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POSTWAR PAVN -- SPECIAL STUDY -- September 1975

A. BACKGROUND. THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO THE COMMUNISTS ON 30 APRIL 1975 RESULTED IN NORTH VIETNAM'S (NVN) INHERITANCE OF VAST AMOUNTS OF AMERICAN WAR MATERIEL AND EQUIPMENT RUNNING INTO BILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS. ADDED TO THE FACT THAT IT NOW HAS THE LARGEST FORCE AND STRONGEST MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, NVN NOW RANKS AS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND OPERATIONALLY EXPERIENCED FORCES IN THE WORLD TODAY.

B. GROUND FORCES:

(1) IN ADDITION TO NAVAL AND AIR FORCES, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY (NVA) CONSISTS OF THE REGULAR ARMY, THE REGIONAL FORCES, THE MILITIA AND SELF-DEFENSE FORCES, AND THE RESERVES. ALTHOUGH THE REGULAR ARMY IS A WELL-ORGANIZED, WELL-EQUIPPED, AND BATTLE-TESTED FORCE READILY ADAPTABLE TO CONVENTIONAL OR UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE, ITS OVERALL COMBAT CAPABILITY PROBABLY HAS BEEN REDUCED CONSIDERABLY

BY THE COMMITMENT OF NVA TROOPS TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HOWEVER, THE MANPOWER REPLACEMENT POOL IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE DEPLETED. THE REGIONAL FORCES (PROVINCIAL FORCES), ARE BETTER ARMED THAN THE MILITIA AND ARE FULL-TIME "SECOND STRING" SOLDIERS. THEY ARE ESTIMATED TO BE ORGANIZED ON THE BASIS OF ONE BATTALION PER PROVINCE, EXCEPT IN SOUTHERN NORTH VIETNAM WHERE THE PROVINCES HAVE REGIMENTAL-SIZE UNITS. THEY ARE NORMALLY DEPLOYED ONLY WITHIN THEIR HOME PROVINCE, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE MOBILE AND CAN BE DEPLOYED AS REQUIRED. BOTH THE MILITIA AND SELF-DEFENSE FORCES ARE PART-TIME ELEMENTS OF THE "HOME GUARD." THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE. WHILE THE MILITIA IS ORGANIZED ON A PROVINCIAL BASIS, THE SELF-DEFENSE UNITS ARE FORMED IN SQUADS, PLATOONS, AND COMPANIES, AND ARE LOCATED IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES, FACTORIES AND PLANTS, MERCHANT SHIPS AND TRAWLERS, AND WHERE NO PROVINCIAL BASIS FOR A MILITIA ORGANIZATION EXISTS. IN WARTIME, THESE LIGHTLY-ARMED, PART-TIME UNITS CAN BE CALLED UPON TO ASSIST THE REGULAR FORCES. THERE IS ALSO A LARGE POOL OF RESERVE FORCES WITHIN NORTH VIETNAM. THIS POOL FORMS A READY RESERVE FOR THE NVA BUT CAN ALSO BE CALLED UPON TO PROVIDE CADRE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE MILITIA AND SELF-DEFENSE FORCES.

(2) THE NVA IS A WELL TRAINED, COMBAT-EFFECTIVE FORCE CAPABLE OF COORDINATED DIVISION-LEVEL OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE CONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS, AS WELL AS SUSTAINED GUERRILLA CAMPAIGNS. IT IS CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY AND REPELLING AGGRESSION BY NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. OTHER THAN THE PRC. IT IS CAPABLE OF INVADING AND DEFEATING MILITARY FORCES OF OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, EXCEPT WHERE LOCAL NONCOMMUNIST FORCES RECEIVE EXTERNAL REINFORCEMENTS AND SUPPLY. WITH COMBAT-TRAINED PERSONNEL INURED TO PHYSICAL HARDSHIP, THE NVA IS CAPABLE OF HIGH-LEVEL GUERRILLA WARFARE AND PARASITARY ACTIVITY IN LAOS, CAMBODIA, AND THAILAND, AND CONVENTIONAL WARFARE IN SELECTED AREAS. LEADERSHIP IS DEDICATED AND CAPABLE, COHESIVE AND DISCIPLINED ORGANIZATION ASSURES LOYALTY THROUGH TIGHT PARTY CONTROL. PRINCIPAL LIMITATIONS ARE CONTINUING DEPENDENCE ON THE U.S.S.R. AND THE PRC FOR MAJOR ITEMS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

(3) DRV MILITARY STRENGTH:

ARMY:	624,000
NAVY:	3,000
AIR FORCE:	10,000
MILITIA:	1,600,000 - CH = 2M.
PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL FORCES:	50,000

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, THERE ARE OVER 1,000,000 WELL-TRAINED FORMER RVNAF AND POLICE PERSONNEL NOW UNDER DRV/PRG CONTROL. ALSO

