

New Enemy Units in Laos Said to Peril Allied Drive

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 17—High military sources reported today that two additional North Vietnamese regiments had moved into new positions in southern Laos in

what appeared to be a serious threat to advancing South Vietnamese troops.

The regiments, believed to total about 4,000 men, are reported to be operating just north of Route 9, along which the South Vietnamese are moving cautiously in their effort to disrupt the network of Communist supply trails.

The movement of the regiments, identified as units of the 320th North Vietnamese Division, coincided with increased indications that the North Vietnamese were also moving anti-aircraft weapons closer to the South Vietnamese troops in an effort to counter American air support.

Moving Out of Tchepone

Military sources here also reported that the North Vietnamese had begun to move some supplies out of a staging area that runs through and south of Tchepone, about 25 miles west of the Laotian-South Vietnamese border. They said the enemy, while bolstering defenses, appeared to be still uncertain of the ultimate range and objectives of the 10-day-old South Vietnamese operation.

The South Vietnamese troops today were reported to have penetrated a little deeper than previously estimated 14 to 15 miles inside Laos. Smaller reconnaissance units are said to be closer to Tchepone.

The reported movements of the enemy positions explain in part yesterday's statement by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, who said that while the operation in Laos was going well, there would be "some tough days ahead."

Allied spokesmen

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