.S. on Civilian Rule

KHANH ASSAILS GEN. TAYLOR

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SAIGON.

Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, South Viet Nam's strongman, said yesterday that if United States Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor "does not act more intelligently, the United States will lose Southeast Asia and we will lose our freedom."

The commander of South Viet Nam's armed forces sharply criticized Gen. Taylor for having engaged in "activities beyond imagination" during American efforts to obtain the restoration of the civilian High National Council and the release of Council members and other politicians arrested by the army last Sunday.

His comments, the harshest made against Gen. Taylor by a non-Communist Vietnamese, appeared to be the beginning of a campaign against the U. S. Ambassador.

Gen. Khanh, former Premier, spoke at his official residence in an exclusive interview. He also broadcast an order of the day to his troops in which he assailed U. S. efforts to restore South Vietnamese political stability.

In the order of the day, broadcast by the Saigon radio, he threw his support behind the young generals who staged the weekend purge. Gen. Khanh asserted the army's right to intervene in politics—a step deplored by the U. S.—and delivered a thinly veiled admonition to the Americans to stay out of the current crisis.

More on STRONGMAN—P 4

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(Continued from page one)

"We make sacrifices for the country's independence and the Vietnamese people's liberty, not to carry out the policy of any foreign country," he declared in the broadcast.

In yesterday's interview, Gen. Khanh said bluntly that the High National Council "will not be reactivated" as the U. S. desires.

Gen. Khanh said bitterly that "the United States and their representatives in Viet Nam like Taylor should work with the decisive elements in the nation—those that have the power of decision—and not try to exert pressure."

"If you want to have a good solution for one problem you must be more realistic . . . you must be more practical and not have a dream of having Viet Nam be an image of the United States, because the way of life and the people are entirely different," Gen. Khanh added.

"Mostly one should not impose on the Vietnamese people and Vietnamese Army those leaders they do not want."

"The attitude of Gen. Taylor during the last 48 hours—as far as my small head is concerned—and his activity have been beyond imagination as far as an ambassador is concerned," Gen. Khanh added. He did not specify further but said that "one day I hope to tell the Vietnamese people and the American people about this."

"It is a pity because Gen. Taylor is not serving his country well," Gen. Khanh said. "Yet he is the representative of that country—the United States—which we (Vietnamese) admire, like and even love."

He pointed out that he was not referring to Gen. Taylor as "Ambassador" because "I do not know if Taylor is doing his job well."

The purge of the High National Council was staged Saturday and Sunday by the young generals' faction, acting in the name of the recently formed Armed Forces Council, of which Gen. Khanh is chairman. The generals proclaimed the dissolution of the National Council—one of the three components of the two-month-old civilian regime which replaced Gen. Khanh's regime last October — but affirmed their allegiance to the other two components—Premier Tran Van Huong and Chief of State Phan Khac Suu.

The U. S., which has been seeking to shore up the shaky civilian regime as the best way to win popular support in the anti-Communist war, was dismayed by the forcible re-entrance of the South Vietnamese Army into politics. Gen. Taylor reportedly warned the generals Sunday that the U. S. might have to reconsider its aid to South Viet Nam unless they backed down.

Associated Press radiophoto

FLANKING MANEUVER—Gen. Nguyen Khanh, commander of Viet Nam's armed forces, leaving his office yesterday in Saigon. Armed paratrooper is at the ready.

The general, who spoke in French and was interpreted into English by a skilled aide, appeared confident of his own position and denied rumors that he himself had been put under house arrest or threatened with ouster by the young general's clique.

Asked about the future of Gen. Duong Van (Big) Minh, his chief political rival and former Chief of State in the Khanh regime, Gen. Khanh said, "He will be retired like every one else." Gen. Minh is in Taipei, Formosa, on a goodwill tour. Gen. Minh is one of the older officers whose retirement is demanded by the increasingly dominant young generals, led by Brig. Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi and Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky.

Gen. Khanh had criticized Gen. Taylor last August in an interview with this correspondent. He said he believed Gen. Taylor favored Gen. Minh over himself (Gen. Khanh was then Premier) but his remarks then were veiled and indirect.

Replying to Gen. Khanh's comments, a U. S. Embassy official said: "Ambassador Taylor has undertaken no activities which can be considered improper in any way in view of the United States involvement and commitment in this country. All his activities are designed to serve the best interests of both Viet Nam and the United States."

Gen. Taylor and Gen. Khanh had met Monday to discuss the weekend purge, but the substance of their talks was not known.

In his broadcast statement, Gen. Khanh outspokenly defended the right of the army to interfere in politics, defying U. S. feeling that such steps cripple the development of democratic civilian government as the chief hope Vietnamese political stability.

"Although the military always supports a clean civilian government, when necessary it still has the task of acting as an intermediary to settle all disputes and differences if they create a situation favorable to the common enemies —communism and colonialism in any form," he said.

He said the High National Council, main target of the young generals' "little coup," had been "exploited by counter-revolutionary elements who placed partisan considerations above the homeland's sacred interests." The dissident generals arrested seven of the Council's nine active members over the weekend and proclaimed it dissolved, to the dismay of American officials.

America has committed 22,000 fighting men to South Viet Nam to help in the anti-Communist war there and has poured in hundreds of millions of dollars in aid—more than $230 million in economic aid alone during 1964. There has been growing anxiety for more than a year that South Vietnamese political instability is depreciating the value of this investment.

The High National Council was a key body in the changeover from nearly a year of military rule to civilian government last October. It installed both Premier Huong and Chief of State Suu. Its next task was to be formation of a parliament.

Recently the Council had been torn by dissension and failed to give solid support to Mr. Huong in his struggle against Buddhist militants opposed to his regime. But it remained one of the three pillars of civilian rule—with Mr. Huong and Mr. Suu—and U. S. officials were appalled by the generals' action dissolving it and reestablishing the army in politics.

Gen. Khanh, however, had nothing but praise yesterday for the military intervention. The armed forces' decision "to again assume their responsibility before history is proof of their good faith," he declared.

"The armed forces are not the tool of any organization or individual but must be the weapon wielded by the people in order to achieve their objectives in the fight against all forms of enslavement."

Besides criticizing the High National Council, he made an apparent attack on Buddhist anti-government demonstrators, denouncing those "engaged in inciting the people, arousing revolt, while our comrades-in-arms are shedding their blood at the front."

The latest Saigon turmoil came at a time of talks between Ambassador Taylor and South Vietnamese political and military leaders on new moves to win the war against the Communist Viet Cong—possibly including extension of the war outside South Viet Nam.

Presumably as part of this planning, Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, Right-wing Deputy Premier of neighboring Laos, arrived in Saigon yesterday and conferred immediately with Premier Huong.

It was believed the two men discussed the possible use of South Vietnamese troops in Laos to cut Viet Cong supply lines running from Communist North Viet Nam through Laos to South Viet Nam.

Reliable sources said that South Vietnamese and Laotian officers have already met secretly in the mountain city of Dalat to discuss ways of interdicting the network of Communist-used paths known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, after the leader of the Communist North Vietnamese.

The Vietnamese were understood to be particularly interested in a blow at the Laotian Communist base at Tchepone, possibly by South Vietnamese Skyraider fighter-bombers.

In Moscow, the official news agency Tass reported that the Soviet Union has warned Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma that U. S. broadening of the Viet Nam War "could spread to the territory of Laos."

In Formosa, Gen. Minh in an interview urged unity and popular confidence in the Saigon government and the armed forces.