AVAILABLE ARE APPROXIMATELY 2,000,000 FORMER PEOPLE'S SELF-DEFENSE FORCE (PSDF) PERSONNEL WHO HAVE HAD SOME TYPE OF MILITARY TRAINING. THIS NEW SOURCE OF MANPOWER COULD BE ASSIMILATED INTO THE REGULAR FORCES IN THE EVENT OF FUTURE HOSTILITIES. SINCE THE TAKEOVER OF SVN, THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS THAT A NUMBER OF SELECTED PERSONNEL FROM THIS GROUP ARE BEING UTILIZED IN BILLETTS REQUIRING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, I.E., AIRCRAFT PILOTS, MECHANICS AND IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

C. AIR FORCE: THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE (NVAF) IS A HIGHLY PROFICIENT, WELL-EQUIPPED, AND COMBAT EXPERIENCED UNIT. IT HAS A PERSONNEL STRENGTH OF APPROXIMATELY 10,000 AND AN AIRCRAFT STRENGTH OF OVER 300 COMMUNIST MANUFACTURED AIRCRAFT AND A NUMBER OF CAPTURED U.S. AIRCRAFT. ALTHOUGH HOMEBASED PRIMARILY AT THE NORTHERN AIRFIELDS, THE OVER 300 TACTICAL FIGHTERS IN THE AIR FORCE CAN DEPLOY TO ANY ONE OF AT LEAST TWENTY JET-CAPABLE AIRFIELDS IN THE COUNTRY WITHIN A VERY SHORT TIME FRAME. OF THESE FIGHTERS, THE MIG-21 COMPRISES THE PRIMARY AIR DEFENSE THREAT, ALTHOUGH THE MIG-19'S AND THE MIG-17'S ARE EFFECTIVELY INTEGRATED INTO THE OVER-ALL AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. THE PRIMARY OFFENSIVE THREAT TO AIR ACTIVITY ALONG THE NVN PERIPHERY WILL COME FROM THE NVAF MIG-21'S, OF WHICH THERE ARE OVER 70, INCLUDING IN EXCESS OF 20 ALL-WEATHER, EXTENDED RANGE FISHBED J MODELS. THE NVAF ALSO POSSESSES A MODEST LIGHT BOMBER FORCE OF 6 IL-28/BEAGLES AND A SMALL NUMBER OF TACTICALLY CONFIGURED AN-2/COLTS. AT LEAST 37 F-5 AND 02 A-67 AIRCRAFT WERE CAPTURED DURING THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM. AIR TRANSPORT CAPABILITY IS ADEQUATE FOR NVN NEEDS AND INCLUDES A VARIETY OF LIGHT AND HEAVY FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS. PRIOR TO THE FALL OF SAIGON, THE NVAF FLEW THE BULK OF FLYABLE A-37'S TO THAILAND, SO AN APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF FLYABLES IS PROBABLY LESS THAN FIFTY PERCENT OF THE 02 IN QUESTION. THE NVAF COULD PROBABLY OPERATE AND MAINTAIN APPROXIMATELY 15-20 AIRCRAFT IN A HIGH STATE OF EFFICIENCY TO EXPLOIT A MILITARY OPPORTUNITY BY STRIPPING PARTS FROM NON-FLYABLE AIRCRAFT. OVER A PERIOD OF A FEW YEARS THIS NUMBER SHOULD DIMINISH AS THE USAGE FACTOR GOES UP UNLESS MEANS ARE DEVELOPED TO DUPLICATE SPARE PARTS. THERE ARE OVER 400 CAPTURED UH-1 HELICOPTERS IN THE HANDS OF THE NVAF. THIS REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT FORCE IN PROVIDING MOBILITY TO GROUND FORCES AND PROVIDING LOGISTICS SUPPORT. THESE AIRCRAFT COULD BE FLOWN WITH A MINIMUM OF TRAINING BY NVAF PEOPLE. BY SHEER NUMBERS ONLY, THEY ARE CAPABLE OF FLYING THESE CHOPPERS FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

D. NAVAL FORCE: THE NORTH VIETNAMESE NAVY IS A SMALL COASTAL PATROL FORCE WITH A MODEST CAPABILITY FOR SURPRISE CRUISE MISSILE (SSYN) OR TORPEDO BOAT ATTACK. IT HAS A PERSONNEL STRENGTH OF

ARTILLERY, VEHICLES, AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT HAVE BEEN PROVIDED IN THIS WAY. THIS FOREIGN LOGISTIC SUPPORT HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN MAKING THE NVA THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. CURRENT SUPPLY LEVELS, THE ADEQUACY OF TRANSPORT SYSTEMS, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUPPLY AND MAINTENANCE SYSTEM POSE NO BINDING LIMITATIONS ON NVA OPERATIONS. GIVEN THE NVA'S LACK OF MATERIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY, SIGNIFICANT DECREASES IN SOVIET AND CHINESE MILITARY AID WOULD EVENTUALLY DEGRADE OVERALL MILITARY CAPABILITIES.

