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SOUTH VIETNAM EXPECTS TO BE ABLE TO TAKE OVER OWN DEFENSE (180)

CANBERRA--THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM WILL BE FULLY ABLE TO TAKE OVER ITS DEFENSE WITHIN TWO OR THREE YEARS, IN THE OPINION OF MINISTER WITH OUT PORTFOLIO DR. PHAN QUANG DAN.

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB HERE DECEMBER 16, DR. DAN SAID "IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS THE AMERICANS HAVE DECIDED TO PULL OUT 100,000 TROOPS. WITHIN TWO OR THREE YEARS WE WILL BE FULLY ABLE TO TAKE OVER.

"RIGHT NOW WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, BUT THERE ARE MANY NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN THE SOUTH AND IT WILL TAKE US TWO OR THREE YEARS TO BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THESE TROOPS, BUT IN THE MEANTIME WE WANT TO SEE PEACE THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS, BUT AS LONG AS THERE IS NO AGREEMENT AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE WE MUST DEFEND OURSELVES.

DR. DAN SAID MORE EMPHASIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN PLACED ON THE VIETNAMESE ARMY AND ON NEUTRALIZING COMMUNIST CADRES. HE SAID THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT THIS WAR WAS TO HAVE LIGHTLY ARMED COUNTER GUERRILLAS AND A STRONG POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, BUT ON THE WHOLE THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT HAD ACHIEVED ITS AIM OF STABILIZING SOUTH VIETNAM. ITEM

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