

# Aides in Pentagon Predict A New Offensive by Hanoi

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WASHINGTON, June 24—Senior officers in the Pentagon expect the North Vietnamese to renew their offensive, using conventional tactics and weapons, in the northern part of South Vietnam and in the Kontum area of the central highlands in the near future.

The North Vietnamese forces in the Anloc area, 60 miles north of Saigon, will probably go onto the defensive, according to officers who have access to the widest range of information on enemy resources and capabilities from hostile and friendly sources in Vietnam and neighboring countries.

The officers do not discount the possibility of a powerful attack aimed at the capture of Hue, in the northern part of South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese are said to believe that the seizure of the former imperial capital, South Vietnam's third largest city, would have a major impact on the American Presidential campaign and would strengthen their hand at the Paris peace talks.

Renewal of the enemy offensive will be accompanied, the sources predicted, by an intensification of guerrilla warfare. One North Vietnamese objective, is to pin down the best South Vietnamese divisions to give the Vietcong greater freedom of operation in the South.

## Heavy Enemy Forces Cited

The American judgment is that when the North Vietnamese resume the offensive, their attacks will be at a lower intensity than in April when the Hanoi government launched its first major conventional drive of the war.

North Vietnam has lost a great many of its most experienced troops in the last 10 weeks, a majority of the tanks it deployed in battle and a high percentage of its trucks.

## Bombing Called Effective

The units in the northern provinces in the highlands area around Kontum will probably be brought up to their former numerical strength, the Pentagon sources said. But losses in veterans cannot really be made up by their replacement with young soldiers fresh from basic training, these officers noted.

Another important element in assessing the capabilities of the enemy forces is the change in their supply situation as a result of intensive United States bombing of power stations, fuel and ammunition depots and communications facilities in the North.

North Vietnam, it is said, is no longer in a position to send south large amounts of supplies because communications, railroads, highways and the truck fleet have been seriously damaged and because the supplies of fuel and ammunition in depots has been drastically reduced.

Senior officers are wary of expressions of undiluted optimism. They feel there has been too much of that in the past. But they assert that the American bombing of the last 10 weeks has done what the experts thought had been done in 1966 and 1967.

They are cautious in their assessment of the capability of the South Vietnamese Army in an offensive role.

They doubt, for example, that a South Vietnamese offensive out of besieged Anloc would make much headway even though the enemy in that area has lost heavily in men and matériel. The morale of the North's units there is still believed to be high and Pentagon officers are fond of quoting Napoleon's aphorism that "in war morale is to matériel as three is to one."

However, they do not doubt the ability of the North Vietnamese divisions, now deployed, to open new offensives and they express indignation with critics who have denigrated the fighting qualities of South Vietnamese soldiers. While they give the fullest credit to the work of the United States and South Vietnamese Air Forces, these officers argue that only troops of quality could have held on to Anloc while suffering losses of up to 25 per cent in combat units.

## Foe's Motivation Analyzed

American analysts believe a resumption of the enemy offensive in the Hue and Kontum areas is dictated primarily by Hanoi's conviction that it cannot withdraw its conventional forces or remain on the defensive without forfeiting the psychological effects of its earlier successes in South Vietnam and abroad.

A secondary consideration, it is believed, is that an expansion and intensification of the guerrilla war by the Vietcong is not possible unless the bulk of the South Vietnamese Army is tied down in conventional battles.

North Vietnam is expected to be most successful in the northern provinces where a new offensive would be able to draw on supplies stockpiled there before and during the first phase of the April offensive.

The American judgment is that General Nguyen Vo Giap, the North's principal strategist, risks further reverses by returning to conventional open warfare against forces enjoying air superiority and, after the North's losses, a preponderance in armor and artillery.