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FOE SAID TO CROSS CAMBODIA BORDER

Drive to Expand Control in
South Vietnam Reported

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PNOMPENH, Cambodia, Oct. 31—Authoritative Western military sources reported today that large numbers of North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops were moving out of their Cambodia border base areas into South Vietnam—apparently as part of a Communist attempt to seize control of as much South Vietnamese territory as possible before a cease-fire is declared.

These military sources, who declined to be identified, said that the Communist troops began their move a few weeks ago and that the push on South Vietnam had been stepped up in the last several days.

All this has coincided with the flurry of negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam this month that has led to the sketching of a tentative agreement on a cease-fire in recent days, Communist troops have stepped up their attacks in South Vietnam, trying to seize new territory and to be in the strongest position possible in the event of a cease-fire.

Move Into Delta

Apparently as part of this pattern, Communist troops in Cambodia, according to the Western military sources, are pushing out of the provinces of Kampot, Takeo and Svayrieng and crossing the border into South Vietnam's Mekong Delta region west and southwest of Saigon. One area they seem to be concentrating on as a stronghold is the Seven Mountains region, about 100 miles due west of Saigon.

Western sources say that at least several thousand Communist troops are involved in the drive and that it includes elements of the North Vietnamese First Division. South Vietnamese units have been trying to block the push, but the Western sources said it was not clear how much success they were having.

Before this, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong were estimated to have had about 60,000 troops in Cambodia. During the current invasion of South Vietnam, which Hanoi began seven months ago, one-third of these troops were normally left behind in Cambodia to protect their rear and their well-developed supply routes.

Western military sources here think the North Vietnamese might be sacrificing some of that rear protection now to seize as much territory as possible in South Vietnam.

Return Expected

Neither the Western sources nor any other informed observers here believe that the North Vietnamese are leaving their Cambodian bases for good, even though the terms for the projected peace accord call for their withdrawal from the country. The consensus is that the troops now pushing into South Vietnam will return once they have achieved their goals across the border.

But even if they did not, it appears unlikely that the insurgency would suddenly end in Cambodia.

The Vietnamese Communists have trained and armed an ever-growing force of Cambodian insurgents. These are known collectively as the Khmer Rouge, but in fact they are a collection of disparate groups—some Communist, some simply opposed to the Cambodian Government, some tied to the deposed chief of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and some quite independent.

The number of these insurgents is said to have grown from 3,000 in 1970, when Prince Sihanouk went into exile in Peking, to at least 30,000 now.

Disruptive Force

Without the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, the Khmer Rouge could probably conduct only a low-level guerrilla insurgency and would probably not be able to topple the Government. But they could create unrest and confusion and make stability impossible, as they have done in the last few months by cutting roads and thus both undermining the economy and damaging morale.

In recent weeks, with the Vietnamese Communists concentrating on targets in South Vietnam, much of the fighting in Cambodia has been carried on by the Khmer Rouge. At present, the anti-Government forces are said to control half to three-quarters of the country's territory. The Government's control has been reduced to the major population centers; it is estimated that the Government administers about 60 per cent of Cambodia's population of seven million.

The Government has been trying to persuade the leaders of various Khmer Rouge groups to come over to the Government side, but reports indicate that these efforts have not been successful.