

U.S. SAYS IT MINES BELOW THE DMZ

Acts to Bar Waterways to Foe's Inland Supply Boats

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Sept. 20 — American planes have been mining the coastal rivers and canals of northern Quangtri Province, just below the demilitarized zone, to prevent the North Vietnamese from moving supplies across the border by boat, a senior United States Air Force officer has disclosed.

It is believed to be the first time that waterways inside South Vietnam have been mined.

The Air Force officer said the mining had been begun



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after aerial reconnaissance in-mese, in trying to prevent last weekend's recapture of Quangtri City, were moving supplies not only down the roads from the DMZ but also by boat.

The mining was disclosed as President Nguyen Van Thieu, during a visit to the northern front today declared that the area between Dongha, north of Quangtri city, and the DMZ would be "sacrificed" as a battleground that is, not contested by South Vietnamese forces. The two disclosures appeared to indicate that it would be a long time before the 320,000 refugees who once lived in Quangtri Province would be allowed to go back again.

North Mined Since May 8

North Vietnamese ports and waterways have been mined since May 8, when President Nixon said that he was taking "decisive action" against the Communist offensive that began March 30.

Quangtri City is on the south bank of the Thachhan river. To the northeast is an extensive area of rice fields, streams and several canals that follow the coastal plain through the demilitarized zone into North Vietnam.

The bulk of the American air effort, however, has recently been directed against the Communists' long-range 130-mm. artillery, which has been firing at Quangtri City all summer long and which kept up during President Thieu's visit today.

Senior Air Force officers say that more than 115 of these guns have been destroyed in and just north of Quangtri since the offensive began. The guns can fire six rounds a minute and have a range of 19 miles.

"We've got them down from the catastrophic levels they were at when the North Vietnamese first came down across the DMZ," one officer said. "There can't be too many left."

The officer estimated that more than 2000 North Vietnamese soldiers were killed in the fighting at Quangtri last week, and that their units had now withdrawn west and north of the city.

Other American officials gave an indication that the summer-long campaign that finally succeeded in retaking Quangtri City last weekend had resulted in heavy casualties for the South Vietnamese marines and paratroops who participated.

They said that South Vietnamese forces had suffered 36,000 men killed and 90,000 wounded in the fighting since the offensive began. In June the same officials had put South's casualties in the offensive at 20,000 killed and 50,000 wounded. The heaviest continuous battle of the summer was in Quangtri Province.

North Vietnamese casualties during the offensive were estimated to have risen from 70,000 killed by June to more than 100,000 now, the officials said.

Bombing of North Credited

American officers here say that the heavy bombing campaign—not only in the South but especially over the North—has been decisive in enabling the South Vietnamese to hold off further enemy advances.

They expect it to go on at least through the American election in November and would like to continue it into next year.

An Air Force officer said that the main highway and railroad bridges throughout North Vietnam had been cut by the bombing, but that many non-military targets, such as textile factories and the Hanoi thermal power plant, had not been hit.

President Thieu has repeatedly called upon the Americans to continue the bombing of the North until the North Vietnamese withdraw their troops from Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam. But he has said that he has doubts about whether the Americans have the will to do this.