

Report by Sen. Mondale

'Ominous' Viet Raid Letter

Washington

Senator Walter F. Mondale (Dem-Minn.) said yesterday he has letters from an American troop commander indicating U.S. forces planned a ground attack deep into the north early this year.

The raid apparently never was carried out.

But Mondale said if the facts are true it is an ominous development.

LANDINGS

The Pentagon, asked about the Mondale statement, said "there were no U.S. Marine amphibious landing in North Vietnam earlier this year, nor were any planned — ei-

ther U.S. Marine or U.S. Army."

Mondale quoted the letters, from an officer on a ship off Vietnam to a military friend, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In a letter dated February 7, Mondale said, the officer wrote his friend:

"I may get burned for telling you this, if they really do censor our mail, but you are a brother officer, but what they are planning for is a raid 50 miles or so north of the DMZ. Sounds like that might put us into North Vietnam, maybe?

"Well the thought is so pre-

posterous with experienced troops, let alone green ones, that I refuse to give it my attention. Nonetheless they are planning it, and I can't even go into the shop anymore because I don't have high enough clearance."

A Mondale aide said "shop" referred to an operational planning center.

LETTER

In a letter dated March 11, Mondale said the officer wrote his friend:

"Did I give you all the details? A two-company raid on the Vinh airfield, 100 miles north of the DMZ and a couple of miles inland. Don't know if they ever seriously

considered committing us — but the helicopters rehearsed daily and a Russian trawler shadowed us. That, plus the Cambodian venture we played in — close enough for me, thanks."

The Vinh airbase is a major facility which a Mondale aide said was used chiefly as a troop transit point. He said he did not know whether American POWs were held there.

The Mondale aide said other parts of the letters make clear the two companies were American troops, one of them under the command of the author of the letters.

Associated Press