

DREW PEARSON

S. Viets Hinder U.S. Withdrawal

WASHINGTON — The Army has completed a secret study which could upset President Nixon's plan to pull more combat troops out of Vietnam. This disturbing document warns bluntly that the South Vietnamese army lacks the leadership, logistics and organization to take over the fighting from American troops.

Too many Commanders, the study states, are still chosen more for their political connections than for their military competence. Officers with good political credentials will often ignore orders from superiors who may not travel in the right circles.

The supply system is so snafued that essentials often don't reach the troops in the field. Some supplies get siphoned into the black market; some are simply misrouted. What gets through is so meager that combat commanders frequently avoid combat rather than expend their supplies. They're afraid the supplies may never be replaced.

At the enlisted level, South Vietnamese soldiers often are forced to steal food from the peasants, which is the wrong way to gain friends in the Viet Cong-ridden countryside. Many men desert, not because they're unwilling to fight but because they need to feed themselves and their families.

The South Vietnamese army has some crack units whose officers and men are as good as any in Asia. The ranger battalions, for exam-

ple, have proved themselves under fire. But in most units, according to the secret study, the leadership is so poor and is so low that they are far from ready to replace the Americans.

GRIM evidence has reached Washington that Russia is preparing for continued hostility along the remote Sinkiang border. Intelligence reports indicate, however, that the Kremlin is divided over how far to push the fighting against the Chinese.

There now seems to be little doubt that the Russians provoked the incidents. They selected the Sinkiang border when the Chinese are the most vulnerable. Not only do the Russians have swifter access to the border, but the mountain tribes in Sinkiang are anti-Chinese.

Some Red army marshals have urged using the border incidents as a pretext for knocking out the Chinese nuclear works at Lop Nor, less than 200 miles inside Sinkiang. The majority in the Kremlin, however, are reported to be opposed to all-out war with China. It fears a Soviet attack deep inside China would only arouse the 700 million population and unite it against Russia.

At present, there is a strong pro-Soviet faction in China. The Kremlin's strategy, apparently, is to provoke

trouble on the border and create tension inside China, hoping this will cause the downfall of the aging Mao Tse-tung. Then the pro-Soviet forces might get a chance to seize control of the Peking government.

Meanwhile, reinforcements have been rushed to the border and the local populace is receiving civil defense training. Throughout Russia, an anti-Chinese propaganda campaign is also preparing the people for continued trouble.

NOTE: Russia has been trying quietly to stop the Arab artillery attacks and commando raids on Israel. The Russians have enough trouble with the Chinese in the Far East, so they don't want the Arabs to involve them in another crisis now in the Middle East. The Russians have a historical aversion to getting embroiled on two fronts at the same time. So they are using their influence in Arab capitals, particularly Cairo, to keep the Arabs as peaceful as possible.

Two of the top ladies in government—Interstate Commerce Chairwoman Virginia Mae Brown and Federal Maritime Chairwoman Helen Delich Bentley—quietly settled a feud between their two agencies the other evening in a private railway car in the nation's capital. They were guests of C. R. Barfos, vice president of the B & O Railroad, at a very, very private dinner. The two ladies cordially agreed to stop the feuding over which agency should set the rates for transportation across international borders.

Sen. Ted Kennedy denied my story that he was familiar with Dyke Road, which he said he entered by mistake on the night of Mary Jo Kopechne's drowning. This column reported he and the late President Kennedy had used a secluded beach nearby belonging to the family of ex-congressman Perkins Bass. Bass rushed out with a denial, but he has now started to backpedal. Under reporters' questioning, he has now acknowledged the late John F. Kennedy had called for permission

to use the family beach while he was recuperating from his 1954 back operation. Bass asserts, however, that Kennedy would anchor his boat a short distance from the Bass Beach, therefore, that he technically didn't use it. The New York Times has also reported that both Jack and Ted Kennedy frequently came by boat to Chappaquiddick Island, therefore, that the senator must have been familiar with the island. . . . Sen. Kennedy also denied my report that his cousin Joe Gargan and friend Paul Markham had rustled up a boat to take him across the channel away from the scene of the accident that fateful night. Now F. Remington Ballou, a Providence, R.I., businessman, has turned up with an eye-witness account of seeing a boat with three men aboard crossing the channel around 2 a.m. He said the boat had doused its lights

The following morning, a 16-year-old boy reported his boat had disappeared during the night. He later found it tied up at the wrong place. . . . This column has learned that a Boston lawyer, Paul J. Redmond, has been retained as counsel for the five girls who attended the beach party with Mary Jo Kopechne. He once served as an assistant U. S. Attorney under Paul Markham, who was with Sen. Kennedy the night of the accident. Reached on the telephone, Redmond refused to answer any questions at all. He wouldn't say whether he was even acquainted with any of the Kennedys or any of their associates. His reply to every question was: "I have no comment on any aspect of this case."



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