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# Press Swarms Vietcong Session in

# Saigon

By Peter O'Laughlin

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TANSONHUT AIR BASE, April 12 (AP)—Saturday is a big day for the Vietcong in Saigon. They hold open house for the press.

Normally only a handful turn out, but this Saturday, as Vietcong and North Vietnamese armies move closer to the capital, the press corps turned up in force.

Joyal Maj. Phuong Nam, spokesman for the Vietcong, welcomes reporters at the gate, somewhat taken aback by their number—well in excess of 100.

"How is the mood in Saigon?" he beams.

Told the population is tense and frightened by the prospect of a North Vietnamese attack on the city, he giggles.

"Have some drink," he says, pointing to a table loaded with bottles of beer and orange soda pop.

Vietcong cameramen photograph newsmen photographing them.

Other Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers stand around in the shade of the former U.S. Air Force barracks, once known as Camp Davis.

In the recreation hall, Vietcong soldiers play pool on a table left behind by the Americans. A few tend the



Col. Yo Dong Giang, at the Vietcong news conference, condemns President Ford's request for aid to the 'Thieu clique.'

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well-kept vegetable gardens.

A fleet of American-made automobiles and jeeps, which once belonged to the U.S. Air Force, stand in the motor pool. "Share a ride," says a fading sign on the guardpost.

The presence of 240 North Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers, living in the middle

of Tansonnhut Air Base on the outskirts of Saigon, is one of the wars great anomalies.

They have been there for more than a year as part of the impotent four-party Joint Military Commission set up under the 1973 Paris cease-fire accords.

"Dear friends," begins Col. Vo Dong Giang to the reporters jammed into the lecture hall, "first of all I apologize for the arrangement. It's not so good, because we could not predict the number would be so many."

The colonel's remarks are

drowned out by a flight of South Vietnamese E-5 freedom fighters as they roar off to bomb his colleagues a few miles away.

He predicts the inevitable collapse of President Thieu's government and accuses the United States of

cept those who serve the dark schemes of the Thieu clique," he replies.

Vietcong policy, he said, "is to protect foreign residents living in South Vietnam."

Asked whether the North Vietnamese will attack the capital, he drags on his cigarette and says: "We don't know if victory is close or far, but it is certain."

He then warns that the People's Revolutionary Committee of Saigon has called for an uprising among the people. Some interpret this to be a signal that Vietcong sapper attacks will be seen in the future.

He is asked whether the South Vietnamese currency, the piaster, was being used in areas controlled by the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government and what the exchange rate was. This brings laughter, but the colonel takes it seriously.

"The revolutionary government has not yet had its own currency. Pending this, the PRG will respect the wealth, the money that people have. The present currency is considered valid."

The news conference breaks up. The Vietcong officers shake hands all round.

"See you again," says the smiling Phoung Nam.

Back in Saigon, the South Vietnamese government announces its displeasure with the press.

"Owing to the unruly behavior of the press, next Saturday's press conference will be limited to 16 people," a government spokesman says.

preparing once more to land troops in South Vietnam.

Reporters are concerned about what would happen to foreigners who might be trapped in Saigon if it were attacked.

"The Vietnamese people will maintain friendship with all Western friends ex-