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all-around~~ed~~—article five of six-article series (article slugged 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ wars becomes sixth article).

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July 21, 1965

THE SHRINKING BLUE SPOTS

(Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, during his visit to Vietnam last week, was given a closed-door briefing at the Headquarters of the 5th Special Forces Group—the command headquarters for the 1350 American "advisors" in 70 different camps in Viet Nam.

While McNamara was being brief^{ed} on one side of the closed-door, an American sergeant ^{explained} posed a ~~major~~ pivotal problem of the guerrilla-subversive war.

"We know that a certain percentage of the Vietnamese irregulars trained by Special Forces are Communists," the sergeant explained. "One American was killed by one of the civilian irregulars he had trained. In one of our camps in the Delta region, four Communist subversives were caught ~~in one place~~ in one day.

"We know that more people are subversives but nobody looks at it this way. It's our job to fight the enemy in the front—not to worry about whether we will be shot from the ~~rear~~ rear."

Meanwhile on the other side of the ~~plywood door~~ ^{plywood door} bidge door, McNamara was briefed by an American sergeant based at the camp called Phu Tuc, where, the Secretary of Defense was told, ^{the ten-man} American Special Forces team and their Vietnamese counterparts receive Communist gunfire only 2000 meters from the barbed-wire ~~perimeter~~ ^{defense} perimeter.

This is a report on Phu Tuc.)

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JULY 21, 1965

PHU TUC, SOUTH VIETNAM--As the American helicopter ~~flies~~ hovered over this Special Forces camp tucked between the government's district headquarters and a burn an old charred French fort, a high-ranking American advisor explained, "This ~~area~~ is a blue spot on our maps; ~~enough~~ enough blue spots make a nation. These are the areas ^{Secured by} that Vietnamese troops, district officials and tribal units. These are the areas that keep ~~a~~ Vietnam going."

But the blue spots are clearly shrinking/ ^{influence} in ~~size~~ and in number.

"This special Forces camp and ~~is~~ Vietnamese government district headquarters is the only ~~area~~ government control within thirty miles of here," the American advisor explained. "All the rest is jungle; the Communists can hid a division ^{Here} ~~in the jungle~~---yet the people in the Pentagon wonder why we can't find them."

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The jungle--some of the densest in the world--bordering Laos and Cambodia, which is also considered a major hidden sanctuary for Communist troops, was a death-trap for crack French units with Korean battlefield experience little more than a decade ago. American combat troops are expected to be sent to these highland areas in the coming months to ~~cross~~ counter the infiltration of North Vietnamese army units, at one extreme of the spectrum, and local Southern-born guerrilla units at the other end.

The helicopter landed between the two barbed wire ~~is~~ fences which formed the inner and outer perimeters of the defense for this camp of no-exit. ~~Every~~ ^{the} road through the valley guarded by the camp had been cut during a series of withering ambushes last ~~night~~ month. Light American transport aircraft brought in enough military supplies for the Special Forces company of ~~h~~ primitive tribesmen, who are also excellent jungle fighters. The ~~Am~~ ten-man American Special Forces team also attempt to supply the food needs for the civilian population outside the camp--a total of 1600 people --but these flights are unscheduled.

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Captain William R. Suhanin of Pittsburgh, the ranking American Special Forces officer met the helicopter. He took off his Green Beret--the symbol of American Special Forces--which revealed his prematurely grey hair.

"I had the grey hair before coming to Phu Tuc," the twenty-nine ~~year~~ ^{LAUGHED.} year-old captain ~~explained.~~ "Now I'm getting ulcers."

He ~~had~~ arrived in Phu Tuc a month ago.

"We have an ~~est~~ [?] estimated 3000 Viet Cong in this province," he explained. "We are the only Special Forces camp in Hau Bom province and we secure this district headquarters. Of the three ~~a~~ government district headquarters in the province, this is the only one that's half-secure.

"One of the three regiments in the province is in this area," he continued standing ~~a~~ ^a in tin-roofed building to escape the blazing ~~sun~~ mid-day sun. "But I can't find it. Daily we ~~sent~~ send out patrols and still we can't find it. In addition, we have three local guerrilla bands in ~~this area~~ within this ten-mile area and they too are hard to deal with. They've ambushed us several times."

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"The camp gets fifty rounds of small arms fire a night from that nearby ridge line," he continued. "It keeps the camp on guard. The V. C. have us under observation all the time."

Asked the distance to the ridge line, he laughed, "550 meters--we have our mortars laid in on it."

~~the~~ Calmly, he explained that ^a ~~the~~ ^{only} village 1000 meters from the camp ~~it~~ was considered sympathetic to the enemy. "There's only women and children left there," he explained. "The others are out fighting us."

"Several weeks ago, we even saw three V. C. in the trees along our ~~airstrip~~ airstrip right outside the gate of the camp," he explained. "And we know that at least three of their agents have already been inside the camp. Part of the V. C. tactic is to pace off measurements so they can have their first mortar rounds come right in on us."

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"We have a limited force here and it's hard to motivate a twenty-man squad to face a battalion," he explained. "But now we are adjusting to the situation. We feel cocky that we can hold the camp against a V. C. ~~regimt~~ regimental attack. But when we start talking about two regiments--well, it starts to pucker."

Montagnard laborers, their wives and the camp defenders were already preparing much tighter defenses for the camp. The dependents of the camp defenders lived under ~~large~~ squat tee-pee's of ~~tat~~ thatch roofing. In front of each ~~tee-~~tee-pee, each family had dug ~~in~~ deep inter-locking ~~in~~ underground bunkers.

"The minute firing begins the ~~in~~ Montagnard kids ~~run~~ ^{SO AMPER} into the bunkers," the captain explained, "even when they're almost ~~in~~ full of flood waters."

The captain, obviously confident despite the situation, ~~explained~~ ^{EXPLAINED} "This place ~~has~~ ^{GETS} to you about night-time. My predecessor was killed only three to four thousand meters from the camp. We know he was killed by a North Vietnamese Army sergeant--we ~~captured~~ killed him. For me to ~~even~~ walk even to the district ~~headqu~~ ^{HEADQU} headquarters ~~only~~ 200 meters away, I carry a rifle. I always carry a ~~pistol~~ ^{PISTOL} pistol even within the camp."

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As the helicopter prepared to leave, an American sergeant at the camp explained: I've been in Vietnam three times; I've been wounded twice. I have ~~the~~ ~~months~~ four months to go. I sure hope I make it.

As the helicopter fluttered out of the camp, a departing American advisor explained: If attacked, Phu Tuc as a 50-50 chance of pulling through. This is where one must break away from the cost-accounting ~~of war~~ ^{system}. It depends on the guts of men.

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