

Vietnam Bulletin

VOL. V, NO. 7

FEBRUARY 15, 1971

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE EMBASSY OF VIET-NAM.

WASHINGTON, D.C.



Operation Lam Son

PRESIDENT THIEU'S MESSAGE ON VIETNAMESE
OPERATIONS IN LAOS

Following is the full text of President NGUYEN VAN THIEU's message to the Vietnamese people, soldiers and cadres on the operations carried out by the ARVN on Laotian territory on February 8, 1971.

This text was released in Saigon at 11:00 a.m., February 8, 1971 (10:00 p. m. Washington time, February 7, 1971).

My fellow country men,
My dear soldiers and cadres,

Today, February 8, 1971, I have ordered the Armed Forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam to attack the Communist North Vietnamese bases on the Laotian territory along the Viet-Nam-Laos border, in Military Region I. This operation is called Operation Lam Son 719. This is an operation limited in time and in space, with the clear and unique objective of disrupting the supply and infiltration network of the Communist North Vietnamese in Laos, which territory has for many years been occupied by the North Vietnamese Communists and used as a base to launch attacks against our country.

Today, I solemnly confirm that the Republic of Viet-Nam always respects the independence, neutrality and sovereignty of the Kingdom of Laos. I also solemnly confirm that the Republic of Viet-Nam does not entertain any territorial ambitions whatsoever concerning the territorial integrity of Laos, nor do we ever seek to interfere in the internal politics of the Kingdom of Laos. I also pledge that when the above-mentioned limited operation ends, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Viet-Nam will completely withdraw from the Laotian territory.

My fellow countrymen,
Soldiers and cadres,

It is a well-known fact throughout the world now that for many years, the North Vietnamese Communists themselves have openly violated the neutrality and territory of the Kingdom of Laos and blatantly violated the 1962 arrangements on Laos, just as they have blatantly violated the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina in order to wage a war of aggression against the Republic of Viet-Nam.

It is also known throughout the world that the Communist North Vietnamese have openly occupied one important part of the Laotian territory, they have built the Ho Chi Minh Trail there in order to move in the South countless soldiers, weapons, ammunition and military materiel, and they have established in that part of the Laotian territory vast military and logistic bases in order to wage the war of aggression against the Republic of Viet-Nam. If this situation is allowed to continue, the North Vietnamese Communists will stubbornly go on with their war of aggression against the Republic of Viet-Nam, Laos and the Khmer Republic.

In the particular case of the Republic of Viet-Nam, we have shown maximum goodwill at the Paris talks in view of a negotiated settlement, in order to solve this war through serious negotiations. The Allied nations have also withdrawn a great part of their troops and are continuing to withdraw from the Republic of Viet-Nam. In the case of North Viet-Nam, on the contrary, they still continue to infiltrate troops, weapons, ammunition and military equipment while preparing themselves to launch fresh attacks in the forthcoming months. For this reason, the attacks by our armed forces against the North Vietnamese Communist troops along the border within Laotian territory do not constitute an act of belligerence on our part, they are merely and solely a necessary act of legitimate self-defense on the part of the Republic of Viet-Nam against the North Vietnamese Communist aggressors.

This is not an act of aggression of the Republic of Viet-Nam against the friendly nation of Laos. On the contrary this is an action designed to stop the North Vietnamese Communists from expanding and perpetuating their aggressive potential.

Finally, this is not an expansion of the war by the Republic of Viet-Nam, either. On the contrary, it is an action taken to help end soon the war in Viet-Nam and restore peace in this part of the world.



37 RELEASED COMMUNIST POW'S CROSS BEN HAI RIVER

Saigon, January 25. - Thirty-seven among 40 Communist prisoners of war released by the RVN government on the occasion of the Lunar New Year Sunday safely crossed Ben Hai River to return to their native villages in North Vietnam.

The release ceremony took place at 10:00 a.m. Sunday at the Gio Linh sub-sector hqs. in Quang Tri province under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, I Corps and I MR Commander.

At 11 a.m. all the 40 released POW's got in 25 M. III Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) flying Red Cross flag in the presence of three International Red Cross officials and a number of RVN government officials.

The convoy moved into the DMZ across a 20 km-long route through the deserted hilly lands. Earlier the 2nd Armored Cavalry group with the cooperation of an Infantry battalion launched a search operation to ensure security for the convoy transporting the released POW's.

