

U.S. Steps Up Bombing; VC Plan Exposed

Effort to Exploit Cease-Fire Seen

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DANANG, Nov. 5—Communist forces in South Vietnam have made extensive and detailed preparations to exploit the cease-fire tentatively worked out between Washington and Hanoi.

Orders to begin the preparations were passed down to working levels here even before the Hanoi regime secretly presented its new peace proposals to presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger in Paris on Oct. 8.

The recent capture of 62 Vietcong agents and a sheaf of important documents here has provided hard information on the Communist plans to make military and political gains during a "period of confusion" surrounding the cease-fire and political gains after the cease-fire takes full effect.

As early as Oct. 4, Vietcong operatives for Danang received instructions to prepare on an urgent basis for the anticipated cease-fire and political settlement.

On Oct. 19, two days after Washington and Hanoi reached tentative agreement on most points in the Paris talks and the day Kissinger began briefing President Thieu in Saigon, senior officials of the Danang city committee of the Vietcong were called to a nearby mountain headquarters to receive a detailed schedule of what was to come.

As set forth in the captured papers, the diplomatic schedule called for the U.S. bombing halt; a Kissinger trip to Hanoi; Washington, Hanoi and Moscow radio announcements of the joint agreement; its formal signing in Paris; and its final implementation 48 hours later. Alongside this,

the Vietcong drew up their own schedule for last-minute military attacks and assassinations, major propaganda efforts and a blossoming of Vietcong and peace flags in an effort to claim territory and popular backing.

Some of the Vietcong schedule—including rocket attacks on the Danang airfield and the infiltration of terrorists and political leaders into the city—was carried out in late October.

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ber while the cease-fire was still expected momentarily.

After the United States postponed final action on the peace plan because of an expressed need to eliminate "ambiguities," Vietcong headquarters sent through "flash" messages to stop the planned activities. The stop-order arrived too late to stave off a police raid on a fortified hide-out in which the local Vietcong leader narrowly escaped arrest and where detailed operations plans were found.

The Danang raids are said to have provided the most specific information on Vietcong planning. It is believed that similar preparations were made throughout the country. Some of the Thieu government's recent internal maneuvers—including the campaign to erect hundreds of thousands of yellow-and-red national flags and warnings about cease-fire propaganda—appear to be countermeasures to plans which came to light here.

Early Clues

Vietcong preparation for a new phase of the Indochina struggle goes back at least six months, during the gestation period of the new peace plan in Hanoi. One of the early clues was an article in the April issue of Tien Phong (Vanguard), an organ of the People's Revolutionary Party, the Communist party of South

Vietnam. The article assessed the strategic balance of forces in Indochina and called for massive attacks to improve the Communist position before a political settlement.

Reports of Communist planning for a cease-fire multiplied in late summer and early fall. The most definitive evidence of the preparations—and the only such documentation yet made available—was the Oct. 4 Danang plan, which came into the hands of the South Vietnamese 3d Infantry Div. in an operation near here on Oct. 9.

Titled "Plan of General Uprising When A Political Solution Is Reached," the paper set out a long list of preparations.

'Thought Preparation'

A critical item was the "preparation of thought" to explain the Washington-Hanoi deal to the party faithful. The paper maintained that "the U.S. imperialists have been shamefully defeated and have to withdraw their troops and end the war of aggression, thus disengaging themselves from Vietnam militarily. Without U.S. support, the puppet army will become confused and come to the verge of collapse. After the cease-fire the puppet troops, though still numerous and well armed, cannot resort to force as before, this is a once-in-a-1,000-years opportunity for our people to stand up to topple the clique of country-selling lackeys to gain freedom, happiness and a better life."

The critical phase would be the "twilight period" between the signing of the cease-fire agreement and the time it takes full effect. While the Saigon army's guard was down and people were celebrating, general attacks were to be mounted against government military posts; people in refugee centers were to be told to return to their villages (many in Vietcong-controlled areas); and "cruel tyrants" were to be assassinated and "spies and puppet administrative personnel" were to be arrested.

