

A Chinese Minesweeper Is Reported at Haiphong

**Pentagon Says the Small Vessel Eluded
Channel Mines by Riding in Through
Inland Waterways at High Tide**

NYTimes

By WILLIAM BEECHER AUG 29 1972
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28—The Pentagon said today that a small Chinese minesweeper slipped into Haiphong harbor about a week ago past the American minefield laid last May as part of a move to cut the flow of military supplies to North Vietnam.

Officials here, however, were at a loss to explain the craft's mission. They said that the 136-foot vessel had not attempted to sweep any mines during its stay in the harbor but that it is merely riding at anchor in the inner harbor.

"Even if the vessel attempts to sweep some mines," a Pentagon official said, "we could simply drop new ones behind it. Militarily, it can play no significant role in breaking up the mine barrier."

Defense Department sources said the small, shallow-draft vessel apparently got past the mines in the main channel lead-

ing to Haiphong by waiting for high tide and using inland waterways.

The sources speculated that the vessel, one of the least capable of the more than 20 in the Chinese Navy, might be a symbolic token of Peking's support for North Vietnam.

Before this development, neither China nor the Soviet Union had made any effort to provide Hanoi with even the most rudimentary capability to sweep mines since the start of the American mining operation on May 8.

It is not known whether China intends to turn the vessel over to the North Vietnamese Navy. But one official said that the minesweeper still flies the Chinese flag.

"Perhaps they merely wanted to embarrass us by demonstrating they could get by our

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minefield," a Pentagon officer said. "Or, maybe they're trying to embarrass Moscow, which has not done a thing about the mines. But whatever the purpose, it's got to be more political than military."

Since the imposition of the mine barrier nearly four months ago, the flow of supplies, which had been 7,000 tons a day, is believed to have been reduced to a trickle. A few Chinese freighters have sailed to islands off the coast and unloaded their cargoes onto small barges and other lighters that then attempted to slip ashore.

Very little is believed to be arriving that way. Only last week, Peking charged that United States planes attacked a 30-foot lifeboat belonging to a Chinese freighter. Military officials in Saigon and Washington insisted that the small vessel was a supply boat, not a lifeboat.

Supply Flow Increased

North Vietnam has managed to increase the flow of war material and food overland from 800 tons a day before the heavy bombing and mining to an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 tons a day now.

In addition, two four-inch pipelines are moving gasoline, diesel fuel and kerosene from China into North Vietnam. There have been reports that a third such pipeline may be under construction.

There was one report that the minesweeper in Haiphong harbor might have been one of four produced in the United States during World War II and turned over to China in 1948, before the take-over of the mainland by the Communists. These boats are wooden-hulled, with a displacement of about 270 tons. Their minesweeping

equipment is regarded as far from modern.

China has larger, more advanced minesweepers, but none has appeared in waters off Vietnam, Pentagon sources said.

It was reported that the Chinese minesweeper was tied up alongside a Chinese freighter, one of the four Chinese vessels that have been kept within Haiphong harbor by the American-laid minefield.

In all, it is said, 27 foreign ships are in the port—including 10 Soviet vessels, four Somali, three Polish, three British of Hong Kong registry, one East German and two Cuban vessels.

Hanoi Honors 5 Chinese It Says Died in U.S. Raid

TOKYO, Aug. 28 (AP)—The North Vietnamese Government held a memorial ceremony Sunday in Hanoi to "pay last respects to the five Chinese seamen killed in the United States bombing of a Chinese merchant ship Aug. 22," a Peking broadcast reported today.

The Hsinhua press agency, in a dispatch from Hanoi, identified the Chinese men as Capt. Chou Mao-chen; a deputy political commissar, Ma Chuan-chu; and seamen Chang Hsiang-pin, Hsieh Mao-ling and Fang Shu-tung, of the Honggi 151. The agency said that they were killed when United States planes attacked a lifeboat of the ship off the North Vietnamese coast.

The United States command in Saigon said that Navy planes destroyed a 30-foot boat off the coast of North Vietnam on Aug. 22, but reported that it had no evidence it was a Chinese lifeboat.

2 Generals and 10 Others Die in Thai Copter Crash

BANGKOK, Thailand, Aug. 28 (AP)—Two generals, three colonels and seven other military and police officers were killed today in the crash of a helicopter about 50 miles southwest of Bangkok, the Government reported.

Lieut. Gen. Kriangkrai Attanant, commander of the army in the Bangkok area and one of the most powerful men behind the Thai Government, and the other officers were on their way to troop maneuvers. A major general also died in the crash.

The helicopter went down on its way to a remote mountainous area, where Government troops are sometimes attacked by terrorists. Officials said that the crash was still under investigation and that they did not know if the helicopter had been shot down.