Son was secure. As long as it wasn't seriously threatened it could even remain secure after the Americans were gone, and "Vietnamization" could continue to be proclaimed a stunning success in hundreds of Bong Sons the length and breadth of Vietnam—until North Vietnam's big push of the past few weeks. Only by removing the Americans completely and putting the South Vietnamese to a harsh test on their own are we now able to get a true—and grim—reading of how well the pacification—plus Vietnamization—effort has really gone.

You could not get such a reading in 1967 because the 1st Cav was everywhere; our helicopters and truck convoys swarmed around the place. Off one of the main roads was a refugee camp of grey concrete—bleak-looking but placid. The sporadic firefight we got into that year in the coastal plains area around the town about 250 miles north of Saigon were small and usually brief. As for Bong Son itself, we carried our rifles and pistols on visits to the makeshift bars, laundries and brothels there, only because military regulations required us to do so and because military police sometimes enforced those regulations.

There were South Vietnamese soldiers operating in the area and they sometimes joined us in battle. Afterwards, there was nearly always the bitter complaint of our troops and field officers that the South Vietnamese soldiers had not only walked away from the enemy fire but had also walked away with some American equipment.

Later, an American adviser, who worked with some of the South Vietnamese reserve force in the area, in discussion of his efforts at on-the-job training in combat, was to comment on the priorities as seen by those troops: "Man, you ain't nothing unless you've got a Seico watch and a transistor radio."

To the outsider, Bong Son appeared mostly to be run by unruly children who, at 10 and 14 years old were more proficient in English—with particular fluency in swear words—than their mothers and grandfathers. The young men, it was said, were either with the Viet Cong, the South Vietnamese reserve or regular force, or off in the hills evading the recruiting efforts of both. It was the children who did the bartering in the shops, and who were also the foremen in the sandbag filling work crews.

For some of the Army majors and light colonels who gathered at night to drink beer in the tent of the public information office at Cavalry forward command headquarters on the edge of town, Bong Son was a bore. When a Cavalry unit would be sent off briefly in 1967 to help out in fighting in Kontum or Chu Lai, they would say almost wistfully: "Of course, we're going to take some casualties there, but it's going to be a good little action."

Early the next year the Cavalry pulled out of quiet, pacified Bong Son. What they left behind would probably have been described by the Army or the hamlet evaluators in the American Mission in Saigon or Joseph Alsop as one of the demonstrable success stories of Vietnam. And so it doubtless remained—until the other day, when it was over-run by the Army of North Vietnam.

[From the Washington Post, May 10, 1972]

**Refugees Find Security Elusive**

(By Lee Lescace)

PHUOC TÚ, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 9.—Refugees from the savage bombardments and Communist successes in Quangtri Province in the far north are now prevented from moving to new homesteads by smaller battles here in Phuoc Tu Province about 40 miles southeast of Saigon where Communist forces have already taken the offensive.

"We came from Gò Linh to Camlo to Dongha to Quangtri to Hue and now here: We don't want to flee again," one of the 1,900 Quangtri refugees camped in this provincial capital's soccer stadium said today.

Although the government had planned to resettle many northern refugees in the south before the current Communist offensive began, the government has now made emergency plans to transport another 100,000 refugees from Quangtri to this and two neighboring provinces as soon as possible to relieve the desperate overcrowding in Danang caused by the loss of Quangtri and panic in Hue.
However, men in the stadium who walked out of Quangtri during the South Vietnamese retreat, arrived here at the same time that the village planned for their permanent resettlement became almost a front-line village itself.

EARLIER ARRIVAL

At the village, called Suoinghe, an earlier arrival from Quangtri said she cannot support herself and her five children because she no longer dares walk to the nearby forest to gather wood for local charcoal ovens.

Mortar and artillery shells have landed close to the village during the last week, she said. As she spoke, South Vietnamese howitzers opened fire on targets less than 8000 yards away.

"See. There see," the woman said.

"When a dog barks or bird calls they shoot in a mortar round," she added.

The woman, whose husband serves with South Vietnam's 1st Division near Hue, said the refugee village suffers from rounds fired by both Communist and government forces.

In addition to the 1,300 Quangtri refugees brought to the village in January as the beginning of the largest and longest (450 miles) refugee move ever planned in South Vietnam and the new arrivals waiting at the stadium, this province had a third group of refugees — about 1,400 people native to Phuocuyen, but driven from their homes to the province capital by Communist attacks in the last 10 days.

