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NIXON TO ANNOUNCE ANY FURTHER BIG WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS (330)

WASHINGTON -- THE WHITE HOUSE SAYS ANY FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM VIETNAM WILL BE PRECEDED BY A PRESIDENTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS NOVEMBER 25 ABOUT MATERIAL MADE AVAILABLE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY RONALD ZIEGLER SAID THAT ANY "SUBSTANTIAL WITHDRAWALS THAT WOULD BE MADE WOULD BE ANNOUNCED AND WOULD BE BASED ON THE THREE CRITERIA" ESTABLISHED EARLIER THIS YEAR BY PRESIDENT NIXON.

THE PRESIDENT, IN HIS MAY 14 ADDRESS ON VIETNAM, SAID U.S. TROOPS THERE WOULD BE REPLACED BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE AS THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY BECAME CAPABLE OF TAKING GREATER RESPONSIBILITY, THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTH VIETNAM PERMITTED, OR PROGRESS WAS MADE IN THE PARIS TALKS. MR. ZIEGLER SAID IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION THAT ANY ONE OF THE CRITERIA COULD FORM THE BASIS FOR A FURTHER WITHDRAWAL.

THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY MET THE GOAL ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT NIXON OF REDEPLOYING 50,000 U.S. TROOPS BY DECEMBER 15. WHEN MR. NIXON ANNOUNCED THE SECOND PHASE OF THAT WITHDRAWAL, WHITE HOUSE SOURCES TOLD NEWSMEN THE MOMENTUM OF WITHDRAWAL MIGHT DRAW DOWN THE FORCE LEVEL ONE TO TWO PERCENT BELOW AUTHORIZED STRENGTH.

THE LEVEL OF U.S. FORCES ACHIEVED BY THE CUTBACK OF 60,000 MEN IS 484,000. MR. ZIEGLER INDICATED THE NUMBER OF TROOPS ACTUALLY PRESENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM COULD DROP BY AS MUCH AS TWO OR THREE PERCENT BELOW THAT FIGURE WITHOUT AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

PAGE 2--NIXON TO ANNOUNCE

HE SAID HE HAD "NO RPT NO AMPLIFICATION TO MAKE" WHEN ASKED IF THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED TO HOPE THAT 125,000 OR MORE TROOPS COULD BE ORDERED HOME DURING 1969.

ASKED ABOUT COMMENTS BY XUAN THUY, THE CHIEF NORTH VIETNAMESE NEGOTIATOR IN PARIS, THAT IT IS "ESSENTIAL" FOR THE UNITED STATES TO HAVE PRIVATE TALKS WITH THE VIET CONG, MR. ZIEGLER REPLIED THAT:

"OUR POSITION HAS BEEN, IN RELATION TO MEETINGS WITH THE VIET CONG, WE WOULD NOT RPT NOT MEET PRIVATELY WITH THEM. WE WOULD SIT IN ON MEETINGS WITH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT IF OUR PARTICIPATION WAS HELPFUL." ITEM

11/25/69 550PM GD

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM