

# Hanoi Unit 40 Miles From Saigon

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SAIGON, March 23.—Intelligence sources confirm that North Vietnamese troops are roving only 40 miles north of this capital city.

Two separate pieces of evidence—either prisoner interrogation and a document or two documents—are required before American and Vietnamese intelligence sources are able to confirm their information.

In this case captured documents and a wounded prisoner, who reported 90 percent of his 400-man battalion to be North Vietnamese, confirmed the evidence. It indicates a likelihood of stiff fighting in the future on the outskirts of Saigon.

The confirmation is viewed as significant since this was the first official evidence that North Vietnamese troops had moved so far south—and so close to the capital of Saigon.

The official evidence was gathered following a dramatic victory in which the U.S. Army 173d Airborne Brigade killed 303 of the Communist troops only 40 miles north-northeast of Saigon last Thursday. American airborne casualties were light.

Other evidence gathered from the battle was:

1—The Communist commanders issued some of their instructions to their troops in “excellent” English. This was presumably done to confuse American troops or Viet-

namese government troops who might be monitoring enemy radio-casts.

2—The attacking Communist units of at least two—and possibly three—battalions were mixed between southern-born local Viet Cong (“hardcore” troops) and “imported” North Vietnamese soldiers, who were in the majority.

While the majority of the captured weapons were Communist-bloc, including Chinese Communist, Czech and Russian items, several of the lethal machine guns were American-made, of World War II vintage.

This has created the suspicion among some of the American troops that American-made weapons and military equipment issued to Western allies or former allies is being black-marketed and sold to the Communist side to be used against them.

In the past, American troops have picked up a number of M-16 rifles and submachine guns—without serial numbers—which would not have been issued to either Vietnamese or American troops in this theater.

3—A number of the dead Communist troops carried Communist-issued passes for the soldiers to take leave in Saigon or in Bien Hoa, a small town 18 miles from Saigon where a major American-protected air base is situated.

4—Captured documents also included Communist plans to attack “at all cost” and overrun an American brigade headquarters, plus several other American-protected installations.

5—Intelligence sources also reported that an increasing flow of .75-mm. pack artillery is being brought into South Vietnam by the Communists. This lethal weapon has a range of three to four miles, which indicates that the Communists from a long distance could pound important airfields, installations and the city of Saigon if they choose.