When the agreement was fully effective, the emphasis was to shift to politics. National Liberation Front flags and "peace flags" were to sprout forth in profusion in "liberated areas," contested areas of cities and towns and even in unpopulated areas of strategic value. Government flags were to be torn down. "We must snatch each citizen, each inch of land from the enemy," the plan declared.

About two weeks into these preparations, on Oct. 19, party leaders for Danang were

called to a meeting in the special zone headquarters—believed to be in the mountains just west of the city—to receive a more detailed plan for these events from "higher echelon." According to a memorandum of the meeting, the leaders were told that "the (cease-fire) agreement is considered as basically achieved" and the following schedule was announced:

Schedule Given

The U.S. bombing of North Vietnam would be stopped effective Oct. 24. Because of the sequence of listing and other indications, this appears to have been a misprint which

should actually have read Oct. 21.

Kissinger would be in Hanoi on Oct. 22—apparently to initiate the peace agreement.

Hanoi, U.S. and Moscow radios would announce the agreement on Oct. 27.

Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh of North Vietnam and Secretary of State William P. Rogers of the United States would sign the agreement officially on Oct. 30 or Oct. 3.

The agreement would probably take effect 48 hours after the signing. The Danang leaders were told that North Vietnam had requested an implementation period of 72 hours, while the United States had asked for only 24 hours—thus a compromise time of 48 hours was deemed probable.

"The period of confusion (from the signing to the effective date) will be very short," the memorandum said, "You are requested to constantly listen to radio announcements to keep abreast of the situation. There may be small changes. Precautionary measures must also be taken, for the Americans may not keep their promises."

Attack in Danang

"To prevent the enemy from encroaching on (liberated) land," a military drive was to be launched Oct. 24-28, with "high points" on the nights of Oct. 24 and Oct. 27. On the first of those nights, 30 rounds of 122 mm. rockets were fired into Danang air base, killing three U.S. airmen, one U.S. civilian and nine Vietnamese civilians. On the second of the designated nights, 28 rounds of 122 mm. rockets hit in and around the air base, but no one was killed.

On the morning of Oct. 23, according to the Danang documents, a flash message was received from headquarters calling for strikes and demonstra-

tions by students, workers, marketplace merchants and government employees on Oct. 29 — after the planned announcement of the peace agreement but before its formal signing.

Hanoi radio has reported that on Oct. 23, the United States asked for a reopening of the cease-fire negotiations and backed away from the plans for formal signing before the end of the month. On Oct. 24, according to the Danang papers, a flash message was

dispatched from higher headquarters relaying this diplomatic information to the city operatives and declaring that "this is a scheme to deceive us and prolong the war, so the implementation of Mission X5 prescribed in the previous message must be postponed."

Stop Order Delayed

The stop order was delayed in transit. Just about the same time it was received inside the city, Danang police were receiving a tip that Vietcong infiltrators were inside the city ready to kill Col. Nguyen Ngoc Khol, the mayor and other acts of violence and propaganda. At 8 p.m. on Oct. 25, the police made simultaneous raids on five suspected Vietcong hideouts.

At the end of a long, narrow alley in a crowded and poverty-stricken quarter less than a mile from the fence of the vast Danang air base the police moved in on a nondescript house, and were hit with live

hand grenades. Two policemen were killed, and a Vietcong leader—believed to be Danang Party Secretary Nam Dua—jumped out a second story window to escape across railroad tracks into nearby swamps.

Hidden under the floor of the house was a reinforced concrete bunker evidently used as a headquarters. In his hurry to get away, the Vietcong leader left behind the cease-fire plans.

That night and in the next several days, 62 suspected Vietcong agents were arrested, including more than a dozen young terrorists recently trained in demolition work. More than 100 pounds of explosive material was seized.

Even so, nearly everyone here concedes that the "other side's" ability to plan ahead has been among the most impressive aspects of its performance in the continuing struggle for Indochina.