

North Viet Nam Recruits Its Own for the Red War

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By Beverly Deepe
A Special Correspondent

SAIGON.

Young North Vietnamese recruits are given a farewell feast and a pep talk by famed Communist Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap before trudging off to infiltrate into South Viet Nam, it was learned yesterday.

"The young North Vietnamese recruits get a party the night before they take off for South Viet Nam," one informed source disclosed here.

"They are wished well, have a feast and are told to win the war in South Viet Nam. Giap (the famous general who spearheaded the fight against the French in the Indochina War a decade ago) has visited these infiltration units before they leave their training centers," the source added.

Informed officials indicated yesterday that 90 per cent of the latest known infiltration from North Viet Nam is made by persons born and raised in North Viet Nam. Of the 4,000 estimated infiltrators from January to August of last year—the latest available intelligence estimates—3,600 were born and raised in North Viet Nam.

REVERSAL

This is in marked reversal to the trend of previous years, when most of the infiltrators from North Viet Nam were born in South Viet Nam, but went to the North following the 1954 Geneva agreements ending the Indochina War. They began to return from North Viet Nam to their native village in 1959 through 1963.

In 1954, 90,000 South Vietnamese Communists went to

North Viet Nam, but between 1959 and 1963, 15,000 of them returned to their native provinces in the southern republic. Now, however, informed sources indicated that the Hanoi regime ran out of Southern-born personnel to infiltrate into the South. So in early 1964 it began sending Northern-born recruits, specialized personnel and leadership cadres.

The remainder of the 90,000 are presumed by reliable sources to be too old or sick to infiltrate southward.

Informed observers here believe that the introduction of North Vietnamese-born personnel into the war in South Viet Nam may produce an adverse effect for the Hanoi regime.

CLEAVAGE

"This means Hanoi has abandoned the fiction that

fighting in South Viet Nam is purely a South Vietnamese affair," one informed source explained. "This is now different from bringing a local boy back home."

Regional cleavages between North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese have existed for centuries.

Intelligence reports have estimated since 1959 that a minimum of 19,000 infiltrated from North Viet Nam. And as many as 34,000 may have been sent. It is estimated that there are 34,000 hard-core Viet Cong guerrillas. However, most of the Viet Cong's strength is still recruited in South Viet Nam. These local guerrillas number up to 80,000. Some observers believe that Hanoi has already infiltrated enough specialists and leadership cadre to make the war in South Viet Nam

self-generating without further infiltration.

One large training center for many of the North Vietnamese-born recruits is Xuan Mai, near Hanoi, where up to 3,000 conscriptees were trained at one time by the Peoples' Army Viet Nam (PAVN) regulars. Training courses in political indoctrination weapons training usually lasts three months but "one kid had only time to pick up his rifle before he started to South Viet Nam," a reliable source said.

THE HOOK

Most infiltration routes are "around the hook" from North Viet Nam, skimming through Laos at the 17th parallel separating North and South Viet Nam and then hugging the Laotian-South Vietnamese border, passing from one way station to the

next. Informed sources said only a few infiltrators travel deeply into Lao territory, through such areas near the Pathet Lao stronghold of Tchepone, which is probably used more for logistic supplies rather than personnel.

"Much of the time they travel at night in groups of five to 500," a source said. "But always they travel under three canopies of cover so that they cannot be spotted from the air. They use so many trails it is actually a line of drift rather than a route. Whenever government troops find one of their trails they shift to another one."

The source said of 165 persons who infiltrated from North Viet Nam and are now in government hands, 100 were captured and the remainder rallied to the government side.