

General Doubts Red Chinese Would Try to Bomb South Viet

By Beverly Deepes
A Special Correspondent

SAIGON

Chinese Communist aircraft that could fly as far south as Saigon would have had a limited bombing capacity, according to a high-ranking United States Air Force officer.

"The Chinese (Communists) have aircraft that can fly as far south as Saigon," said Maj. Gen. Joseph H. Moore, "but it would be a serious question whether they would undertake it."

Gen. Moore said the bombing capacity of Chinese Communist aircraft would be reduced because of the flying distance between Saigon and North Vietnamese or Chinese bases. Saigon is about 800 miles south of Hanoi, capital of North Viet Nam, and 700 miles from a major Chinese Communist air base on Hainan Island. He said North Vietnamese aircraft are only transports and trainers.

The 50-year-old Air Force general, commander of the 2d Air Division based in Saigon, controls all U. S. Air Force aircraft in both South

Viet Nam and Thailand. This includes propeller-driven aircraft used in Viet Nam's counter-insurgency war, F-100 photo-reconnaissance jets, and F-102 jet interceptors and B-57 jet fighter-bombers brought in last week to provide air defense against Communist aircraft which might have retaliated against American bombings of North Viet Nam. The U. S. Navy aircraft used in defending U. S. destroyers against attack and in bombing North Viet Nam are part of the 7th Fleet.

'HOW LONG?'

Gen. Moore said he did not know how long the American jet interceptors and jet fighter-bombers rushed here last week would remain in South Viet Nam.

"I don't know when they'll consider the crisis past," Gen. Moore said. "But the commander in the field has to be ready for any contingency."

He said that the frequent "scrambling" of the newly-arrived American jet interceptors and fighter-bombers has been routine to keep pilots in practice and to check the aircraft. He said that un-

identified tracks on radar screens have appeared, but "each time we get up there, we find only friendly aircraft."

The unspecified number of F-102 Delta Dagger jet interceptors and B-57 jet fighter-bombers were sent to South Viet Nam last week to provide aerial defense in case of North Vietnamese or Chinese Communist counterattack. The 1954 Geneva agreements ending the French Indo-China War prohibits the basing of jet aircraft in either North or South Viet Nam, but for the past year American photo reconnaissance jets have been "transited" in Saigon and in northern cities of the Vietnamese republic.

PHASE III

Gen. Moore said the Geneva agreements would rule out use of the newly-arrived jets in the counter-insurgency war in South Viet Nam. But he said the jets, if necessary, would be useful in case the Viet Cong guerrillas increased the pace and intensity of their war to the point of entering the conventional warfare stage called Phase III.

"It's nonsense to say that jets are too fast (for counter-guerrilla war)," Gen. Moore said. "Jets can be flown as slowly as prop planes and can deliver their ordnance more accurately. They provide a firmer platform. And jets can work at greater speeds when they encounter heavier ground fire."

"But as long as we have no air opposition (in South Viet Nam), we can fly anything—prop planes and reconnaissance planes, which are most useful here. They fly from short fields and do not need a lot of installations."

Gen. Moore said the buildup of American defensive jet aircraft was fast and successful not only in Viet Nam, but also in Thailand. He said there are good communications links and interlocking radar nets between Viet Nam and Thailand.

"Every time we have an exercise, we learn lessons," Gen. Moore said. "But there's nothing to indicate a change in our procedures. Movements like this are second nature to the units involved. They are used to making long moves on short notice."