

Beverly Ann Deapo  
64A Hong Thap Tu  
Saigon, Vietnam

August 3, 1967

Cambodia—page 1

PLEIKU, SOUTH VIETNAM—For the first time in the Vietnam war, American military officers openly and publically say Cambodia has become a ~~new~~ sanctuary for North Vietnamese regulars—currently at least five known regiments.

South Vietnamese and American field commanders are weighing— at least verbally—the military ~~advantages~~ advantages of invading Cambodia to strike at the North Vietnamese units. But this is considered unlikely because of adverse, world-wide political repercussions, reliable sources report.

BORDER Press correspondents are freely given briefings on the sensitive diplomatic subject once reserved only for such senior Americans as former Vice President Richard M. ~~Mc~~ Nixon. Maps displayed casually in military offices here show two big blobs of grease paint in Cambodia marked "NVA"—North Vietnamese Army.

(More)

The official freedom given to Americans to discuss the issue of Cambodia came in the wake of U. S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk's statement there is at least one North Vietnamese division in Cambodia. Cambodia's government and ruling Prince Sihanouk have vociferously denied the allegation.

Since 1963, American military advisors have called the Cambodian border a "little Yalu" for Southern-based Viet Cong guerrillas. In November, 1965, however, American field commanders first ~~accused~~ accused North Vietnamese regulars of seeking sanctuary in Cambodia after the ~~bloody~~ bloody battle of Ia Drang Valley. But, these statements were largely hushed up or ignored the higher ~~up~~ up the official American Establishment ladder one asked questions.

American field commanders, responsible for watching the Cambodian border along a 150-mile frontline west of here say, there are five known regiments of North Vietnamese regulars situated across the jungled boundary line from where U. S. Army 4th ~~Inf~~ Infantry Division troops have operated for the past year.

American commanders list the five known regiments as: 95B, 66, 88, 32 and 33. Three of these regiments form the 1st North Vietnamese Division, these sources said. Hence, military sources calculate nearly one and half North Vietnamese divisions ~~is safely~~ ~~are safely~~ ~~lying~~ ~~across~~ ~~the~~ ~~border~~, ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~capability~~ of whisking into South Vietnam and attacking the outnumbered American brigades or smaller South Vietnamese units.

*without the ~~24th~~ Sanctuary, CAPABLE*

*ED*

(More)

Maj. Gen. Vinh Loc, South Vietnamese commander ~~and~~ of the Second Military Corps along the most sensitive <sup>NORTHERN</sup> part of the ~~Cambodian~~ border, said he estimated the combined North Vietnamese and Viet Cong strength at ~~a~~ two divisions ~~spanning~~ across the line in Cambodia.

"I have begged the ~~South~~ (South Vietnamese) High Command in Saigon to give me permission to go into Cambodia," Gen. Loc said. "I always say the best defense is to attack. Or we should at least send Commandos and Ranger patrols in (into Cambodia) to destroy the North Vietnamese installations and to give their troops a fear of their security.

"But, the High Command never says yes--and never says no," he shrugged. "We respect too much international law and convention--that's our weakness," he concluded, indicating he probably would not be given the green light from Saigon to move across the border.

(More)

American commanders, however, thought ~~the chances of~~ a military attack against North Vietnamese units based in Cambodia would have little chance of success.

"If we could launch a lightning ground and air attack against those units--all in 24 hours, we could knock them out easily," one American military source explained. "But, we would have to have total surprise, or else the unit NVA units would simply break up and scatter and we'd never get them. The chances are that even a blitz invasion of Cambodia would not appreciably alter the military situation to favor us ~~in~~ over here very much."

American field commanders ~~in this area~~ believe the border war against North Vietnamese main force units has ~~reached a~~ <sup>currently</sup> military deadlock in this area.

"We have five North Vietnamese regiments across the Cambodian border facing our ~~troops~~ troops," one American military source explained. "And we had the same five regiments facing us when we moved ~~there~~ here a year ago. In one year, we have killed 2500 North Vietnamese regulars--confirmed by bodycount--and they've brought down more replacements for their casualties. The difference is the new replacements are younger and ~~are~~ have less training, but the enemy is making up for that with much more lethal weaponry."

(More)

American intelligence experts are known to base their assessment of North Vietnamese strength in Cambodia on a wide array of evidence, including aerial reconnaissance flights and ground patrols across the border by Vietnamese Special Forces teams and their American advisors.

However, high-ranking American military officials in Saigon have expressed the view that even this intelligence information is not accurate <sup>or precise</sup> enough.