

SEP 19 1975

PILOT FOR SAIGON CALLED RED AGENT

—SEP 19 1975

Bombed Thieu Palace in Last
Days—Trained in U.S.

NYTimes

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

HONG KONG, Sept. 18—The South Vietnamese Air Force pilot who unexpectedly bombed the presidential palace in Saigon last April was the son of a Vietcong official and had been a secret Communist agent for years, according to a Communist newspaper that has become available here.

At the time it was widely believed the pilot was infuriated at President Nguyen Van Thieu because his wife and baby were left behind when Da Nang was abandoned to advancing Communist troops without a fight.

President Thieu escaped unharmed in the attack involving an American-made F-5E jet fighter, but the incident added to the sense of panic in Saigon that eventually helped destroy the Thieu Government.

If accurate, the account in the Communist paper, South Vietnam—The Struggle, gives a rare glimpse into the workings of the Vietcong's secret apparatus.

'Lot of Comedy to Act'

According to the paper, which is described as the central organ of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, the pilot had had "a lot of comedy to act," especially during two years he spent in the United States for training.

Several months before the actual raid, the article said, he had received secret orders "to take advantage of any opportunity to bomb Thieu's Independence Palace and then fly to the liberated zone." Several times after he informed his contact that he would carry out the attack, his unit was moved too far from the Saigon area.

The pilot's name was Dinh Thanh Trung, the article said, and after his father, a district party secretary, was killed in 1963 in a Government attack in the Mekong Delta, he adopted the alias of Nguyen Thanh Trung. The alteration was made by "a close comrade" of his father's who also arranged to doctor their life stories.

Examined For A Year

Six years after the death of Mr. Trung's father, the article related, a Communist agent, identified only as "graying Comrade K," told him to enlist in the South Vietnamese Air Force. At the time he was a science student at Saigon University.

Mr. Trung's background and qualifications were examined for a year, the article said, and after that he was accepted.

The article reported that on the morning of the attack Mr. Trung was not scheduled to fly but volunteered at the last minute to fill in for another pilot who usually came to work late because his home was in Saigon and the squadron was based in Bien Hoa, 40 minutes drive away.

Most of the bombs missed the palace, the article conceded, but said it was because the pilot "wanted to avoid the servants' quarters."

After the fall of Saigon on April 30, Mr. Trung was reunited with his mother. She had never been told that he was working for the Communists.