It is a small-scale war in Phuocuyen. The Vietcong force which launched attacks 10 days ago is estimated at two battalions. South Vietnamese regular army units are not involved, only Regional and Popular Forces. Neither side is using tanks, and air strikes are all by Vietnamese planes — and are very infrequent by Quangtri standards.

DISTRICT CAPITALS

Two district capitals have been isolated by the Vietcong attacks. Xuyenmoc is surrounded, but has not been directly attacked while sharp fighting took place yesterday and today at Ducthanh where the district command post was hit by more than 300 mortar rounds and 45 Communists were reported killed while attempting to overrun the headquarters.

"The enemy thought they could win a cheap victory here," one South Vietnamese official said. "They wanted to get this province with two battalions instead of using a division like at Anloc."

Government officials are confident the Communists will not capture this province, but they are vague about when the siege of Xuyenmoc and Ducthanh can be lifted. At present garrisons in both towns are being resupplied by air.

Meanwhile the refugees, who receive a pound of rice plus small quantities of other food and about five cents a day from the government, will continue to be brought here from South Vietnam's northern provinces.

One senior American intelligence official estimated today that 700,000 South Vietnamese have been made refugees since the current Communist offensive began March 30.

Asked what difference there is between living in Quangtri and here, one of the newly arrived refugees said he was not sure yet. Then he added:

"Wherever there are no bullets and bombs, living is more comfortable."

[From the Washington Post, Wednesday, April 19, 1972]

FIRE AGAIN HITS A SECURE VILLAGE NEAR SAIGON

(By Peter Osnos)

LONGCANG, April 18.—Four nights ago, for the first time in so long no one can remember when it last happened, the Communists struck in force here, leveling the headquarters of the local militia with an hour-long mortar barrage.

It was a small affair when compared in scale or ferocity to the multi­division tank, artillery and infantry assaults in Quangtri and Binhlong
Provinces, but it was bad enough to frighten villagers who had come to believe Longcang was secure and their homes safe from deadly cross fire.

Longcang is a sleepy farming village that could be almost anywhere in the southern provinces of South Vietnam, but in fact, it is less than 20 miles from Saigon and that too makes the enemy pressure significant.

By the standards developed over the years for measuring such things, Longcang was no longer a problem. With rarely a shot fired in anger and only occasional visits by minor Communist cadre propagandizing among the people or collecting Viet Cong taxes.

But just as the Communist big-unit offensive near South Vietnam's borders has shown that Hanoi still has the capacity and intention to wage a major war, the mounting number of incidents in the countryside has shown how easily gains in pacification, slowly made over the years, can be threatened.

"We thought that the Vietcong had gone away," said the wife of Pham Van Lac, a farmer who returned to the village and his little rice plot a year ago after spending three years crowded in with relatives who lived on a main road where it was less dangerous.

His old house, indeed most of the village, had been wiped out in fighting during 1967-68. "Some houses were burned, some bombed, but all were destroyed," said Pham Van Lac's mother.

For the past year, since the family returned, Longcang had been quiet. The government had given the farmer title to the land he rented for years from someone else and he had built a thatch and mud house with a tin roof.

Lac had harvested two rice crops, one of U.S.-supplied IR-8, one of the new miracle strains, and the other of Vietnamese rice, which is better tasting but less filling. In slack time the family had made straw mats. In all, they managed to make ends meet.

Proudly displaying the government certificate that declares him a landowner, Pham Van Lac, repeating himself time and again for emphasis, said "how happy he had been to return to the land that now belonged to him-and earn a living from odd jobs.

"If it would be light all day long, sun all day, never any night, then it would be all right," the wife said, adding, as she remembered the attack, "Sweat was pouring off my head but I was shivering."

"But the troubles of the past never left Lac's wife and mother, and they were always a little afraid, now once again they have good reason."

If there was anything at all about the attack that can be regarded as hopeful, it is that the militiamen of Longcang, a garrison of 50 in the outpost that was hardest hit (the village office and a smaller outpost also took fire) evidently acquitted themselves well.

They held their positions despite steady mortaring and a ground assault that followed. It was 45 minutes before artillery was called in and two hours before the Vietnamese air force could spare a gunship, but when the fighting was over, only one militiaman had been killed and seven wounded.

Lt. Ha Quang Khen, an English-speaking 25-year-old who is the operations officer for the four regional forces companies in the area, said the men at the outpost were prepared because they had been told to expect an attack any time after April 12.

