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U.S. Officials Report Hanoi
Has Doubled Infiltration

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18 — North Vietnam is sending nearly twice as many troops southward along infiltration routes in the early weeks of the dry season this year as it did in 1969, senior United States officials reported today. If the infiltration rate of the last month is sustained during the winter, these officials said, the total for the season will be comparable to that of two years ago, which the Administration estimated early this year at 200,000 men. Last year the infiltration dropped to 110,000 men, the officials said.

Administration officials say they are not certain, however, whether Hanoi will maintain the present rate. Public statements in North Vietnam and intelligence reports reaching here have underscored Hanoi's growing military and industrial manpower problems.

Giap's Report Cited

In this connection, Senior United States officials attached importance to a recent statement by North Vietnam's Defense Minister, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, that "the present struggle to liberate the South has raised striking and complicated problems, which must be solved in time in order to frustrate the enemy's new schemes and tricks."

General Giap made this statement in a report he delivered last September to the All-Army Conference on the Military Situation. The text became available here this week.

United States officials said they were unable to judge at this stage whether the increased infiltration was North Vietnam's response to the allied offensive in Cambodia last spring, which severed many enemy supply routes and destroyed food and arms caches, or an attempt by Hanoi to solidify its military position in anticipation of a new round of peace talks in Paris.

Although the heavy southward movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam since mid-October has been observed by United States reconnaissance planes and other means, officials say, it cannot yet be determined how the fresh troops would be used when they come out of the "pipeline."

Informed officials tend to believe that most of the new units are intended for Cambodia, where they will replace the men lost last spring during United States and South Vietnamese incursions. Others are believed to be headed for southern Laos and the Central Highlands in South Vietnam.

The officials note that it can take as long as three months for the North Vietnamese troops to reach their southern destination after entering the network of roads and tracks that make up the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

They say that except for new concentrations observed in southern Laos, presumably assigned to protect the infiltration trail, and a slight increase in North Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, the fresh units have not yet begun to emerge from the infiltration routes in sufficient numbers to indicate the enemy's ultimate strategy.

Increased Activity Expected

However, senior officials said, the Administration expects an increase in military activity next March or April in north-east Cambodia. But most American officials doubt that the Communists will attempt to sweep through the country and capture the capital of Pnompenh.

The officials expressed the view that Cambodian and South Vietnamese troops could handle the situation with the support of B-52 jet bombers, which have been attacking the infiltration trails since early autumn, and of United States tactical aircraft.

The Communists, whose strength in Cambodia is estimated at nearly 60,000, are expected to seek to establish new sanctuaries in the north-east regions to compensate for the losses they suffered last spring and to restore easy access to South Vietnam, the officials said.

Major Gains Ruled Out

American officials ruled out the possibility that the Communists would be able to rebuild their facilities in Cambodia to the level existing before the allied attacks last May and June. They said that today's thrust into Cambodia by a South Vietnamese task force was intended to prevent Hanoi from reconstructing its bases in Cambodia.

Some officials expressed concern, however, that some of the enemy units moving down the infiltration routes might be destined for the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. That area is considered the most vulnerable to Communist assaults. American commanders had long attributed this situation to the inadequate performance of Maj. Gen. Lumong Lan, the South Vietnamese commander in the area who was replaced two months ago, reportedly at United States insistence.

Officials said that North Vietnam's current infiltration effort began early in October, about a month earlier than usual. But, they said, the effects of a typhoon this month offset some of Hanoi's effort.