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frictions 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, JULY 3—Personal, non-political frictions have developed and are worsening between Communist North Vietnamese and Southern-born Viet Cong troops.

The conflicts are considered significant enough that for the first known time the Viet Cong high command has issued a written directive designed to ease relations between troopers of the two regions. In the past, individual and group frictions within military units were ironed out verbally by powerful political ~~com~~ commissars.

The directive, ~~part of a doc~~ contained in a document captured by Allied forces, was issued by the Viet Cong high command in March and seemed to indicate that frictions had intensified between the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops during the Tet offensive in late January, when the Communists suffered heavy casualties.

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frictions 2 (normass/deepe)

The portion of the captured document highlighting the problem was ironically entitled "the mission of public relations" and urged Southern-born Viet Cong to provide more assistance for Northern troop replacements ~~assigned~~ assigned to a unit.

These frictions are considered to be based on a multitude of differences between the three traditional regions of Vietnam: Tonkin, in North Vietnam; Annam or Central Vietnam, which is ~~geograph~~ geographically split at the 17th parallel between North and South Vietnam; Cochinchina, which comprises the rice-rich Mekong Delta region south of Saigon. The regional differences have long plagued ^{the South} and ^{have been} energetically ~~publicized about political incho incohesiveness~~ ^{the N.V. Communist} energetically publicized about political incho incohesiveness on the Vietnamese government side; now, it appears these divergent ways of life, language accents and traditional habits are also posing headaches ~~on the~~ for even the more politically indoctrinated and disciplined Communist side.

The regional frictions on the Communist side are considered low-level differences at the soldier level of privates and subordinate field commanders; they are quite unrelated to high-level Communist decisions involving military strategy and the Paris peace talks. Communist troopers have been ordered not repeat to not to discuss the pros and cons of peace negotiations and have been told these decisions are made only at the ~~senior~~ powerful Politburo level.

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frictions 3 (normass/deepe)

Violent of friction,

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In one case, more disciplined Northern troops criticized a Southern soldier for being too intemperate in his drinking; the Southern became an enraged, threw a grenade into a sampan sampan with his Northern sub carrying his Northern subordinates and then defected to the Vietnamese government side, where he told his story to a goverme an Allied interrogator.

One captured document also described a Viet Cong's guerrilla's guerrilla's self-criticism session inwh which he admitted the Nor his North Northern big-unit comrades refused to follow his orders. So, he too lead them into the middle middle of the Hob jungles outside of Saigon, deliberately deserted them so that they would get lost and learn a good lesson. Instead, then they stumbee stumbled into a Vietnamese government unit which killed or captured the Northerners. The Southern guerrilla leader, who repented, was

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scolded by his superiors, but only lightly punished. that

Increasing numbers of Communist prisoners, defectors and documents indicate the frictions, even bitterness, is increasing at a time when Communist battlefield casualties are running high, when more and more Northerners are being sent in as replacements for local Southern losses, and as Northerners increasingly assume more command positions and authority to map out the direction of the war.

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frictions 4(normass/deepe)

Also, among the Communist troopers, there appears to be personal differences of opinion between the Northerners and Southerners about military tactics. The Southern-born Viet Cong guerrillas, and regulars, who know the local area and people, prefer to ~~frictions~~ continue to fight a low-intensity, low-risk guerrilla-styled war, in which they ~~fight~~ engage Allied units when they believe they can win and withdraw when they can not. The North Vietnamese units, unfamiliar with the terrain and local population, have gradually inched the war into a more conventional stream, WHEREBY COMMUNIST in which the troopers are ordered to "fight to the last man" until reinforcements arrive, and sometimes the reinforcements do not arrive in time to aid the beleaguered unit. One personal rub is that the Southern Viet Cong guerrillas are generally called on to serve as the "spearheading" element—to guide and lead in the larger predominantly Northern units—which means the Southerners in the more forward positions and more dangerous ASSIGNMENTS jobs suffer a higher proportion of casualties.

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~~different regional food habits. In the Binh province, which surrounds Saigon, another disagreement between Northern and Southern troops is that the~~

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frictions 5 (nomass/deepe)

One Southern prisoner told Allied interrogators he had argued that these tactics were unwise, since a regular soldier could be trained in a matter of weeks and easily replaced if he were killed, but guerrillas required years of training to become effective in know learning his local area, people and problems. But, the Northerners rejected his line of reasoning.

