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Viet Communists Capture

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The North Vietnamese have captured at least \$5 billion worth of American military equipment and facilities in their conquest of South Vietnam—making them the heavyweight of Indochina and a power to be reckoned with in Asia.

Hanoi's victorious commanders are now in a better position than ever to wage industrial rather than guerrilla warfare, with modern weapons like American tanks lessening their need to rely on the stealth of small bands of soldiers.

The new Vietnam also could end up with the premier air force in its part of the world, but this possibility is clouded by the uncertainty of how many South Vietnamese aircraft were flown into Thailand and who will get them ultimately.

Late yesterday, reports out of Bangkok said 125 South Vietnamese air force aircraft had landed at bases in Thailand carrying refugees. Most of the planes set down in Utapao, old home of American B-52s.

American C-141 jet transports quickly began flying out the 2,700 South Vietnamese civilian and military refugees who reached Thailand by the hastily organized airlift. Their next stop was Guam.

Thai government officials, fearful of offending Vietnam, pressed the American government to remove the South Vietnamese as quickly as possible.

Deepened fears about the military might of Vietnam also are believed to be behind the Thai government's threat to impound the American-made planes that landed in Thailand and return them to the Provisional Revolutionary Government, in Saigon.

But Philip C. Habib, as-

sistant secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific affairs, told the Senate Judiciary refugees subcommittee yesterday that the planes ese into Thailand belong to ese into Thailand belong to the United States and cannot be given to another government.

The U.S. Air Force is prepared to fly the aircraft out of Thailand once the State Department gives the word. The F-5 fighters and helicopters can be dismantled and put inside C-5 transports.

At least 27 F-5s, 1 C-47 transports and helicopters mined number of C-130 transports and helicopters were in the mix of 125 aircraft that had arrived in Thailand from South Vietnam yesterday and Tuesday.

No matter how big an air force the new Vietnam ends up with, it will be a powerful military force.

Military officials here predict Vietnam's victorious military leaders will resist the temptation the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) succumbed to—relying on helicopters to take them into battle by day rather than on punishing marches to the objective by night.

If these predictions are correct, then the new Vietnam will stand ready to wage either guerrilla or industrial warfare—twin objectives the American force in Vietnam never really achieved.

U.S. commanders kept talking about the need to take the night away from the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, but never did it.

In waging industrial-type warfare, the two Vietnams could probably go to battle with at least 1,000 tanks—five times as many Thailand could field and about as many as Great Britain has in its inventory.

South Vietnam had be-

tween 500 and 600 American made M-48 and M-41 tanks and North Vietnam about 900 Soviet-supplied tanks. Even allowing for losses and taking apart some of the tanks to repair others, it seems certain 1,000 battle-ready American and Soviet tanks—with plenty of ammunition—would be available.

Their victory also gives the Communist leadership lots of extra firepower, thanks to the capture of more than 1,000 big American artillery pieces—most likely including over 100 of the giant 175-millimeter guns.

The Pentagon believes relatively little artillery ammunition was blown up by the retreating South Vietnamese troops.

Military specialists here took some small comfort yesterday from the belief that Vietnam could not make the spare parts for some time to keep its armor and aircraft operating indefinitely.

However, the Soviet Un-

ion and China could decide to manufacture the parts needed for American weaponry. The Vietnamese—like the Israelis before them—could fix, patch and improve in the meantime to maximize the effectiveness of their newly captured load of American arms.

Other major military gains for the North Vietnamese are the bases and communications systems they captured largely intact. Camranh Bay, for example, is a modern military commander's dream with its complex of air strips, deep-water port, barracks and repair shops.

The Pentagon estimates that the North Vietnamese captured \$1 billion in facilities at American-built bases like Camranh Bay. This figure is not the price of building those facilities—just the estimated worth as they stand today.

The rest of the \$5 billion in American military facilities and arms lost to the North Vietnamese consists, according to the Pentagon:

\$5 Billion In U.S. Weaponry

between \$2 billion and \$3 billion in combat weaponry ranging from fighter-bombers to rifles; \$500 million in spare parts and engines in storage areas like Danang and Bienhoa air bases; \$200 million to \$300 million in ammunition; \$20 million in fuel and lubricants.

For fear South Vietnamese pilots might get out of American control and bomb distant targets. That American policy-makers wanted to keep off-limits, the United States never gave Saigon long-range fighters and never trained the Vietnamese in aerial refueling or gave them fighter-bombers with that capability.

Thus, the new pilots who will fly captured American-made planes will not be able to fly too far.

The F5s and A-3Fs Saigon had, loaded with bombs, have a combat radius of only about 300 miles—depending how much they carry. In the dogfight role, the F-5E is so short-ranged that it is basically a home-defense aircraft.

Aviation specialists said yesterday that it would be a major and unlikely undertaking for the North Vietnamese to modify captured American aircraft for mid-air refueling—a capability essential for bombing distant targets.

Yesterday, the Pentagon and State Department were busy trying to shut off the supply pipeline to Vietnam.

The Pentagon estimates between \$80 million to \$100 million in weaponry was en route to Vietnam, mostly by ship when the Saigon government surrendered. The Military Sealift Command was going over the ship manifests to determine the cargo on each ship and then radioing orders to the skipper to steam toward a new destination.

Ammunition, for example, was being re-routed to Okinawa, where there were bunkers for storing it. Much of the other military equipment was ordered back home to such ports as Oakland, Calif.

“We’re trying to find out what’s still in the middle of the pond,” said one Pentagon official, “and decide the places to send them.”

Similarly, the Agency for International Development said last night that it was using authority in the Foreign Assistance Act and procurement regulations to rerout its cargo headed for Vietnam.

The cargo—mostly fertilizer, steel products, chemicals and machinery—was being taken off the ships at Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong.

In another executive action triggered by the collapse of South Vietnam, the Treasury Department yesterday placed a freeze on all South Vietnamese assets in the United States.

The order, effective at noon, means that no one in South Vietnam can withdraw funds for a U.S. bank account without the Treasury Department’s permission.

Also, no American can send no money to South Viet-

nam, even for humanitarian relief, without the treasurer’s approval.

The action was approved by the National Security Council. A similar embargo was ordered April 18 when Cambodia fell to Communist insurgents.

Gangland Figure Slain in Chicago

Reuter

CHICAGO, April 30—The brother of Sam Battaglia, reputed former head of Chicago’s crime syndicate, was killed last night in front of his home by an assassin using a gun fitted with a silencer, police said today.

Investigators in the Chicago Police Department said the murder of Anthony Battaglia, 61, was the first gangland-style killing in Chicago in several years. The investigators said they understand that the city’s crime bosses have ordered an all-out hunt for Battaglia’s killer and that the murder was “an outside job.”