When the convoy entered the DMZ, 3 km from Ben Hai bridge, NVN loud speakers constantly threatened to open fire if the convoy kept on moving into the DMZ. The RVN competent officials present at the scene requested the Communists not to use violence since it was a human act.

However, the Communist anti-aircraft batteries on the other side of Ben Hai river fired at a RVN L. I9 reconnaissance plane which was carrying out an observation mission over the DMZ causing light damage to the aircraft.

At 12h20, the first APC transporting the Communist prisoners of war reached the place scheduled for the release, 2km west of Hien Luong Bridge.

Twenty minutes later, the prisoners embarked on five sampans and sailed by themselves to the other side of the river.

Three prisoners then changed their mind and requested to be allowed to stay in South Vietnam.

Their demand was accepted by the RVN authorities and they were sent back to Gio Linh.

The release ceremony lasted for ten minutes in the presence of RVN government officials, representatives of International Red Cross and a number of newsmen.

Ten minutes after the released landed on the other side of the river, the Communists fired about eight mortar rounds at the RVN Armored Cavalry and Infantry units participating in the release ceremony. One combatant was wounded in the mortar barrage.

However, by order of Col. Vu Van Giai, Deputy Commander of the 1st Infantry Division, RVN troops did not return fire for fear that the prisoners might be wounded.

The Communist POW's released Sunday by the RVN government included regular North Vietnamese troops who had been wounded and captured in the RVN as well as Cambodian front.

A day before the release, Radio Ha Noi aired an announcement requesting that the release and reception of POW's must be realized in accordance with the process fixed for the July 11, 1970 release, meaning that the RVN must provide the POW's with motorized boats which will be manned by the POW's themselves from the sea to Cua Tung area.

However, the RVN government, for humanitarian reason was still determined to carry out the release in accordance with the process previously arranged.

At a meeting with the press at C.I base, 20 kms North of Quang Tri and 20 kms south of Ben Hai River, three prisoners of war who asked to stay in South Vietnam said that if they return to the North as their friends, they will be deprived of all civil rights by the North Vietnamese authorities and will be sent back to the South Vietnam battlefield after a period of brainwashing.

The three POW's who volunteered to stay here included Sergeant Cao Huan, 20, a native of Nghe An who was wounded at his left leg and captured on November 21, 1969 in Quang Nam. The two others were Nguyen Van Tho, 20, a native of Thanh Hoa who was captured on March, 15, 1970 in Quang Ngai and Private Phung Quang Thuan, 27, a native of Ha Tay who was captured on November, 1969 in Long Khanh.

This was the sixth time the Republic of Vietnam government unilaterally released the North Vietnamese prisoners of war who illegally infiltrated in South Vietnam. The first release took place on December 31, 1965.

PRES. THIEU: TAN HOI IS DECISIVE YEAR FOR NATION'S FATE

Saigon, January 29. - President Nguyen Van Thieu in his televised and radio Tet message to his fellow countrymen at midnight Tuesday remarked that we have never been so near to peace than last year.

Explaining his statement, President Thieu cited the fact that the Communists were expelled to border areas and most of insecure areas were pacified.

"The scene of peace in rural areas brought about by the RVN Armed Forces and people makes us confident that we will have a peace we long for in a near future" the President added.

However, the peace to be restored in Vietnam, according to the President, is not a peace in poverty and slavery under the Communist rule but a lasting and genuine peace.

The Communists confessed that they can not win over the RVN Armed Forces, and they have to return to their former guerrilla tactics.

However, they will not publicly recognize their failure through an agreement because they still hope that South Vietnam would have a defeatist government headed by a naive leader.

According to President Thieu, the Communists wished to infiltrate their henchmen into the RVN government through the two coming elections in order to easily take over South Vietnam. He said:

"Tan Hoi Lunar Year will be a decisive year to the fate of our country. We will have either a peace in freedom and prosperity or a peace which leads to the loss of the country within this year".

P.M. KHIEM ON CABINET'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN 1970

Saigon, January 29. - On the occasion of Tan Hoi Lunar New Year, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem sent Tet wishes to his fellow-countrymen through the national Radio and Television systems. He also presented achievements scored by the RVN government in the past year and his Cabinet action program for 1971.

Prime Minister Khiem made known that early in 1970 the RVN government launched the Pacification-Development campaign aimed at eliminating Communists military forces, and ensuring security for the entire people.

