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Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War  
in South Vietnam

Paper No. 101

Follow-up interrogation of  
an officer of the North Vietnamese  
Army, of the 98th Support Regiment.

Source: A LAO commissioned officer from the interrogation of a North Vietnamese Army (NVNA) officer who defected to the LAO Armed Forces (FAR) in 1967. Source joined the NVNA in 1959. Came to Laos with the 98th Regiment in May 1964. Worked with the Pathet Lao (PL) political officer.

1. Summary: The 98th NVNA Regiment moved into Laos between April and December 1964 bringing with it supplies to be used in the building of Route 110. It was later joined by another three-battalion regiment and in March 1965 the combined force was designated as the BINH TRAM 5. A permanent headquarters was established in Cambodia in November or December 1966. The headquarters has a CW radio. Intragroup communication is by written message.

2. The 98th NVNA support regiment started leaving THANH HOA, North Vietnam, for Laos in April 1964, and Source estimated, all three battalions of the regiment were in place along what is now Route 110 before the end of 1964. The battalion travelled in groups of about 40 men. The first group, riding in two trucks, travelled for two days to reach BAN ILENG (unlocated) on the Lao border. The group stayed there for three days before moving by truck to TCHEPONE. The trip from THANH HOA to TCHEPONE, with travelling done only during daylight hours took about two weeks. From TCHEPONE, the men continued the trip on foot passing through BA BAC and BAN VANG DIEP (unlocated) and arriving in the BAN SEMPO area in late June or early July 1964. The first group marked trees as it went along to leave a trail for succeeding groups to follow. Only about eight of the 40 men in the first group were armed. Each man in the regiment carried about 40 kilograms of cargo. The cargo included shovels, picks, crowbars, machetes, hoes, hammers, dynamite, canned milk, rice, and dried and canned fish.

3. Another regiment, made up of three construction battalions, had reinforced the 98th Regiment by February 1965. The new regiment had about 1000 men, primarily new recruits who although between the ages of 18 and 20 had engineering or road construction experience. In March 1965 the six-battalion construction group was given the name BINH TRAM (jungle military post) 5. A permanent headquarters for BINH TRAM5 was established in Cambodia in November or December 1966. Previously, the headquarters had been moved from place to place in the area of Route 110 to avoid air strikes, and never kept in one place more than two weeks. Source visited the headquarters at least once a month.

4. The headquarters of BINH TRAM 5 has a CW radio about 22 inches wide, 14 inches deep and 12 inches high. Its antenna is about 10 meters high. Source did not know its operating frequencies, the type of code used or to whom

messages are sent. Radio contacts are daily at 0700 and 1500 hours and once during the night. Source assumed the radio messages are concerned with the supply situation and probably also air strike damage. A switchboard with 15 telephones serves the headquarters complex. Communication within BIN TRAM 5 is through written messages carried by couriers assigned to each company.