

U.S. Says Papers Show Enemy Planned a Trap

NYTimes

By FOX BUTTERFIELD
Special to The New York Times

APR 15 1972

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 14—Intelligence sources made available today what they described as secret enemy directives showing that the Communist offensive on the front north of Saigon was carefully planned last winter in Hanoi as a trap to draw the South Vietnamese Army away from populated areas near the capital and the Mekong Delta.

An order dated early last December and another believed to have been issued late in February outline a major campaign, to last for one to two months, that remarkably resembles the heavy fighting now under way in the Anloc area of Binhlong Province.

In an effort to save the besieged South Vietnamese Fifth Division there, the Government in Saigon has rushed in its last reserves of paratroops and the entire 21st Division from the lower Mekong Delta, 160 miles away.

Giap's Design Seen

American analysts describe the plan outlined in the document as a classic design by Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, the North Vietnamese Defense Minister and the architect of the French defeat at Dienbienphu in 1954.

The analysts believe that the call for a one-month to two-month offensive is about what the Communists are capable of mounting with their complex but limited logistics system.

Because of allied domination of the air and because of the preference of the North Vietnamese for fighting and living in the jungle rather than relying on roads, they must get their supplies into place before battle begins.

The orders were attributed to the Central Office for South Vietnam, which American analysts say is the North Vietnamese Politburo's office for directing the war in South Vietnam. It is believed to be headed by Pham Hung, the fourth- or fifth-ranking member of the nine-man Politburo, and to be in northeastern Cambodia.

Confident of Superiority

The two documents, made available today, are labeled COSVN Directive 42, dated early last December, and COSVN Directive 43, which is believed to have been issued in late February to amplify the earlier order.

The directives apply only to the area around Saigon and the Mekong Delta, not to the Central Highlands or the Quangtri region, where the Communists are now thought to have established separate command centers.

The authors of the docu-

ments appear confident that in the new fighting, which is compared in importance to the Tet offensive of 1968, the Communist main-force troops can easily defeat the South Vietnamese Army even though it "enjoys extensive United States air, fire and mechanized support." The authors say that South Vietnam's disastrous campaign in Laos last year proves that North Vietnam's army is superior.

The directives say that the offensive was originally scheduled to begin in early February—as American officials had repeatedly predicted—but was delayed for unspecified reasons.

In addition to "inflicting heavy losses on U. S. and Government forces" and "defeating the Vietnamization program," one of the original purposes of the offensive, according to the documents, was to "undermine President Nixon's political influence and render his visit to Peking in February a political failure."

The directives indicate that Hanoi counted heavily on American antiwar sentiment to limit the Nixon Administration's reaction to the offensive. The authors estimate that in the face of the attacks "the U. S. will continue its troop-withdrawal schedule and its reduction of aid to the Government."

Guerrillas' Weaknesses

The authors speak of serious weaknesses in the organization and strength of local Vietcong guerrillas, as contrasted with the North Vietnamese Army. "Recruitment of secret guerrillas has been totally inadequate," Directive 43 states. It also criticizes the dissemination of party orders as "inadequate and superficial" and accuses village cadres of relying on the North Vietnamese Army rather than building up local guerrilla units.

However, Directive 43 specifies that the attacks by regular troops must be preceded by a "spontaneous uprising" in villages and cities. The order warns the North Vietnamese commanders to refrain from showing themselves "until after the spontaneous uprising occurs."

Unlike the Tet offensive of 1968, when there were widespread though eventually abortive uprisings by guerrillas in South Vietnam's cities, there have been no incidents in the last two weeks in the urban areas.

American analysts are unsure whether this means that the Vietcong are too weak to carry out the directive of whether there has been a change in plan and the uprising will come later.

Directive 42 states that the "main theaters of war during this campaign" will be Tay Ninh, Binhlong and Binhduong provinces, north and west of Saigon, and Dinh Tuong and Kienhoa Provinces, in the populous Mekong Delta. "By drawing the bulk of Government forces to these provinces, the other provinces will be left vulnerable to counterpacification attacks."

The directives say that the campaign "may continue for one to two months," after which there will be a review of the results and possibly further attacks. The attacks by main force units, the uprisings in the cities and counterpacification drives by Vietcong guerrillas are termed "the three punches."

Directive 42 orders the North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia—the Fifth, Seventh and Ninth divisions—to begin having their "rear service organizations" transport their supplies by their civilian labor units.

According to allied intelligence estimates, 90,000 North Vietnamese have been spotted on the Ho Chi Minh supply-trail network so far this spring, compared with 64,000 in all of last year. Nearly half of the infiltrators are believed headed for the enemy Base Area 609 in Laos, opposite Kontum Province.