(3) NORTH VIETNAM'S SHIPYARDS ARE BELIEVED CAPABLE OF PRODUCING SOME SMALL PATROL CRAFT AND PROVIDING ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. THE HAIPHONG NAVAL BASE HAS THE BEST EQUIPPED REPAIR YARD; HOWEVER, EXTENSIVE REPAIRS MUST BE PERFORMED IN THE PRC. THE TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON EXTERNAL SOURCES FOR SHIPS, ARMAMENTS, ELECTRONICS, AND SPARE PARTS IS A MAJOR AND CONTINUING LOGISTICAL PROBLEM.

(4) THERE IS NO INDIGENOUS AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY, ALL AIRCRAFT BEING PROCURED FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES. THERE IS BELIEVED TO BE A LIMITED BUT FULL-RANGE AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE CAPABILITY AT PHUC YEN AND THREE OTHER MAJOR BASES. CHINESE MAINTENANCE FACILITIES ARE NO LONGER CONSIDERED NECESSARY. MINOR SERVICING CAN PROBABLY BE PERFORMED AT ALL NORTH VIETNAMESE AIR BASES. DESPITE THE COMPLETE ABSENCE OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTION, THE AIR FORCE IS AMPLY SUPPLIED WITH WAR MATERIAL BY ITS COMMUNIST ALLIES.

(5) THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE BELIEVED CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING MOST OF THE VAST AMOUNT OF U.S. WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT NOW UNDER THEIR CONTROL. MOST OF THESE WERE CAPTURED OR SURRENDERED TO COMMUNIST FORCES INTACT AND IN WORKING ORDER. FOR EQUIPMENT REQUIRING MAINTENANCE, SPARE PARTS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY AVAILABLE FROM ABANDONED SOUTH VIETNAMESE DEPOTS AND WAREHOUSES. HOW RAPIDLY THESE STOCKS ARE DEPLETED WOULD DEPEND UPON THE UNKNOWN, THE ACTUAL AMOUNT OF SPARE PARTS AVAILABLE AND THE ABILITY OF THE COMMUNISTS TO MATCH THE WIDE ASSORTMENT OF SPARE PARTS WITH END ITEMS. REPAIRS, NEVERTHELESS, CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH CANNICALIZATION OR COULD BE HOME-PRODUCED FOR ITEMS WHICH COULD BE EASILY MANUFACTURED.

F. MISSILES: THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE BELIEVED TO POSSESS AS MANY AS 250 SOVIET SA-2/GUIDELINE SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE OVERSEEN LAUNCHERS WITH AN INVENTORY OF FOUR MISSILES FOR EACH LAUNCHER. SINCE JANUARY 1973, THE SOVIET SA-3/GOA SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE OVERSEEN HAS ENTERED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SAH INVENTORY. ESTIMATED RANGE FROM 16 TO 32 LAUNCHERS WITH EIGHT MISSILES FOR EACH LAUNCHER. IN ADDITION, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE INVENTORY INCLUDES A LARGE NUMBER OF SOVIET SA-7/GRAIL SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES

APPROXIMATELY 3,000, WITH SOME 1,700 PERSONNEL SERVING AFLOAT. ITS INVENTORY INCLUDES SOME 65 CRAFT OF COMMUNIST MANUFACTURE, 50 OF WHICH ARE AUXILIARY TYPE. THE COMBATANT ELEMENTS CONSIST OF SMALL, PATROL-TYPE VESSELS, INCLUDING SO-1-CLASS SUBMARINE CHASER, KONGAR GUIDED MISSILE PATROL BOATS, PATROL TORPEDO BOATS, AND GUNBOATS OF THE SHAYON/SHANGHAI II CLASS. THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM HAS PROVIDED THE NAVY ACCESS TO SEVERAL HUNDRED ADDITIONAL CRAFT, MOST OF WHICH ARE RIVER PATROL BOATS. HOWEVER, THE ADDITION OF CAPTURED GVN BLUE WATER NAVY SHIPS WILL ENHANCE THE NAVY'S FLEXIBILITY AND RANGE.

E. LOGISTICS:

(1) THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF REAR SERVICES IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROCUREMENT, STORAGE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ARMED FORCES. SUBORDINATE DIRECTORATES UNDER THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF REAR SERVICES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDLING SPECIFIC LOGISTIC FUNCTIONS, SUCH AS QUARTERMASTER AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES, PETROLEUM, AND ARMAMENT. THE MUNITIONS DIRECTORATE, FOR EXAMPLE, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPERVISING DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

(2) WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CAPTURED U.S. MATERIEL, PRACTICALLY ALL OTHER MILITARY MATERIEL USED BY THE NVA HAS BEEN IMPORTED FROM THE SOVIET UNION OR THE PRC, AND MOST HAS BEEN TRANSPORTED BY RAIL ACROSS CHINA. MODERN EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING WEAPONS, ANTIAIRCRAFT