

# A Viet Border Buildup

## Tay Ninh, South Vietnam

Communist troops are in the midst of a major buildup of supplies and military equipment in this critical border province northwest of Saigon, according to South Vietnamese and American officials.

The officials say the Communists have also introduced some sophisticated weapons never before seen in the area, including a 130-mm. gun that has a range of nearly 17 miles.

"If this was before the cease-fire and the VC were concentrating troops and new weapons the way they are now, I'd say they were planning to attack," said Colonel Le Van Thien, the province chief here. Then he added with a touch of sarcasm, "But with the cease-fire we don't know what they are planning to do."

### BASH

A senior American intelligence official in Saigon said, "They are certainly preparing their options for another 'military bash.'"

According to the Paris peace accord signed last December, both sides in the Vietnam conflict may replace Military equipment on a piece by piece basis. The introduction of new weapons or the addition of men and equipment is prohibited.

Earlier this week American officials in Washington and Saigon disclosed that the Communists have been

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Xuan Thuy, Hanoi's peace delegation chief, yesterday rejected President Nixon's recent hints that the U.S. might begin further military action if North Vietnam continues its infiltration of the south.

"Until now the facts have shown that threats have not resulted in anything positive," Thuy told newsmen at Le Bourget airport.

moving large amounts of war material into South Vietnam from the North. High-ranking South Vietnamese officers said a good deal of it has already reached Tay Ninh, which lies at the southern terminus of the Ho Chi Minh trail.

### TANK

Brigadier General Le Van Tu, who commands South Vietnam's 25th Infantry Division, estimated that as many as 100 Soviet-made T-54 tanks have arrived in Tay Ninh in the last month.

This territory — roughly the northern third of the province — has been a Communist sanctuary since the earliest days of the war. It has long served as a staging

area for supplies and troops entering South Vietnam. Thuy was at the airport to greet the Viet Cong's new chief political delegate, minister of State Nguyen Van Hieu, and say good-bye to Viet Cong Foreign Minister Nguyen Thi Binh.

"What is essential now is that all the parties correctly execute the clauses of the agreement in order to provide a really enduring peace in Vietnam," he said.

*United Press*

area for supplies and troops entering South Vietnam.

But Tu said that the traffic during the past month had been heavier than during most comparable periods last year.

"Since the cease-fire its been easy for them to move," the general said. "They don't have to be afraid of air strikes and artillery now."

Intelligence officials in Saigon estimate that the Communists have moved an entire battalion of 12 130-mm. guns into the provinces northwest of Saigon, and they say this is the first time they have been seen south of the central highlands.

### HEAT

In addition, the general

and other South Vietnamese officers reported, the Communists have recently introduced to Tay Ninh the Soviet-made surface-to-air (SAM-7) heat-seeking missile and the AT-3 wire-guided missile. Both are small weapons carried and fired by one man.

A SAM-7 recently brought down a helicopter north of Tay Ninh and fragments of AT-3 missiles were found at an outpost that came under heavy shelling three weeks ago.

South Vietnamese officers say that elements of two North Vietnamese divisions — the Seventh and the Ninth — are believed to be operating in Tay Ninh. But they say they believed most of the Communist troops in the province at present are logistics and rear-area personnel. They are unable to say with confidence how many Communist troops are facing them.

Hard intelligence on the intentions of the Communists is sorely lacking. Tu says that at the rate the Communists are going they could be ready for a division-sized attack by early April.

*N.Y. Times Service*