

Russ Flour, China Arms To No. Viet

By Larry Green

SAIGON — (CDN) — Russia is sending wheat flour to Hanoi via China and more bulk goods reached North Vietnam during August than in any other month in the history of the Indochina war despite the intense U.S. bombing campaign and naval blockade, intelligence sources said today.

At the same time, Hanoi, which lost more than 600 tanks and other tracked vehicles in the current six-month offensive, has begun to replenish her supply with Chinese - made weapons, sources said.

It was also learned that for the first time in the war North Vietnam has developed a capability of manufacturing quantities of ammunition and small weapons, once supplied by China and the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, military sources say Hanoi has begun to send thousands of new troops down the Ho Chi Minh trail toward the Quang Tri battle zone.

Thousands more are expected to enter the infiltration network next month.

North Vietnam's success at getting around the U.S. blockade and interdiction campaign indicates Hanoi's

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ability to sustain the war for several more years, some sources believe.

August actually was the first month since the bombing began in April and the ports and inland waterways were mined in May that Hanoi was able to overcome shortage problems.

But now analysts believe the tiny country is receiving all the food, ammunition and petroleum it needs.

Tonkin Gulf

Although they did not give quantities now reaching North Vietnam, before the offensive intelligence sources said the country was unloading as much as 7000 tons of cargo daily at its several Tonkin Gulf ports.

The Soviet Union, which is buying millions of dollars worth of wheat on credit from the United States, is stepping up its shipping of wheat flour to aid Hanoi's war effort, ranking Western sources said.

At least seven and possibly eight Russian freighters are now in Chinese ports unloading the flour, which these sources say is "probably" destined for North Vietnam.

The shipments are apparently the first of their kind

in recent years and reflect the increasing use of Chinese ports by Russian freighters seeking to evade the American sea blockade of North Vietnam.

Previously China barred Russian ships from docking at its ports but in recent months they have been unloading their Hanoi bound cargoes, usually petroleum products.

Trucks

Now most of the supplies are being carried from the Chinese border southward by truck despite the claim by the U.S. Command here that most major highway bridges are destroyed.

Since the bombing campaign began, U.S. planes have attacked North Vietnam more than 55,000 times. At least 107 planes have been lost since April over North Vietnam and 112 pilots are listed as captured or missing.

Additional supplies are

being floated across the U.S. mine fields with the tides or carried on small boats from two or three Chinese freighters always anchored in the Tonkin Gulf just beyond the explosive devices.

New shipments of tracked vehicles, probably tanks and armored personnel carriers, were spotted in recent aerial photographs, which showed as many as 100 railroad flat cars backed up at the Chinese border with the vehicles covered with canvas.

Until the offensive began it was believed the Soviet Union was North Vietnam's major supplier of tanks, armored vehicles and long-range artillery.