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U.S. Guerrilla War Held in First Stages

By Saul Friedman

WASHINGTON — (CDN) Incredibly, the early stages of guerrilla warfare may have begun in the United States. Law enforcement officials and violence experts, watching the increases in bombings and attacks on police, are certain of it. And so are the self-proclaimed guerrilla revolutionaries in the growing American underground.

What no one knows is whether the current wave of guerrilla-style terrorism will be stopped short of extreme police-state measures or a full-blown, hit-run war.

"It is neither too romantic nor paranoid to suggest we are experiencing guerrilla warfare," said a high-ranking Justice Department official. "That is what is happening. But we are reluctant to admit it to ourselves or even think in those terms."

Quinn Tamm, a former

FBI official with a reputation as a moderate who runs the International Association of Chiefs of Police, has no such reluctance.

Already Here

"I think we're engaged in a type of guerrilla war," he said. "It is a situation police have never faced in this country. But it's here now."

At Brandeis University's Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence, Director John W. Spiegel, who previously has minimized the possibility of guerrilla-style action in this country, recently asked his staff to study the outbreaks of bombings and assaults on police and come up with new conclusions.

The staff of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee has begun a file labeled "Guerrilla Warfare."

And the FBI is strengthening its internal security desks throughout the country to concentrate on left-wing

and revolutionary groups among the young.

Conclusions that America is experiencing the opening of guerrilla-style warfare are based, in part, on the following evidence:

- The Treasury Department reports that more than 4500 bombings occurred throughout the nation between January, 1969, and April, 1970.

The Senate's permanent subcommittee on investigations, in a less exhaustive study, counted 1188 bombings and attempted bombings in the 18 months ended last July 9.

The committee said the frequency of bombings increased from 1.6 per day in 1969 to 3.1 per day this year.

Although bombings seem concentrated in the largest cities — New York, Chicago, and San Francisco — they also occurred in diverse places like Omaha, Minneapolis, Ames and Des Moines, Iowa; and Madison, Wis.

- So far this year more than 20 police officers have been killed — by snipers, bombers, and bushwackers — in unprovoked assaults, more than double the number for 1969.

Last year, the FBI said, 86 police officers were killed in the line of duty. And the average number of police deaths in the line of duty from 1962 through 1968 was 53. So far about 60 policemen have been killed this year.

Concerted Effort

An FBI statistical analyst said: "The killing of police officers now seems like a concerted effort."

The Justice Department official added that while attacks on police have occurred in past years, "they have become more frequent, and well-planned."

"There are several parallels between what is happening in this country and the war in Vietnam," the Justice Department official said.

"In Vietnam the communities are poor and the people ignorant and simply want to get along," he said. "The guerrillas terrorize the people into being neutral. The same thing is happening in the black ghettos. We can't get any respected black figure to come out in support of police officers or in condemnation of the attacks on police."

Tamm voiced the same complaint, he suggested that if the public does not back stronger police action to suppress the guerrilla actions, law enforcement officers will take matters into their own hands.

Tamm's police chiefs association is studying new "weapons systems" (a term that originated in the Defense Department during its debates on how best to deal with insurgents in South Vietnam), and it has a Justice Department grant to compile a data center of bombing and measures to combat bombers.