

VIET—From Page A1

New Phase Predicted In Vietnamese War

heavily armed than the South Vietnamese units they face.

He estimated Viet Cong strength at, somewhere between 28,000 and 34,000 men—enough to experiment with new tactics and learn whether they can face government units on an equal basis over a period of several days.

So far, he said, the fighting at Binh Gia has cost government forces 200 dead, 190 wounded and 65 missing against reports of 140 dead Communists. The battle still may not be over.

This drawn-out battle was the fourth which confirmed captured documents expressing Red hopes for escalating the civil war beyond the hit-and-run stage, according to the spokesman.

The spokesman said the Viet Cong forces around Binh Gia only recently had marched into surrounding Phuoc Tuy Province, a sparsely populated region of swams, rubber plantations and a few rice paddies.

"Evidence shows they probably intend to stay and contest the Province," he said. Thus far the struggle had been favorable for the enemy, but 3000 government troops still searched the area in hope of bringing the Communists to battle, he said.

A U.S. Army enlisted crewman was wounded by ground fire in Phuoc Tuy yesterday while flying in one of 30 helicopters carrying search troops. That search failed to uncover any guerrillas and only two were seen today. Both were captured, the first Communist prisoners taken since the campaign began on Dec. 28.

The spokesman said the Viet Cong obviously had moved a regimental headquarters into Phuoc Tuy Province where there were no Red troops before November. The Province is ideal for the guerrillas, he said, because of the jungle which covers their hiding places.

He said the Viet Cong also may hope to link Phuoc Tuy with the north Communist zones, completing a ring of

rebel-held territory around Saigon.

He also said they might be trying to lure government troops out of the Hop Tac pacification program around Saigon. The American command pins most of its hopes for an eventual turn in the war on this program.

Vietnamese sources reported North Vietnamese political officers have been infiltrating into South Viet-Nam in recent months to assure continued Communist domination of the so-called "national liberation front."

U.S. Toll in Viet-Nam Put at 1173 in 1964

SAIGON, Jan. 6 (AP)—U.S. official sources announced today that American battle casualties in the South Vietnamese guerrilla war in 1964 totaled 1173, including 138 killed.

This compared with 615 casualties, including 107 killed, in the previous three years of American involvement.