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PLEI ME, SOUTH VIETNAM--The nine-day ~~siege~~ state of siege, broken this week at this battered Special Forces camp, dramatically illustrates the increased infiltration of North Vietnamese units into South Vietnam, according to reliable sources.

These sources indicate that one of the two regiments involved in the Plei Me battle was a newly-infiltrated one ~~the~~ existence of which was heretofore unknown in South Viet Nam. The newly-infiltrated regiment is considered the sixth known, or reliably identified, regiment of the People's Army of North Vietnam (PAVN) in South. Three of these six regiments ~~now identified~~ are included in the ~~325~~ 10,000-man 325th PAVN Division, which Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara identified in August.

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"The introduction of American troops combat troops into South Vietnam tipped the balance of forces away from the ~~V~~ Communists," one reliable source indicated. "But if Hanoi sends in more and more PAVN units, the ~~long~~ long-term effect could be a military ~~st~~ stalemate. Right now there are enough American combat troops in South Vietnam so that ~~they~~ ^{SOUTH VIETNAM} they can not lose. But Hanoi can introduce ^{Enough} ~~enough~~ PAVN units so the Americans ^{And SOUTH VIETNAM} can not ~~win~~ win, and ^a the stalemate might result."

Reliable sources said that the siege of Plei Me was a "military mousetrap," in which the primary purpose was not to over-run the Special Forces camp, but instead to chew up incoming reinforcements from the Vietnamese strategic reserve or to annihilate American helicopters landing elements of the elite U. S. Air Cavalry Division. These sources indicate that if the Communists could have inflicted heavy American losses, it would have considerably enhanced their month-long "Hate America" political campaign which began ~~OCTOBER~~ October 15.

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Communists' And Mortar Attacks

The ~~lightning~~ lightning raids/ this week against the U. S. ~~air~~ ^{air} airbases in the U. S. Marine Corps enclaves of Danang and Chu Lai, north of here, ^{was} is also considered an attempt to bolster their "Hate America" campaign.

"The PAVN units have been trying to suck American ground troops into a trap, like Plei Me for a long time," one reliable source said.

They failed this time, but despite considerable losses they did not fail completely. The fact that they braved a multi-million-dollar American airstrikes for nine days and nights earned them respect by American ground commanders, pilots and Vietnamese troops.

An inspection of the battlefield after the fighting had finished indicated that the ~~Comm~~ PAVN units limited the effectiveness of American airstrikes, dropping thousands of tons of 500 and 1000-pound bombs, napalm, white phosphorous and a highly-classified conventional bomb called "Lazy Dog" (technically called the CBU, ^{containing} which contains ~~thousands~~ ^{thousands} of small ~~steel~~ ^{steel} steel arrows which drift to the ground) by the use of one simple weapon ~~and~~ an 18-inch spade. With the spade, the PAVN units dug four to six-foot deep ^{horizontal} trenches in the shape of an L-shaped trenches. When the bombs were dropped, ^{Communists} the fighters ducked into flat part of the "L" and were protected from bomb fragments and napalm, except in the cases of direct bomb hits.

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In the end, it was the American airstrikes, and not the combat troops on the ground, which forced the ~~PAVN~~ PAVN units to flee from their entrenchments.

During the battle for Plei Me, the Communists employed two Mobile Warfare tactics, which mark the end of Phase Two and the beginning of Phase Three of Mao Tse-Tung's guerrilla warfare strategy.

The first tactic employed was the attack on the road-bound reinforcements of government troops and armor ~~which established~~ in which the Communists established a momentary, but fluid front-line. The Communists did not attack the column from fixed foxholes, but instead ran forward in the jungle to raid the slow-moving convoy. Despite moderate government casualties, this Communist tactic failed when the armored elements turned back down the road to route the attacking Communist elements. The countryside was littered with the dead ~~Viet~~ Communist bodies, and foreign correspondents saw other Communist fighters running through the hills.

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The encirclement and siege of the Special Forces camp itself was considered a second sophisticated mobile warfare tactic as the Communists established a solid, fixed frontline of trenches, some of which were within fifty yards from the camp perimeter. These trenches were dug within a period of several hours immediately preceding the attack and despite the close proximity to the camp, the American and Vietnamese officers within the perimeter were unaware of what was happening outside. There had been no prior intelligence reports indicating that massive numbers of enemy troops were moving into the general vicinity, indicating a lack of good intelligence information and adequate patrolling outside the camp.

Reliable sources consider this sophisticated development of Mobile Warfare tactics, plus the introduction of massive concentrations of heavy weapons, dampens, if not refutes, the official American claims that the Communists are de-escalating into small operating units employing simple guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run actions.

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Reliable sources did not identify the number of the newly-infiltrated unit participating in the Plei Me battle, but said it was either a standard regiment of two infantry battalions supported by a heavy weapons battalion, or else a new type of unit--possibly a brigade--of two or ~~W~~ three PAVN infantry battalions plus one PAVN heavy weapons battalion, augmented by one battalion of hard-core, locally-recruited Viet Cong guerrillas. Identification of the 300-some weapons captured during after the battle --of mixed American, French and Chinese Communist manufacture--indicated to intelligence sources that the unit was a blend of locally-recruited Viet Cong plus North Vietnamese Army units.

"We're still not sure whether the heavy weapons are distributed ~~i~~ within each battalion or are in one ~~sp~~ separate battalion which they concentrate on strategic terrain," one reliable source indicated.

It is also unknown whether the newly-infiltrated ~~unit~~ regiment is ~~an~~ autonomous or is evidence of a second PAVN division in South Vietnam, reliable sources indicated.

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American troops searching foxholes around Plei Me found a photograph in a Communist packsack of a soldier wearing a red paratrooper beret, ~~indi~~ possibly indicating the new unit ^{was} is an elite one.

A second newly-infiltrated PAVN unit regiment was within the past six weeks partially identified fifty miles north of here, but did not participate in the Plei Me action, reliable sources said.

A third newly-infiltrated PAVN unit, the 32nd Infantry Regiment, was involved in the engagement attacking the road-bound government relief column moving into the Plei Mei Me camp, reliable sources said.

The three recognized regiments of the 325th PAVN division are the 101, 95 and 18. In a little noticed and perhaps diversionary action during the Plei Me battle, reliable military sources indicate that one battalion of the 95th Regiment plus one PAVN battalion heretofore unknown attacked, ~~and~~ overran and inflicted severe casualties on the headquarters company of a Vietnamese government Ranger battalion in coastal Phu Yen province.

One key PAVN base area is considered to lie in western Pleiku province near or on the ill-defined border with Cambodia. American strike aircraft ~~and~~ pilots have been ordered not to launch air operations within five ~~to~~ kilometers of the Vietnamese-Cambodian border without prior authorization from the American Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington.

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