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battles 1 (normass/deepe)

~~SECRET~~

SAIGON, MAY 10--Aⁿs Vietnam peace talks begin in Paris, senior ^{AMERICAN} ~~allied~~ field commanders believe the Allies are currently winning a clear-cut military victory in the significant battle of Saigon.

They say they have inflicted disasterously heavy losses on the ~~more than~~ three-plus Communist division-equivalents which have attempted to assault and infiltrate the capital.

"The battle of Saigon is being won largely outside the city," one high-placed source explained. "The Communists are taking heavy losses."

But, Allied commanders are still concerned about the Communists small-unit capabilities--to rocket ~~to base positions~~ and ~~use~~ mortar Saigon, without much risk ^{of} to their troops, or to raise urban havoc with terrorist incidents, ^{AND} sniper and propaganda teams.

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battles 2 (normass/deepe)

Captured Communist prisoners have told the Allied commanders that their units have been ordered to stay in the city and fight at any cost and hence more small-scale actions are expected in the near future. Some of ²the units badly battered in the battle of ²Saigon are expected to withdraw and regroup, probably five ⁸to kilometers from the city limits, where they will try to get ²ammunition, supplies and ²at continue harrassment of the capital.

American
"But, their units are in bad shape," one senior commander explained.

"We are finding and destroying them; ²and it will take time to find all of them. We have to search every little bit of nipa ²and palms, ²if not, they let you walk by them. *(trees)*

optimistic.
"But, I'm very ~~optimist~~. I feel that within a couple of days, the

battle of Saigon will be won and the city will be secure militarily ~~and~~ secure ²(against ~~m~~ (from main-force units), but it will take time to get the snipers,"

AND ARTILLERY TEAMS.
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battles 3 (normass/deepe)

Captured Communist senior officers and documents have confirmed for the Allied commanders here that the current Communist offensive is "to achieve a psychological victory leading to a political advantage at the ~~negotiation~~ negotiation table. The time of the offensive appears to be carefully related to negotiations," one informed source explained. "Hence, the Communist units have been ordered to remain in the Saigon area, but their capabilities have been drastically reduced." We expect that the ~~will~~ will try to maintain pressure ~~for~~ a few days after talks begin."

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battles 4 (normass/deepe)

One informed source explained that Communist prisoners said they
"had been told they had to liberate the South and that there would be
a general uprising ~~again~~ ^{once again} and that they will achieve final victory with this
offensive. I ~~do~~ ^{don't} know what the Communist leaders will say next time--
this line of propaganda is getting a little worn." ~~Communist~~ ^{Communist}
~~propaganda~~ documents indicate a similar line of argument was told ~~the~~ ^{to}
their troops during ~~the~~ before the Tet offensive which began late January.

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battles 5 (normass/deepe)

The optimism of Allied commanders is based on both the quantity and quality of the Communist losses.

In the battle for Saigon, within its city limits and the fringes ^{of} from it, 1,600 Communists have been killed in the 121-hour period beginning 4 a.m. May 5 to 5 a.m. on May 9. An additional 100 Communists were captured and handfuls of others defected to the Allied side. During the ~~comparable~~ ^{at same} period, Allied losses were 87 fatalities were 87. Translated into kill-ratio terms, 18 Communists were killed for every Allied trooper.

On May 9, for example, 402 enemy Communists were killed in action and eighteen were captured in the Saigon and its immediate environs. Fourteen Allied soldiers were killed—ten Vietnamese and four American—-for nearly at 30 to 1 kill-ratio. ratio. Some localized actions gave the Allies, ~~a~~ ^{at} a ratio of killing 100 Communists will losing only one themselves. The over-all average of 18 to 1 kill-ratio ratio during the past five days in the sai Saigon area is one of the highest in the history of the war for sustained actions, informed sources report.

Outside of Saigon in the ~~provinces~~ rural provinces immediately surrounding the capital, an additional 2500 Communists have been killed in the past five days since the beginning ^{of} of the Communist offensive, informed sources report.

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battles 6 (normass/deepe)

~~NO MAIN FORCE UNITS ENROUTE~~

COMMUNIST

"We have been intercepting the main-force units ~~enroute~~
enroute to Saigon since late April," one senior Allied commander
said. "We have reduced the combat effectiveness of many of these units.
This does not mean we killed ~~even~~ every man in the unit, but it means
they have lost about fifty per cent casualties. We have contacted
all of their organized regiments except a few—and those ~~have~~ been heavily
damaged since the last week of April."

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battles 7 (normass/deepe)

More than the quan numbers of Communist losses, however, Allied commanders are also encouraged by the quality of their losses.

"Militarily when this battle is finished, the enemy will be in bad shape," one Allied commander explained. "He has lost alot of leadership of his officers and non-commissioned officers, his key leaders and local cadre. Many of the local cadre surfaced surfaced and assisted in the movement of military formations; the local and guerrillas were thrown in with the main force. We have taken a tremendous toll of these cadre and local guerrillas and this is going to leave their whole Communist ~~system~~ system in shambles. And without leadership the machine won't function. You can't take a gropo corporal and make him a company commander in one day. Many of these Gu Southern guerrillas from the villages just can't be replaced by North Vietnamese from anthe another country. I don't say after this, the the enemy can not launch another attack on the Saigon— but it won't be effective."