Especially during the Tet offensive in late January, Viet Cong elements complained that they had succeeded in spearheading "a hole in the knot of the enemy defense net" as they had been ordered, but the big-units of Northerners ~~who~~ regulars who promised to reinforce them failed to show up and the Viet Cong were sacrificed too readily without achieving their objectives.

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frictions 6 (normass/deepe)

Some Viet Cong also told Allied interrogators they blamed the North Vietnamese commanders for an over-reliance on the use of artillery and ~~mortars~~ in coordination with ground assaults on Allied positions. One revealed his unit was to move in close to his assigned target area and as it rushed in for the ground assault, the North Vietnamese artillery unit was to open coordinating fire—but it did not. His unit was ordered to continue the assault and suffered ^{su} severe losses.

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frictions 7 (normass/deepe)

The Viet Cong elements are also beginning to complain about the fighting abilities of the Northerners. One Southern captive told an Allied interrogator that in the early 1960's, the North Vietnamese instructors and political cadre were held in high regard by the Viet Cong, but now as the Viet Cong fight alongside the North Vietnamese Army units, they see increasingly their weaknesses. The Viet Cong criticized the North predominantly Northern units for getting lost in the unfamiliar terrain of the Southern countryside and suburban areas.

One Allied interrogator explained that numerous Communist prisoners revealed the Northern and Southern troopers, instead of calling each other 'comrade', often called each other "Tho's soldiers", referring to Nguyen Huu Tho, the political head of the Southern Viet Cong, and the Southerners in turn call the Northerners "Giap's soldiers," referring to General Vo Nguyen Giap, Hanoi's commander-in-chief. Indicative of some animosity, the troops often make puns by saying "pronouncing "Tho" in a different accent, thus making changing its entire meaning, and by doing so, "tho" takes on the definition of "longevity." A different pronunciation of "giap" became the word "armor-plate." Hence, the Southerners boast that as "longevity soldiers" they survive on the battlefield longer than the "armor-plated" Northerners.

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frictions 8 (normass/deepe)

The Northern troops and unit leaders ofg often complain that the Viet Cong are to lacksadaisical and undisciplined. During the Tet offensive, one Southerner recalled some of the Viet Cong troops swore enrout^{to}e to Saigon, and the Northerners scolded them for doing so. The Viet Cong retorted it was a Southern habit. Later the unit—the 506th Battalion of Long An province—moved into a village from which the population had evacuated. The Viet Cong soldiers started helping themselves to the eggs in the nest of one of the villagers gardens. The Northerners objected, saying the Viet Cong were stealing from the people and must write a note and leave some money behind for the eggs. The Southern^{ers} Southerners objected, saying the villagers were their friends and had given them food in the past; the incident on the battlefield ended when the Northerners ended up eating some of the eggs too. Later, however, in the traditional criticism and self-criticism session after the battle, a fiery exchange took place. The Northern One Northerner criticized the Viet Cong for not leaving^g e leaving behind a note of thanks and money for the eggs in the Northern tradition of courtesy. One Viet Cong reportedly retorted: "You are very tricky people. You ate the eggs until your stomach was full and then you put the blame on us." (Both sides were reprimanded).

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frictions 10 (normass/deepe)

Another disagreement between Northern and Southern troops resulted from differing regional food habits. In Gia Dinh province, which surrounds Saigon, shortly before the Tet offensive, Communist commanders ordered the villagers to kill their dogs to prevent their barking at Communist troop movements. No villager dared object to the order. But, the question arose: ^{WHAT} who to do with the body of the dead dogs. The Northerners, who consider dogmeat a delicacy, wanted the villagers to give the carcass them the carcasses to eat. The Southerners, who rarely eat dogmeat, objected; they wanted to bury their pets out of sentiment. The Northerners called them wasteful and said all the meat should be eaten. But, the Southern guerrilla leader prevailed, reportedly arguing, "You people are strangers here and the people love their dogs. If you eat it, they'll blame ^{us} men when you leave this area."

(Hank; I plan to file a very short piece Friday. Could I file a three-part series over the week-end on the Communists shortrange strategy, the military situation around Saigon including their ~~order~~ order of battle, and their political situation. We could airmail it, but in view of threatening attack I recommend cabling it. Also, if this is okay, then I'd like to spend most of next week on one topic mentioned in my long earlier memo. Would you want a two or three part series on refugee refugees? I think it's rather a hot issue now. Please advise. Regards Bev). ^{Bombing Str}
^{Get. Raga 20}