

Beverly Ann Deepe
64A Hong Thap Tu
Saigon, Vietnam

January 14, 1967

SERIES—Article five of five-article series

Page 1

SAIGON—Since the American bombing raids against North Vietnam were initiated two years ago this week, Communist strength within South Vietnam has continued to skyrocket—and is expected to so soar as dramatically in 1967.

"If the objective of bombing North Vietnam was to slow down the rate of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam, then this has en certainly failed," one high-ranking source explained this week.

The dramatic increase in the rate of infiltration from North Vietnam—an invisible invasion—indicates that more and more of the Communist military manpower is supplied by North Vietnam rather than local recruitment in South Vietnam.

These are the official intelligence estimates: in early 1965, before the bombing of North Vietnam, the rate of infiltration was estimated at 3,000 a month; following the bombing on February 7, the estimate immediately jumped to 4,000 a month; two years after the initial bombing the estimates had soared to a minimum of 10,000 a month—a threefold increase. In contrast the Communist military recruitment within South Vietnam has remained relatively constant; at the time of the bombing raids against North Vietnam the estimate by intelligence sources was 3,000 a month; today, two years later, the estimate was between 3,500 to 4,000 recruits a month.

(More)

series--article five of five-article series

Page 2

In round numbers, the Communists strength on February 7, 1965, when the bombing raids began, was officially estimated at 117,000. Today, two years later, the estimate is at least 280,000—an increase of nearly 240 percent. ~~And~~ American military sources say that obviously more American and allied troops will be needed to maintain a favorable balance of forces.

Far more worrisome to American military commanders, however, is the staggering ~~large~~ increase in the Communist order of battle.

On February 7, 1965, there were no known Communist division headquarters in South Vietnam; today, two years later, there are nine—seven predominantly of North Vietnamese origin and two recruited in South Vietnam. A tenth is considered by intelligence sources of being under ~~of~~ formation—on the ~~far~~ doorsteps of Saigon city. In 1967, it is officially estimated that at least 12 Communist division headquarters will fighting in South Vietnam.

In addition, two years ago, the Communists maintained five known autonomous regiments; today, they have forty; they are expected to climb to at least ~~an~~ fifty by the end of 1967. Two years ago, the Communist had formed roughly fifty autonomous mobile battalions; they current confirmed figure is 180; by the end of 1967, the Communists are expected to have organized 215.

Equally significant is the dramatic increase of the Communist heavy weapons battalions—which shoot down American planes and helicopters and mortar strategic airfields in South Vietnam. On February 7, 1965, six Communist heavy weapons battalions had been officially confirmed in intelligence sources; today, ~~for~~ two years later, the number was confirmed to be 70; the estimate by the end of 1967 is nearly double—to 135. (More)

Despite heavy Communist casualties inflicted by American and allied ~~top~~ troops, the Communist strength, as officially estimated continues to escalate. In 1965-66, 94,000 Communists were officially listed as killed; ~~160~~ 16,000 were captured, 31,000 defected to the government side--a minimal total of 141,000 confirmed losses. Yet they have still shown a net increase of at least 163,000 men during the past two years.

The Communist escalation has also shown in up in improvements in their arms, supplies and equipment. ~~Indication~~ Several years ago, weapons captured from the Viet Cong guerrillas were mainly outmoded French rifles, ^{or} American weapons; only two percent were from Communist bloc countries. Today, allied forces are capturing more and more ~~Che~~ Czech and Communist Chinese ~~mm~~ machineguns, submachineguns and rifles of the so-called SKZ family of weapons--the weapons now ^{used} ~~used~~ to equip the Soviet frontline divisions. Since the American bombing of North Vietnam two years ago, allied forces have captured 30,000 Communist weapons--enough to equip nearly three Communist divisions. Yet, for the first time in the war, the Communists are now able to launch mortar barrages ~~xx~~ using as many as 500 rounds of ammunition; during 1967, American field commanders expect the next round of escalation in weaponry to include the use of Communist artillery.

(More)

Deepe

Series—article five of five-article series

page 4

In general, while the over-all military situation during 1967 appears headed for the bitterest and bloodiest fighting to date in the war, the military picture from the Communist viewpoint is not quite as favorable as in late 1964, when at the peak of their ~~at~~ relative strengths they were well on their way to seizing power in South Vietnam. In late/ 1964, before the arrival of American ground troops, the Vietnamese government strategic reserve had been nibbled away; during fierce engagements, the South Vietnamese government forces were unable to send in relief troops even to pick up their own dead. Western businessmen openly predicted they would wake up some morning "to see the Viet Cong flag flying over Saigon;" some Western newsmen began sending out of country their personal belongings; the Vietnamese paratroopers had prepared maps for the evacuation of Saigon. The build-up of American forces beginning in March, 1965, halted this systematic advance of the Viet Cong, ~~ref~~ reinforced with organized battalions from North Vietnam. During late 1964, the Communists were in their final Third Phase of guerrilla warfare; ^{yet} ~~two years~~ two years later ~~when~~ nearly 400,000 American troops ~~had been engaged,~~ had failed to de-escalate them back into Phase Two, reliable sources report.

(More)

Throughout 1965 and most of 1966, the Communist deliberately--and successfully--for the most part laid low while American combat units sought to make contact with them. The few bloody, spectacular, toe-to-toe ~~engagements~~ engagements were the exception rather than the rule. Simultaneously, the Communist studied American military tactics and began to counter as well as to skirt them, while they continued to import and recruit in-country enough Communist fighters to re-establish the balance of forces they had initially lost with the American build-up.

By mid-1966, North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh announced on July 17th, the partial mobilization of all civilian and military elements in North Vietnam, and three months later, on October 27th, the presidium of the ~~North~~ National Liberation Front for South Vietnam appealed to all the people, cadres and soldiers to launch a total campaign, called the fall-spring campaign, in order to implement their war of attrition and to inflict enough casualties on the American and allied troops to "break the imperialists will of aggression."

In this appeal, the presidium defined their strategy during the fall-spring offensive, which ends in April, 1967:

(More)

Deepe

Series--article five of five-article series

page 6

1. The Viet Cong-North Vietnamese main forces to ~~scrach~~ search out and engage American-allied main forces ~~for~~ by using mobile warfare tactics.

2. The Viet Cong regional (provincial) mobile units to assemble deeply into the areas contested both by the government and the Viet Cong ~~to~~ or in the government-controlled areas to attack the American and allied forces and installations.

3. The Communist guerrilla forces to attack Vietnamese government pacification programs, which are screened by American units, ~~and~~ and to carry sabotage against roads, rivers, bridges and allied installations.

4. The political, economic, cultural and financial Communist cadres living in the government-controlled areas, particularly the cities, to induce Vietnamese the Vietnamese population, army and government officials to rebel ~~xxx~~ against or to paralyze the Vietnamese government of ~~the~~ Prime Minister ~~Ng~~ Nguyen Cao Ky.

On this ~~the~~ success or failure of the Communist campaign scheduled to end in April of this year may well rest the key ~~decide~~ ~~appress~~ assessment ~~of~~ of whether by American ~~go~~ and Vietnamese ~~politymak~~ ~~pa~~ policymakers believe the allied forces can win this agonizing, which-way war.