

By Hanoi Reported

by Craig R. Whitney
Special to The New York Times

Saigon, South Vietnam, March 23 - Intelligence reports are said to show that the North Vietnamese have recently built up airfields in the southern part of their country and have been promising the Vietcong and their own troops that they will begin using bombers over South Vietnam soon.

Senior American analysts here are inclined to view such promises as propaganda. "They would add a new dimension to the war if it happened," one of them said today.

But, the South Vietnamese Air Force moved half a dozen

air force moved half a dozen F-5 fighter planes to Dunang recently to be ready if North Vietnamese MIG's should dash south across the demilitarized zone.

What the American analysts expect is a gradual upsurge of enemy military action inside South Vietnam - especially rocket and mortar attacks - more shellings of the Cambodian capital of Phnompenh, and a determined North Vietnamese attempt in northern Laos to push the defenders out of the old Long Tieng base.

Expect Summer Offensive

American specialists view the construction by the North Vietnamese of three 3,600-foot airfields, in addition to three operational MIG airfields below the 20th Parallel, as part of preparation for "something for which they expect us to retaliate by bombing," as one American put it today.

Senior American officials here now say that they expect the long-awaited enemy military offensive this year to come in the period from July to September and they believe it will be aimed at affecting the United States Presidential election.

They say that the offensive was scheduled to have taken place last month but that the Communists decided that they would have taken too many casualties if they had gone through with it at that time.

American military officers and civilian analysts here say that it is clear that the primary objective of the North Vietnamese strategy this year, as in the past, is South Vietnam. Though they do not believe an enemy offensive has yet begun, they say that the general level of Communist military activity is gradually increasing within South Vietnam. The best analysis here is that it will continue to mount over the next few months.

"They have found that targets in Laos and Cambodia are easier to hit," one official said. "Things have been pretty hard for them here in Vietnam this year, but they can pretty much romp around most of Cambodia, and there's really very little to stop them in Laos."

Between 6,000 and 9,000 North Vietnamese soldiers began pressing an attack on the Plaine des Jarres in Northern Laos last December and forced the Central Intelligence Agency in January to withdraw most of its equipment and helicopters from Long Tieng, the once-secret base 25 miles south of the plateau.

The Attack Is Resumed

After having effectively put the base out of action in mid-January, the attackers fell back. But a week ago they began pressing their offensive again, retaking most of the key positions on Skyline Ridge, which overlooks the northern side of the narrow Long Tieng valley.

"Weather has very seriously hampered our bombing there in the last few days," a military source here said, referring to both American and Laotian Government Air Force bombing in support of the defenders.

"When the weather breaks the other way ... " he began, and broke off.

"The North Vietnamese have made a strong decision to take the base this year," he said, "but that does not mean they have the capability to do it."

The American view is that the North Vietnamese are diverting men and materiel to

northern Laos as a way of putting pressure on the neutralist Government of Prince Souvanna Phouma to withdraw its consent to American bombing of the Communist infiltration network, which the enemy is widening this year in the southern Laotian panhandle.

Doubt Cambodia Takeover

The Americans feel that while the Communists are always capable of bringing pressure to bear on the ill-trained Cambodians to the south—as they did Tuesday, with the heaviest rocket attack of the war on Phnompenh—they do not intend to take over the country.

With South Vietnamese military capabilities already considerable and growing stronger every week, the Americans say, it is easier for the Communists to demonstrate their own strength elsewhere.

"They think maybe that they can embarrass us as easily in Cambodia or Laos as in Vietnam," an American official said. "I think their plans are guided by their desire to have a very direct influence on the American electoral process this year."

In South Vietnam, American analysts say they discern an enemy pattern of shellings rather than direct, large-scale ground assaults, but they say that the 80,000 troops of North Vietnamese divisions are in position to be committed quickly to action. Those divisions have moved recently or are moving into the Central Highlands and into the jungle mountains below the demilitarized zone.

Hitting Cambodian Lines

The South Vietnamese, for their part, have been pushing out into the jungles both in Eastern Cambodia, most recently with a 7,000-man force east of the Chup rubber plantation and south of the demilitarized zone, seeking to cut Communist supply lines and stem an offensive before it can start.

They have reported that they have seized more than 1,100 weapons and 25,000 gallons of gasoline in base areas in eastern Cambodia. "Each of those weapons was carried on somebody's back all those hundreds of miles from North Vietnam." An intelligence specialist said, "I think these spoiling operations couldn't have helped but disrupt their offensive plans."

The Communists retaliated yesterday by shelling the South Vietnamese rear base at Tay Ninh, blowing up five times as much gasoline as the South Vietnamese Army had seized in the two weeks before.

Shellings have also become