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withdrawal 1 (normass/deepe)

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WITH U. S. THIRD MARINE DIVISION, ALONG THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE, VIETNAM,
OCTOBER 12—The Allied defense line all along Vietnam's demilitarized zone
would probably be forced to make an orderly, but strategic withdrawal southwards
if the bombing of North Vietnam ceases without adequate, iron-clad guarantees
of tit-for-tat & de-escalation by the Communists.

This is the view of senior commanders here and in Saigon. Even if the
North Vietnamese agree to the "restoration of the DMZ" ~~in re~~ by withdrawing their
ground troops from the six-mile-wide zone in return for cessation of the American
"acts of war", Marine tactical commanders still would be unhappy. For, in their
view, the real threat to Allied defenses along the DMZ is not a massive ground
invasion through the DMZ—but is Communist artillery from North Vietnam, across the
6 six-mile-wide zone and onto American Marine, Army and Vietnamese Army ^{installations} bases and

mobile operation positions.

*at Bases. Currently, the Allies have
quieted Communist artillery in North Vietnam
AND the DMZ By lightning counter-attacks
of air AND artillery once it is fired.*

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withdrawal 2 (normass/deepe)

One Saigon-based officer close to American commander, General Creighton W. Abrams, opened up the possibility of an Allied withdrawal along the DMZ when he said:

"You can not repeat not have Americans or Vietnamese near the DMZ with people shooting at them from north of the Ben Hai ~~pe~~ river (which separates North and South Vietnam) and we can not shoot back. You just can not have that. We've just got to be able to shoot back. It's ~~just~~ a military rule and without that the situation is intolerable. You can not have Americans being shot at without letting them shoot back. You just can't run it that way."

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withdrawal 3 (normass/deepe)

Officially, there is yet no repeat no decision ~~taxx~~ for an Allied retreat southwards in the event of a cessation of bombing over North Vietnam that would be disadvantageous to American and Vietnamese troops. "We'll make the necessary decisions when ~~a~~ that time comes," one ~~hsg~~ high-ranking source explained. Anyhow, for ~~tact~~ American tactical commanders along the DMZ, they know the decision will be made at much higher level than theirs.

But, these tactical commanders along the DMZ are e^e emphatic about the following points if the bombing of North Vietnam ceases without adequate ~~adequate~~ ^{and ground-movements} guarantees for cessation of Communist artillery across the zone:

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withdrawal 4 (normass/deepe)

1. In its current form, the Allied defense line along the 40-mile long DMZ clearly ~~could not be held~~ without heavy personnel and material losses.

2. Hence, a ~~disadvantageous~~ halt to the bombing of the North ~~wi~~ would demand a critical, strategic re-appraisal of the Allied defense line all along the DMZ.

3. In making that strategic ~~re-arpp~~ re-appraisal, there are only two options for the Allies—either to dig deeper or to retreat south out of the range of Communist artillery. But, even to dig deeper into bunkered positions does not strike the M¹ tactical commanders as a very ~~rp~~ probable solution— for they run the high-risk of intensive, ~~if not continuous~~ artillery bombardment reminiscent of the Khe Sanh siege days.

The Allied defense line is suspended into the three sides of a strategic box; Allied troops can not move ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ further east because of the South China Sea; they can not move further~~x~~ west or north because of the political boundaries with North Vietnam or Laos. Hence, then can only retreat south—or begin digging in deeper.

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withdrawal 5 (nomass/deepe)

"If the government stops the bombing, we would have to have a very careful ~~even~~ evaluation ~~on~~ of our present dispositions," one tactical commander who had ~~alth~~ already thought out ^{such} its consequences, explained. "We can't sit under ^(meaning from planes) bombardment from the North without hardened sites. They'd chew us up little by little. Now they can open up and we can immediately counter without our air and artillery because we maintain constant air cover over the North.

~~But, so otherwise, we would have to~~ ^{the} the Marines and Americans and ^{COMMUNIST} Vietnamese would have to ~~we~~ dig in deeper and take their fire as at Con Thien— or else to withdraw southwards. But, then one asks—how far south can we go. This decision would have to be made at a pretty high level—either to stay where we are in hardened sites or to withdraw."

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withdrawal 3 (normassa/deepee)

Any strategic withdrawal from the DMZ would involve more than 20,000 American Marines and soldiers, plus Vietnamese infantrymen and armor, as well as other additional thousands of support-type personnel in their headquarters-logistical complexes. The withdrawal would be designed to pull these installations Allied installations and units out of the range of the ~~whom~~ Communists' whopping 130 millimeter artillery, the Communists most dependable, accurate and long-range artillery used to date. It was this artillery directed from both ~~North Vietnam~~ ^{the north} and Laos which pounded the American Marines at the , Tho Sanh combat base earlier this year.

The 130 millimeter artillery has a maximum range of 27,000 meters--or 16.2 repeat 16.2 miles. If the ~~the~~ North Vietnamese based and continued to shoot their artillery from immediately north of the DMZ, then the Allies would be forced to withdraw from such major positions as the huge refugee resettlement and district town of Cam Lo, the massive American artillery position at Camp Carroll, the forward supply base of Dong Ha, from headquarters command areas along Route 9, and from tens of smaller outpost outposts ~~tapping~~ tapping the electronic sensors of the McNamara line and ^{more than} mobile operational ~~base~~ bases, which the Marines now use to enhance their heliborne mobility.