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battles 8 (normass/deepe)

Informed sources revealed the captured Communist prisoners and

defectors have said the ~~North Vietnamese and Communist~~ morale is low -

7 although no repeat ^{UNIT} no mass defections have taken place, ~~by ^{UNIT} army~~ clumps

of three to six defectors/^{from ONE UNIT} have rallied to the Allies at a time. They give

as their reasons for defection that they are not being adequately supported

by their higher headquarters, that they are hungry and homesick, that they

are afraid of Allied power and that they do not feel they have a ~~chance~~

chance of victory. "The ~~on~~ fact they do not feel a chance for victory,"

is the most important one mentioned by most of them," one source said.

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battles 9 (normass/deepe)

AMERICAN

Allied commanders believe the success to date in the battle of Saigon has hinged on their ability to intercept Communist units moving towards the city. But, the job of intercepting Communist units is difficult—and the odds are in favor the Communists when they attempt to infiltrate the city.

"The Allied interception was well done, which was the whole point of the Ta Toan Thang (Complete Vieto Victory) operation launched the second week of April," a senior Al American field commander explained. "This is not to say we got every many coming into the city. It is vict vic virtually impossible to get every enemy unit before it gets to the city." HND,

"But, it is easy for the Communists to if infiltrate. Many have government identity cards and wear civilian clothes," the source continued. "Some of them even dress in Vietnamese government uniforms. They speak the laung laun language and they have their weapons cached in the city. It is virtually impossible to stop every man. The Vietnamese police did an exceptional job in picking up some infiltrators.

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battles 9 (normassa/deepe)

"Also, when a Communist division moves, it does not form up as a division," the source explained. "The division breaks down into ~~small~~ smaller units, generally companies, or at least no larger than a battalion. Then they move at no night, with the companies re-assembling in a base area, then the next morning the the three companies move out separately again and finally at one time when they are within striking range of the city they form up into battalions and regiments.

"We have caught them mostly at night as they were moving," he continued.

"It used to be said that the night belongs to the V. C. (Viet Cong).

But it's not true any more. In the past six months we have stressed night operations. Now almost all ~~our~~ ^{AMERICAN} operations are at night and it has paid real dividends because that is the only time the Viet Cong can move."

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battles 11 (normass/deepe)

Reliable Allied sources here are clearly worried about ~~the~~ ^{of the Communist thrusts} the psychological and political repercussions in America and Europe, even though they see the Communists as suffering heavy losses.

"I feel sorry for the American people," one informed source explained. "They must think the Allied cause is hopeless. By the time ~~the~~ ^{burning} events are sifted out by the press, the television puts on pictures of Saigon and they see heavier American casualty figures, they must be willing to sue for é peace.

"But, in fact, the reverse is true. ~~the~~ We are winning a tremendous military victory--and the Communists are suffering a real military disaster.

"Why do you think the Communists are negotiating anyway," he continued. "The war is shifting gears--but why? Ho Chi Minh used to say this would be a long, drawn-out war, maybe even twenty years. Then all of ~~sudden~~ a sudden, he goes all-out with an offensive into the cities. Why? Because he was losing the attrition war. The Allies have been fighting ^{Here} four years ~~in the attrition way~~ and General (William C.) Westmoreland was ^{saying} right in ~~saying~~ in using Allied mobility and firepower to destroy the enemy--and the Allies could do that better and faster than the Communists. destroy the Communists faster than they could destroy the Allies.

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battles 12 (normass/deepe)

"So, Ho Chi Minh changed from the protracted war to the all-out attacks in the cities because he was losing attrition-wise. No one would change his tactics if he were winning. So he shifted to negotiating in Paris while putting all-out pressure on the capital cities for an all-out victory. During Tet, it worked for him. He won a tremendous psychological victory, but suffered a military disaster. But, the American people did not know about ~~the military~~ the Allied military victory, so they self-imposed their own ~~created their own~~ self-imposed psychological defeat."

(Hank: This is an assessment from the American point of view by ~~the~~ an senior allied commander. This is the first time he had been interviewed by the press and I suspect ~~of~~ this is a more detailed review of what the wires are running. Tomorrow, I'll write another military piece updating the Viet Cong colonels story.—this will be more of an analysis of the Communists plan.

In the above story, I've made a point of using alot of quotes explaining the official viewpoint here, to make it clear it is the official appraisal, which I think should be run whether one ~~one~~ believes it is too rosy or not.

I'll also mail you a ~~seg~~ map of Saigon showing the nine precincts in case you don't have it or need it in the future. Could you return me Nik Wheeler's photos if they're not in the mail yet. Thanks for the note

regarding them. There's fighting around the press transmitter site—but as long as that is not ~~at~~ knocked out Reuters says their communications will hold v better than Tet. ~~My~~ Regards Bev).

== END REUTER.