

Hanoi Defector's Surprising Story

Saigon

One of the highest ranking officers to defect from the North Vietnamese army said yesterday that Communist forces have known of all planned allied military operations in Vietnam, including the Cambodian invasion, from one to four days ahead of time.

He said that since 1969 the targets of all B-52 raids generally have been known 24 hours in advance, although the warning time occasionally shrinks to as little as one hour.

Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Van Nang, alias Han Thanh, made his statements at a press conference arranged by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

QUESTIONABLE

In a press conference such as this, there is of course no way to assess whether the speaker is stating his true feelings or what he expects his audience would like to hear.

Government spokesman said the 46-year-old Vietnamese officer gave himself up

at a military outpost on the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh province on May 20. He was identified as deputy commander of Communist military Subregion 2, which includes Saigon. He said he had been in the army since 1945 and had been trained at the military academy in Hanoi.

Colonel Nang said advance notice of allied military plans is relayed to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong military units by COSVN, the Communist military headquarters for South Vietnam, which he said was located 14 to 15 kilometers north of the plantation town of Memot prior to the American invasion of Cambodia on May 1.

SILENCE

Queried about this alleged massive breach of United States and South Vietnamese military security, a U.S. military spokesman in Saigon said, "This is an intelligence matter. We cannot confirm or deny what the man said."

Colonel Nang attributed advance knowledge of the B-52 raids in particular to in-

tercepted radio transmissions but suggested an intelligence network directed by COSVN is responsible for much of the information on allied military plans.

The North Vietnamese officer, who is married, said he succeeded in moving his family to Saigon before turning himself in.

He said he was informed of coming allied incursions into his area of Cambodia as early as April 29, although the actual attack against his units did not occur until May 2.

OVERWHELMED

He said the units in his area of the Parrot's Beak, including three infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, a sapper company and a reconnaissance company, were ordered to defend the supply depot in their area but were overwhelmed by allied artillery and aircraft, losing two-thirds of their strength. He put the number of Communist killed and missing in the action at 1900 before the order to withdraw was received.

Colonel Nang said the allied invasion of Cambodia upset Communist plans for a May offensive in South Vietnam. His description of the planned campaign against South Vietnamese cities and towns fit what American intelligence sources as early as April had described as plans for "Campaign X."

The plans called not only for a drive against Saigon but also a campaign for assassinations of village and hamlet officials in the pacification program.

CHANGE

Colonel Nang said the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the Cambodian invasion resulted in cancellation of that operation in favor of a Communist drive into Cambodia intended to overthrow the government of Premier Lon Nol.

He made these additional points:

- As a result of the Cambodian invasion, the morale of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops is "really shaky and their belief in a military victory is diminished ver much."

- Due to heavy losses of supplies of food, ammunition and weapons, Communist forces no longer have the ability to mount a large-scale offensive.

- Communist units in Cambodia have suffered heavy losses.

- There are no Chinese Communist advisers in the field with North Vietnamese units, but during a visit to the general staff headquarters of COSVN prior to the 1968 Tet offensive he had met 16 Chinese advisers.

- Communist forces have complete information on announced plans for U.S. troop withdrawals but are not heartened by this because "it doesn't raise any hope for victory."

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