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withdrawal ² (normass/deepe)

For the Marine commanders, the ~~inmedi~~ immediate significance of the bombing of North Vietnam ~~in this regard~~ is that the Allies have fairly well suppressed the Communist artillery ^{from North} by quick-reaction air and artillery ^{counter-} strikes. The tactical mechanics of suppressing Communist artillery fire revolves around constant airborne alert of small, two-seater spotter plans which keep the whole ^{Region} DMZ under consistent observation. Whenever Communist artillery ^{fires}, the little ~~spot~~ spotters ~~use the "flash-bang"~~ try to catch a glimpse of the flash and smoke ^{to note the location} ~~from the firing~~ while other American ground units use the "flash-bang" system of computing roughly how long the artillery round is in the air ~~be~~ and from the rough location that it was fired. Then American tactical aircraft as well as ^{called to retaliate} American artillery are within minutes ~~retaliating~~ ^{COMMUNIST} on the specific or general ^{map} coordinates from which the ~~130 millimeter~~ artillery was fired.

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withdrawal 5 (normass/deepe)

"Cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam could be disastrous for us," said Maj. Gen. Raymond Davis, the M¹ Korean War Medal of Honor winner who now commands the Third Marine Division. ~~"All our positions most"~~ "Most of our positions near the DMZ would be subject to Communist artillery without adequate capability for us to respond. We rely on our air observation and airstrikes to keep this Communist artillery down.

"We aren't that worried about a Communist ground push. The enemy does not have enough ground forces at this time to cause us immediate concern. But, the enemy's artillery is different. It is clearly a fact—and we have gone through this before—that when we gain the upperhand along the DMZ ~~he~~ the enemy calls for a cessation of the bombing—and then he increases his supply and troop movements. After every ceasefire during the past three years, the Communists ~~move~~ ^{have moved} in their heavy artillery and we ~~have~~ ^{had} to go in and bomb it out. Now, if the enemy agrees not to shoot over the DMZ, it would solve part of that problem."

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withdrawal ⁹ (normass/deepe)

During the past several ~~mon~~ months, the Communist artillery, which once consistently raked the whole DMZ area, has been relatively quiet not only because American ~~firepo~~ tactical air and artillery firepower have reacted in split-second fashion to counter it, but also because of B-52 Stratetic Air Command raids along the zone as well as because of heavy flooding and muddy roads which prevente prevented massive Communist replacement of supplies and destroyed artillery. Pieces.

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withdrawal ¹⁰7 (normass/deepe)

Even if the bombing and "other acts of war" are ceased over North Vietnam, American commanders are along the DMZ are insistent they retain the option of using unarmed air reconnaissance. "The American government can never give up their right to air reconnaissance," one Marine aviator emphasized, "and we never will. Even though Eisenhower was embarrassed by it—we still kept reconnaissance air reconnaissance going. Anyhow, everyone uses air reconnaissance every day—the Soviets are reconning the United States every day with their satellites. We will just have to keep some reconnaissance of some sort over North Vietnam to see if they're massing southwards."

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withdrawal (normass/deepe)

For the Marine commanders, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey's campaign speeches urging "restoration of the DMZ" by the North Vietnamese in exchange for American cessation of the bombing over the North seems extravagantly out of step with the tactical situation facing the Allies. Whether or not the Communist ground troops withdraw from the DMZ seems irrelevant to the Marine officers--the hectic battles result when the Communists push south of the DMZ. Even if the Communists would agree not to transit through the DMZ, they could still bring men and supplies in through Laos, and dump them in the rear of the Marines--behind the Allied DMZ line--or else move them further south into even as far as the greater Saigon perimeter. This would not be much of a concession by the Communists, in the eyes of the Marines. Clearly, the Marines would want all this southward flow of men and materials stopped--whether it comes straight across the DMZ or through Laos. In addition, they want airtight guarantees the Communist bombardments across the DMZ would cease--for Marines who remember all too well the artillery poundings at Con Thien and Khe Sanh, as well as sporadic fire at almost every other installation, this becomes a crucial demand.

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withdrawal / 2 (normass/deepe)

. One other immediate, significant point of concern to the tactical commanders is the shifting monsoon winds along the DMZ. Monsoon rains prevail along the ~~DMZ~~ DMZ during most of the year—but the important question is whether, as the in winds shift, they are advantageous to either the Allies ~~on the Communist side.~~ At this time, the ~~southeast~~ monsoon rains are disadvantageous for the Communists; the Laotian side of the mountains are rain-swept; their supply trails and roads are wet and in some cases the rivers that must be crossed are flooded. But, within a matter of weeks, the ~~monsoon~~ monsoon begins, inundating the Allied-held coastal plains populated coastal plains—where are also based logistical depots—and smothering the Marine-held mountaintops in clouds, fog and mist during most the coming months. When these monsoons ~~hamper~~ Marine helicopter mobility and tactical air support, the Communist roads roads and trails are in good shape for rapid trafficking; if, the Marines argue, the bombing of the North is stopped at a disadvantage to the Allies along the li DMZ, then these two factors ~~combined~~ would further jeopardize prospects of holding the 40-mile-long muddy line.

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withdrawal 13 (normass/deepe)

Other military officers havenoted that criticized ~~ex~~ the American cessations of the bombing over the northern portions of North Vietnam in March, just as the ~~Hanoi-Haiphong areas received the best weather for receiving~~ weather over Hanoi-Haiphong became most favorable for Allied airstrikes--and when the Communists were in the best position to receive ~~supplies~~ import supplies.

"The weather has ^{there} consistently been a factor the Communists have played played to ~~the~~ advantage and we have ignored," one senior military officer explained. "Now, ~~there~~ there are so many supplies in North Vietnam the country is about to sink."

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