According to the Prime Minister, by the end of December 1969, people living in insecure areas numbered 500,000 but at the end of 1970, this figure was reduced to only 70,000 persons.

In addition, over 500,000 people joined the Civil Self Defense Forces last year, bringing to over four million the total CSD strength in the country.

He recalled that in the Spring of last year the RVN and Allied Forces launched several search-and-destroy operations against Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia inflicting severe casualties to the enemy and destroyed most of their supply installations.

Prime Minister Khiem said the success of peace restoration projects could be measured by the increasing desperation among the enemy ranks. Last year over 32,000 Communists rallied the national cause.

Besides, he added, administrative official elections were organized at 10,118 out of 10,552 hamlets throughout the country and at 2,080 out of 2,151 villages.

In the field of rural and economic development Prime Minister Khiem said, the Miracle Rice species and new cultivation methods have brought prosperity to the rural people, and many tenants have become owners of the land they till.

However, Prime Minister Khiem stressed, we still have to solve several other critical problems concerning the war victims, war-invalids, war-dead families and inflation.

In conclusion, Prime Minister Khiem said in Tan Hoi year we must exploit achievements scored in the past and quickly solve remaining problems in accordance with three objectives put forth by President Nguyen Van Thieu: self-help, self-administration, and self-reliance.

RVN PROPOSES RELEASE OF DISABLED POW'S DETAINED BY BOTH SIDES

Saigon, January 29. - The RVN government last January 26 proposed the release of all North Vietnamese disabled and incurable-disease stricken prisoners of war detained in South Vietnam and called for reciprocal action from the other side.

A statement of the Foreign Affairs Ministry said that the RVN government cannot yet satisfactorily carry out the Geneva 1949 convention on the prisoners-of-war issue because the Hanoi authorities are still reluctant to give humanitarian treatment to prisoners of war.

The statement said right now the RVN is ready to receive all POW's released by North Vietnam authorities.

Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam made known that the statement was sent to Amb. Pham Dang Lam, chief of RVN delegation at the Paris peace talks, and the International Red Cross in Geneva to inform the other side of this new RVN initiative.

According to Min. Lam the number of North Vietnamese disabled POW's detained in South reached 813. The total number of North Vietnamese POW's was 9,189 excluding 28,256 Viet Cong.

233 COMMUNIST POWs REPATRIATED

Saigon, January 25. - The release of 37 North Vietnamese prisoners-of-war at Ben Hai River Sunday has raised to 233 the number of North Vietnamese troops and fishermen repatriated so far by the RVN government.

In the totalsix repatriations, 14 POWs out of the released have asked to be allowed to stay in the South and have been accepted by the RVN government.

THE LEGEND OF PRINCESS LIEU HANH

Adapted by George F. Schultz

The events described in this legend are said to have taken place during the reign of the Emperor Le Anh Tong, who ruled over Dai Viet from 1556 to 1573.

Since the exiled princess was a daughter of Ngoc Hoang, the Emperor of Jade, supreme deity of the Taoists, we may suppose that the story is of Taoist inspiration.

The legend is sometimes entitled "The Exiled Fairy" since the celestial princess was of course an immortal or fairy (tien).

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One autumn night, the Emperor Le Anh Tong had a strange prophetic dream. Under the high ceiling of a vast hall, the supporting columns of which were made of the four precious stones he saw two rows of mandarins, arrayed in magnificent court dress, standing attentively. In the center of the hall, at the top of the nine steps, Ngoc Hoang, the Jade Emperor, dressed in a magnificent tunic embroidered with golden dragons, was seated on his throne.

A young maiden then entered the hall; as she walked toward, the pearls dangling from the sash at her waist tingled harmoniously. Standing near the steps leading up to the throne, she held in her hands a jade cup in which she offered Ngoc Hoang the Wine of Longevity. As the Jade Emperor leaned forward to receive the cup, it fell from the maiden's grasp and crashed to the floor, breaking into a thousand pieces.

Immediately, a genie seated to the Jade Emperor's left was seen to open a large book and inscribe two characters therein. Two courtiers then conducted the unfortunate maiden towards a door over which was written in golden characters: "EXILE BY IMPERIAL DECREE." This inscription was followed by the character for "south (nam)". It was evident that because of her carelessness in serving the Jade Emperor the maiden had been banished from the Celestial Empire and thenceforth would have to seek an existence on the dark, unfriendly Earth below.

