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A052 DI THIEU 1-30 THURSDAY MORNING, 30 JANUARY 1975

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SAIGON (UPI) -- PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU SAID TODAY THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT COLLAPSE IF THE UNITED STATES REFUSES TO PROVIDE \$300 MILLION IN NEW MILITARY AID.

THIEU, IN HIS FIRST MEETING WITH A GROUP OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN NEARLY TWO YEARS, SAID HIS GOVERNMENT NEEDS THE MONEY TO SUSTAIN THE WAR EFFORT.

THE PRESIDENT ALSO REJECTED COMMUNIST CHARGES THAT HE IS THE ONLY OBSTACLE TO PEACE IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND SAID HE IS READY TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS AT ONCE.

"THERE IS A DANGER THAT SOUTH VIETNAM WILL COLLAPSE IF WE DON'T GET THE AID," THIEU SAID, SPEAKING RAPIDLY IN ENGLISH. "THE SITUATION WILL BE CRITICAL BY THE END OF THE YEAR."

HE SAID THE \$300 MILLION AID REQUEST PRESIDENT FORD SENT TO CONGRESS IS THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM NEEDED BECAUSE EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES HAVE REDUCED MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS 60 PER CENT.

CONGRESS CUT THE ADMINISTRATION'S ORIGINAL AID REQUEST OF \$1.1 BILLION FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR TO \$700 MILLION. FORD ASKED CONGRESS TUESDAY FOR AN ADDITIONAL \$300 MILLION.

THIEU SAID MANY SOUTH VIETNAMESE FEEL THE UNITED STATES HAS BEGUN TO WAVER IN ITS SUPPORT OF HIS REGIME. HE WAS QUICK TO ADD, HOWEVER, THAT ANY SUCH ASSESSMENT IS PREMATURE.

THIEU APPARENTLY HELD THE SUDDEN NEWS CONFERENCE TO BOLSTER HIS SAGGING IMAGE ABROAD, PARTICULARLY IN THE UNITED STATES, AS CONGRESS HEARD DEBATE ON THE INDOCHINA MILITARY AID BILL.

OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE ACCUSED THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENTAL CORRUPTION AND HAVE DEMANDED HIS RESIGNATION.

AMERICAN NEWS SERVICES WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE SESSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF NINE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS, BUT UPI OBTAINED A RESUME OF THIEU'S REMARKS AT THE 90-MINUTE BREAKFAST SESSION.

RELAXED AND EXPANSIVE, THIEU RESPONDED WITH AN EMPHATIC "NO" WHEN ASKED IF HE WOULD ACCEPT A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH THE COMMUNISTS.

THIEU SAID HIS GOVERNMENT HAS REPEATEDLY TRIED TO IMPLEMENT THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT, BUT NORTH VIETNAM IS CONTINUING TO TRY TO OVERTHROW HIM BY FORCE.

THE PRESIDENT SAID HE IS READY FOR IMMEDIATE NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS AND HE WOULD ACCEPT ANY GOVERNMENT ELECTED IN A "FREE AND OPEN" VOTE.

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