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military 1 (park/deepe)

SAIGON, NOVEMBER 13--Probeedham. The beginning of the end of the American-North Vietnamese big-unit confrontations in the northern half of South Vietnam was slowly, half-perceptibly unraveled here with the *Sig. feat tactical* ~~strategic~~ shift of the elite U. S. Army 1st Air Cavalry Division. The American command announced this week that the first elements of the airmobile division *was* being moved to the Cambodian border area northwest of Saigon from ~~i~~ the suburbs of Hue, where it had been the "swing force" reserve for the defense of the old imperial capital, for the demilitarized zone ~~and~~ and for the interdiction of the Communist ~~logisto~~ *the single* logistical road network leading from Laos ~~into~~ the Ashau Valley towards Hue and Danang.

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military 2 (park/decoy)

Officially, General Creighton Abrams made plans for moving the First Cavalry before the October 16th peace ~~breath~~ breakthrough in Paris—and officially, he made the move because of the growing threat along the ~~Ca-mb~~ Cambodian border ~~semi-circu~~ semi-circular are flanking Saigon to the northwest. There the Communists have reportedly added another division—the 1st North Vietnamese Army Division, which until a month ago hibernated along the first and second ~~group~~ corps border—to reinforce the 5th, 7th and 9th Communist divisions, which criss-cross into Cambodia, using it as a sanctuary when American B-52 F4 raids prevent safe ~~group~~ regroupment in War Zone C, Tay Ninh, Phuoc Long and Hau Nghia provinces.

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military 3 (park/deepe)

Then, on November 11--Armistice Day--the American command terminated the 14-month-long operation Wheeler-Wallowa and the seven-month-long Operation Burlington Trail, in which ~~two American~~ two American brigades claimed killing 12,000 Communists ~~west-northwest of Tan Ky~~ only 16 and five miles respectively west-northwest of Tan Ky. These two brigades are scheduled for repositioning--the manner of which is still classified.

Despite the military veneer of these ~~at action~~ actions by General Abrams, the up-shot of these moves appear to be the first adjustment of the battlefield to the ~~political~~ general political agreement between Hanoi and Washington for ~~tit-for-tat~~ ~~tagit~~ military de-escalation and disengagement. ~~from~~

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military 4 (park/deepe)

Vietnamese officers in a position to know report that General Abrams has advised--and the Vietnamese Joint General Staff has agreed--that in the two northern corps areas of the South--~~covering the northern~~ half of the country--~~their~~ Allied tactical offensive operations be cut back, that Allied forces be pulled back into major base areas and ~~conv-cons~~ conserve their strengths while waiting to determine whether the Communist abide by their ~~understanding~~ "understanding" to reduce the scale of activity war activity. "And if the Communists begin ~~escalate~~ to ~~escalate~~ re-escalate, we'll ~~fight~~ escalate twice as strongly," the Vietnamese officer reported, ~~impp~~ implying either a resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam or moving Allied troops across the borders into La o Laos--or both.

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military 5 (park/deepe)

This ~~military~~ tacit military de-escalation, now underway in its first stages, seems only partially and indirectly related to the American Ha no Hanoi deal in Paris for the cessation of the bombing over North Vietnam in exchange for a certain "understanding" of what would follow on the part of Hanoi. Instead, this military de-escalation seems more directly and precisely related to reports that secret arrangements have been made in Laos for a "gradual and proportionate" ~~withdrawal~~ withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from the South. While the secret ~~arrang~~ arrangement is still broad in outline and general in scope and commitment by both sides, it does include some specific options for the regroupment of troops into enclaves prior to withdrawal—which is what is currently suggested by General Abrams re-positioning of American forces and his advice for a pull-back of Vietnamese forces. The American and North Vietnamese Ambassadors to Laos, Messrs. William H. Sullivan from ~~Washgto~~ Washington and Le Van Hien from Hanoi, reportedly lead the shaping of the broad outlines of the disengagement plan.

