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OCTOBER 24, 1968

SEIZURE OF COMMUNIST MATERIEL TERMED CAUSE OF FIGHTING LULL

SAIGON -- SEIZURE BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND ALLIED FORCES OF 300 TONS OF COMMUNIST ARMS AND FOOD IN SEPTEMBER IS A FACTOR IN THE CURRENT LULL IN THE VIETNAM WAR, SAYS THE U.S. MILITARY COMMAND.

THE CAPTURED MATERIEL INCLUDED ENOUGH WEAPONS TO EQUIP A 600-MAN NORTH VIETNAMESE BATTALION AND SUFFICIENT FOOD TO FEED IT FOR FIVE MONTHS.

"LOSS OF THIS MATERIEL AND FOOD HAS UNDOUBTEDLY HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENEMY'S ABILITY TO INITIATE OR SUSTAIN COMBAT IN CERTAIN AREAS," U.S. MILITARY HEADQUARTERS SAID OCTOBER 23.

ACCORDING TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT, THE MAJORITY OF THE CACHES DISCOVERED WERE IN THE NORTHERNMOST PROVINCES AND AREAS AROUND SAIGON, WHERE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF ENEMY ACTIVITY WAS REPORTED IN THE SAME PERIOD.

THE LIST INCLUDED: 1,125 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS, 50 CREW-SERVED WEAPONS, FOUR ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS, 500 ROCKETS, 3,700 MINES, NINE MORTARS, NINE FLAME THROWERS, 11,000 HAND GRENADES AND RIFLE GRENADES, 5,854 ROCKET GRENADES, 18,000 ROUNDS OF MORTAR AMMUNITION, APPROXIMATELY 1,800,000 ROUNDS OF SMALL ARMS AMMUNITION AND 5,130 KILOGRAMS (11,400 POUNDS) OF TNT.

ABOUT 135 TONS OF RICE AND THREE TONS OF SALT WERE ALSO SEIZED.

FOR NORTH VIETNAM THE LOSS REPRESENTED NOT ONLY A LOSS OF FIGHTING POTENTIAL, BUT A WASTE OF MATERIEL AND MANPOWER TO PRODUCE AND TRANSPORT IT TO NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

SUPPLIES DESTINED FOR THE SAIGON REGION MUST BE TRANSPORTED BY PORTER FROM THE TRI-BORDER AREA OF LAOS, NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM OVER APPROXIMATELY 650 KILOMETERS OF JUNGLE TRAIL.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT IT WOULD TAKE 172 NORTH VIETNAMESE PORTERS ABOUT 42 DAYS TO TRANSPORT THE 5,130 KILOGRAMS OF CAPTURED TNT FROM THE TRI-BORDER AREA TO THE SAIGON REGION.

FROM RECENT RADIO HANOI BROADCASTS, IT IS KNOWN THAT LEADING POLITBURO MEMBERS ADVOCATE A PROTRACTED GUERRILLA BATTLE IN LIEU OF ANY STRONG CONCESSIONS THEY MIGHT HOPE WOULD BE MADE BY THE UNITED STATES IN THE CURRENT PARIS TALKS.

NORTH VIETNAMESE INFILTRATION INTO THE SOUTH, IN THE MEANTIME, IS GREATER SO FAR IN 1968 THAN IN THE FOUR PRECEDING YEARS, AND MANY MORE CACHES OF SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN FOUND THIS YEAR THAN IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1967.

NOT TOO FAR FROM SAIGON, A COMPLETE FIELD HOSPITAL WAS FOUND, AUTHORITIES HERE REPORTED, INDICATING LONG-RANGE PLANNING IN HANOI, AND CLOSE COOPERATION ON THE LOCAL LEVEL.

IT IS THE ALLIES' STRATEGY HERE TO SEEK OUT SUCH SUPPLIES AND INSTALLATIONS, AND TO DESTROY THEM AND KEEP THE ENEMY OFF BALANCE SO THAT THE PREDICTED THIRD-PHASE OFFENSIVE CANNOT BE LAUNCHED AGAINST THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE URBAN AREAS.

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