

# Taylor Returns Today For Decisions on Viet

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SAIGON.

*Nothing is complete,  
Neither victory nor defeat.*

In 1959, Gen. Maxwell Taylor put that favorite Pentagon jingle in his book, "The Uncertain Trumpet."

Today, six years later, the 63-year-old Ambassador to South Viet Nam returns to Washington for what probably will be his most crucial review to date on the situation in Viet Nam.

For the United States, that situation seems to embrace the paradoxes in the jingle—an incomplete military victory and an incomplete political defeat.

The stepped-up bombing of North Viet Nam and of Communist Viet Cong guerrilla positions in the South was the "beginning of the beginning" of the military war, in the view of one Vietnamese general. But it was the "beginning of the end" of the political war.

As the U. S. displayed more and more of its military power it lost more and more power on the political side—to both the Communist subversives and the Neutralist Buddhist politico-priests.

"With Taylor's forward strategy (of bombing North Viet Nam), we gained time. We have set the Communists' timetable back 15 to 20 years if the Americans really want to," one Western military expert explained.

"But we have gone backward politically—the whole political tide has shifted against us. This tide must be reversed—the question is whether it will be. This is the core of the problem facing Taylor and Washington."

The danger is that American jets, Marines and advisers will some day be ordered to leave by a pro-Neutralist South Vietnamese government.

Even now, although the government of Premier Phan Huy Quat maintains an official anti-Communist stand, more

than half of his government is considered under the manipulation, directly or indirectly, of those favoring neutralism—either the Buddhist priests or the French.

Similarly, the armed forces leadership is split, but the generals being manipulated by the Buddhists have seized the initiative.

## CHRONOLOGY

This is the chronology of political deterioration and military escalation according to reliable sources here:

On July 20, 1964, thirteen days after Ambassador Taylor arrived in Viet Nam, the American-backed strongman, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh, then Premier and now roving ambassador, launched the official government policy of "Bac Tien" (march to the north).

Gen. Taylor was irked and assured Gen. Khanh that this was not American policy.

No sooner had the generals publicly patched up their differences at a press gathering than the Aug. 5 Tonkin Gulf incident flared and American planes retaliated against North Vietnamese military targets.

Gen. Khanh then instituted martial law provisions, proposed a new strongman constitution and had himself elected President by the generals in the Military Revolutionary Council. Ten days later, he was toppled from power by rioting Buddhists. He later became commander-in-chief.

Gen. Taylor returned to Washington in mid-November to report on the rapidly deteriorating political and military situation. At the same time, he submitted to President Johnson a proposal to escalate the war through actions in both the North and South.

President Johnson reportedly told Gen. Taylor that the proposal could be carried out on the condition that a

reasonable amount of political stability was first established in the South.

At the end of November, Gen. Taylor returned to Saigon and spent about 10 days consulting with leaders of the government, the armed forces, the Buddhists, the Catholics and the political parties. He told the Vietnamese to rally behind the civilian government then headed by Premier Tran Van Huong and not to struggle for power among themselves. In that event he would be able to carry out his six-month plan for military escalation.

The advice was quickly ignored by Buddhist leaders and by Gen. Khanh's supporters, the "young turk" generals.

The Buddhists continued their campaign against the Huong government, and on Dec. 20 the generals destroyed the legislative body, called the High National Council.

The action of the generals was strongly disapproved by Gen. Taylor, and the conflict between the Ambassador and Gen. Khanh flared up publicly.

## DELAY

Then, instead of restoring the High National Council as Gen. Taylor wanted, the generals toppled Premier Huong on Jan. 25. This two-month coup further delayed Gen. Taylor's escalation plan, which had been scheduled to start at the beginning of 1965.

In early February, instead of returning to Washington to report on the situation, Gen. Taylor was ordered by President Johnson to stay on. A delegation headed by McGeorge Bundy, the President's national security advisor, dispatched to Saigon.

On Feb. 7, the Communists in South Viet Nam launched a fierce assault on American installations at Pleiku. Gen. Taylor was given a green light to put his plan in action even though no official government

had been formed to replace Premier Huong's.

Then came the bombings in North Viet Nam, the build-up of U. S. forces including 3,500 Marines, new war material and a plan to greatly enlarge the South Vietnamese armed forces.

On the political side, the American mission is endeavoring to stabilize and strengthen the central government headed by Premier Quat.

To bring the Vietnamese together at regional and village levels in the countryside, the mission is placing its hope in the "hop-tac" (co-operation) operation worked out last summer.

This is a pilot of an ambitious strategic plan of pacification around Saigon, in which the co-operation of the Vietnamese military and civilian authorities at all echelons, the Vietnamese people and the Americans is

required to bring the plan to success.

Gen. Taylor's military and political plan was summarized in his speech to the Lions Club in Saigon last Monday. "It will depend upon our ability to solve three basic problems," he said.

"The first is to generate sufficient trained manpower—military, paramilitary and police—to establish the necessary preponderance of strength over the growing numbers of the Viet Cong. Related thereto is the need to end the leadership, direction and support from North Viet Nam without which the Viet Cong cannot long maintain themselves. Then there is the need for a stable government both in Saigon and in the provinces, so that the resources made available for military and pacification operations can be utilized to the best advantages."