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military 6 (park/deepe)

The final and formal agreement on the bilateral, concurrent withdrawal of North Vietnamese and American troops is thought to be one of the first items of substantive discussion on the agenda of the Paris peace talks--with or without the representation of the reluctant Saigon government. The speech of Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, broadcast received in Saigon at 0905 this morning, November 13, explicitly said as much--that pro productive talks could be continued ~~tax~~ between the U. S. and North Vietnam for a "military ~~arrag~~ arrangement" leading to a diminution of in the level of combat, even without the presence of the South Vietnamese delegation in Paris--a point that a number of Saigonese have made in the past.

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military 7 (park/deepe)

If there was ever much doubt left in Saigon about Washington's haste in liquidating his chunk of the Vietnam war—even if it means forfeiting its commitments to keep South Vietnam viable and partially non-Communist—the Clifford speech this morning evaporated most illusions. ~~Low-ranking Vietnamese~~ Low-ranking Vietnamese, listening to the radio broadcast, were shocked at Clifford's tone and language; Western diplomats were stunned by "the thunderclap—this is hardly the way to bring the GVN (Government of Vietnam) to the conference table. ^{It will} simply dig its four heels in like a mule and remain obdurate." But, the most startling reaction came in the American community, which was equally flabber, flabbergasted and even more chagrined. ^{One} senior American official, speaking privately, said: "Clifford was ~~saying~~ LBJ is going to Paris with or without Thieu—there's going to be an immediate beginning of an American pull-back and a ceasefire by the time Nixon takes office." This is peace at any price—and Washington does not care how it looks to the rest of the world ~~or how~~ if the North Vietnamese simply slip in as the Americans leave."

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military 8 (park/deepe)

Or, as one knowledgeable Western observer suggested:

"This is the beginning of the big American bug-out. The Clifford speech was the way of walking backwards through a revolving door and making it appear as though they were marching in."

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military/8 (park/deepe)

~~Meanwhile, the "understanding" of what Hanoi was to refrain from~~

Meanwhile, the "understanding" of the actions Hanoi was to refrain from in exchange for the American cessation of the bombing appears to be so quickly and flimsily worked out on details that even responsible American and South Vietnamese officials are still in the dark on the specifics—and hence more in the dark about what Hanoi is actually violating. President Thieu was reportedly told by American Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker that Hanoi agreed to call off "ground attacks and ~~also~~ shellings" on "major cities"—yet now both American and Vietnamese military officers are clearly worried about a Communist fourth offensive, part of which might hit Saigon. But, Ambassador Bunker has been known to include the 44 provincial capitals ^{AS WELL AS "MAJOR CITIES"} in the details of Hanoi's part of the bargain. ^{NOT} The American military command admits it has not repeat ~~also~~ not been given any clarifications of this by Washington. "There is some confusion in the attacks on the cities," one senior source explained. "Some press reports carrying backgrounders from Washington lists provincial capitals and above; some say only urban centers."

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military 9 (park/deepe)

"But, what is a Vietnamese urban center. My Tho has been shelled several times with a goodly amount of ordnance—it's a provincial capital, but is it an urban center? Also what about a military compound on the fringe of a ~~unhammamentum~~ provincial capital—in as in the case of the ~~shadingu~~ Quang Tri? What about these military installations on the fringes and inside greater metropolitan Saigon? Is shelling of Tan Son Nhut military airbase and the ~~semmie~~ commercial civilian terminal a Communist violation? ~~Hammingham~~ And what if the Communists begin a wave of terrorism in the cities—that's another form of ground attack? We don't know. That will have to be refined in Washington. Did the negotiators spell it out that clearly—or did they overlook that point?"

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military 10 (park/deepo)

But, South Vietnamese government officials who are claiming even ~~attacks~~ on district capitals as a Communist violation and have counted more than 30 since November 1—are becoming increasingly shrill at both the Communists and the Americans for the incidents.

"If the Communists do not repeat not shell New York or Washington—then the Americans do not repeat not recognize them as being major cities," one Vietnamese politician said sarcastically.

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