Emperor Le Anh Tong awakened with a start. The palace was filled with a bright light, and the sweet smell of incense invaded his chamber. A courtier was kneeling on the phoenix-embroidered mat; when ordered to speak, he informed the emperor that during the night the empress had given birth to a princess. She was named Lieu Hanh.

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As Princess Lieu Hanh grew to womanhood, she became famous throughout the Empire of Dai Viet for her perfect beauty. She preferred to live in a small palace at some distance from the court, which her father had been pleased to build for her there so that she might pursue her studies in quietude.

The princess loved to sit at the edge of a pool fringed with lotus blossoms, painting rustic landscapes or playing the lute or the flute. She would oftentimes compose verses in honor of the four seasons of the year, and these she would then sing to

her own accompaniment.

As the pure tones of the maiden's lute floated through the soft air of the garden, the Emperor would go there to listen. Then he would be struck by a sad melancholy which seemed to penetrate to his very soul. He would frown as he spoke.

"Why must you play these sorrowful airs?" he would ask.

Having no answer for her father's question, Princess Lieu Hanh would remain silent.

When the Emperor decided that it was time for the princess to marry, he selected a handsome young mandarin named Dao Lang to be her husband. Although she seemed quite happy with married life, three years later the princess took sick and died.

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After his wife's death, the mandarin was rarely seen at court. He spent most of his time in the princess's little palace, where he could sit at the edge of the lotus pool. He had kept a few locks of his wife's hair, which still retained the fragrance of her perfume. In the silent garden he seemed to hear again the pure tones of the lute of former times.

At the end of a year, as was the custom, Princess Lieu Hanh's coffin was opened so that her remains could be laid to rest in her permanent tomb. When the coffin was found to be empty, Dao Lang turned pale and was unable to speak or move.

The following day, the mandarin requested an audience with the Emperor and begged to be permitted to resign his position at court so that he might retire to his native village of Ton Huong, in Nghe An province. His resignation was accepted.

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On Dao Lang's return to his native village, he again visited the sites dear to the Immortals. The rumble of the sea was heard beneath the purple slopes of Mt. Hoanh Son, the home of flocks of colorful herons. The little village of Ton Huong was backed against a hill covered with fragrant plants. Dao Lang was fond of strolling about under the tall trees, where he could listen to the murmur of a hidden spring that seemed to accompany his reveries.

One day, the young widower set off along a path shaded by century-old sophoras; it led to an old temple, the half-broken steps of which lay hidden under piles of dead leaves. On a branch he saw a piece of red paper on which were written some verses in old characters, their meaning unclear. For a moment he thought he detected footsteps on the soft moss; but he saw no one.

The following day, he returned to the temple and waited. There was a mysterious rustle in the silent woods; then a little puff of wind bearing a familiar fragrance met his steps as he moved forward. Suddenly he perceived the shadow of the loved one of yesteryear appear under the dark vault of the sophoras.

The princess's approach was signaled by the sound of the pearls dangling from the sash at her waist. When they met, she told her husband of her origin and of how she had come to be exiled to the Earth.

"The period of my exile has come to a close," she said, "but the magic peace of the garden and the lotus pond will remain with me forever. Today we have met again; however, no one can say how long we may be able to remain together."

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In the shade of a mango tree, a son was born to the reunited couple; their happiness seemed complete. One evening, the princess played some old familiar melodies on the flute. The cold tones slipping from the instrument produced a feeling of nostalgia. When the last note had faded away, Dao Lang stood motionless, looking at the moonlight on a quiet bay.

From afar, as if from an unknown land, a serene melody rose through the air. Then it faded into space, although the effect seemed to remain. Lieu Hanh shuddered; laying aside the flute, she walked towards her husband.

"It is time to part again," she said simply. "Farewell."

Dao Lang gave no sign of comprehension. Slowly his wife receded towards the door and raised the curtain. The sound of her pearls tinkled harmoniously and then everything was silent.

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Their son became a famous scholar.

Dao Lang erected a small altar under the sophoras in the sacred woods that had witnessed his meeting with Princess Lieu Hanh. This altar is still to be seen in the vicinity of Ton Huong.

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Vol. V, No. 7
February 15, 1971.

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VIET-NAM BULLETIN

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VET-NAM BULLETIN

A weekly publication of the Embassy of Viet-Nam
2251 "R" Street, Washington D.C. 20008
Telephone: 234-4860

U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Washington, DC
Permit No.41866

BULK RATE

Vol. V, No. 7
February 15, 1971.