"It would have been possible for the Communists to overrun us," he said, "if it had been a complete surprise. But we had received intelligence and none of the soldiers was asleep. We had a full alert."

The lieutenant estimated that the total enemy attacking force at all three targets was about 100 men, but no one, he acknowledged, really knew for sure how many there were. The extent of enemy casualties is also vague. One officer said two were killed, another said five.

Nothing more has happened in Longcang since the attack, but in the near distance this morning there was the sound of small arms fire as helicopters circle overhead and artillery boomed from a district compound a few miles
away. The neighboring town on Longson had been hit overnight and scattered fighting was still going on.

It is one thing to hear daytime artillery and the ratatat of enemy guns on the road to Anloc and Quangtri, two remote provincial cities under a siege that has captured world headlines. It is quite another to hear the same thing, even on a much smaller scale, just outside Saigon.

Living in the capital, Pham Van Lac's brother reads newspapers besides listening to the government-controlled radio and he has heard a good deal about the tank and infantry battles raging elsewhere. But his views on it are somewhat detached, as if it had little to do with him like a tornado in Kansas to a resident of Missouri.

There is no way, however, to shut out the fighting only a few hundred yards down the road or a short walk across the rice paddies.

[From the Washington Post, May 22, 1972]

A MINOR BATTLE WIPES OUT A VILLAGE
(By Thomas W. Lippman)

LOCGLING, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 21.—The battle for Locgliang was not much considering the way things are going in the Vietnam war these days.

The enemy attacked, the local defense force sought help from the South Vietnamese army's 25th Division, the commander of the relief force called in air strikes, the bombs came and the village was hit. It lasted only a day or two and hardly rated a mention in the daily war bulletins issued by the Saigon command.

But for about 350 families here, it was everything. This sideshow of the war leveled their houses, destroyed much of their rice stock, shattered their household goods, killed their wells, killed their livestock and burned their trees and shrubs.

The villagers fled into the nearby fields before the bombs came, so few were killed, and some had time to grab a few possessions or a few sacks of rice.

Today, almost a week later, most of them were back in the village, sifting through the rubble, salvaging what they could—a few roof tiles, bits of clothing, shards of crockery, and shell fragments to be sold to Chinese merchants in Saigon who will turn them into rice pots.

The surrounding countryside was a Vietnamese cliche—rice paddies, water buffalo, palm trees, and, except for an occasional artillery round, silence.

This was a prosperous village, with tree-shaded yards and houses of brick and cement. Now there is little but wreckage, some of it still smoldering.

It is the kind of incident that takes place a dozen times a week in this other phase of the war, which bears little resemblance to the big-unit offensive in the north and around Anloc. There is no mass evacuation, no encirclement, no helicopter-fleet bringing in supplies.

Locgliang is in Haungia province, only 20 miles northwest of Saigon, and only about two miles from the district capital of Trangbang, which straddles Highway 1, the main road from Saigon to Phnom Penh.

They had no warning, the woman said, and no time to take anything. She said she had only 100 piastres—about 25 cents—and the clothes she was wearing.

Across the road, a family of about seven or eight persons assembled on the rim of a 25 foot-deep bomb crater. The earth thrown up when the bomb hit buried their house and everything in it. In a way, they were lucky, because much of it is still intact down there. All they have to do is exhum it, which they were doing today.

"Climb down there and see if you can get out," one woman said, pointing to the hole. "Doesn't that make you feel sick?" Like many other villagers, she wanted to know if the visitor taking notes was making a list of the damage to be compensated by the government.

The village, and much of the province, were under Vietcong control for much of the 1960s and were declared pacified only after the U.S. 25th Infantry Division came to the province in 1966. Now the Americans are gone.
South Vietnamese troops are spread thin around the country and the province is again embattled.

Two related families who lived in adjoining houses lost everything in last week's battle. "Where is the money to buy more?" asked a woman whose rice stocks went up in flames with her house. "We have nine children. How can we feed them?"

Her husband was bagging the ashes of their rice hoard to use as fertilizer. Their houses were burned, the woman said, when a South Vietnamese officer ordered them leveled to clear a fire zone between his troops and an enemy mortar position.

The village chief, over lemonade at a makeshift refreshment stand, said that what troubled the villagers the most was that there were no Vietcong in the village by the time the bombs came—a frequent complaint in such situations.

The bombing was not necessary, he said, because the enemy were all outside the village limits when the strikes were called in.

He said no Vietcong bodies had been found in the village, though patches of lime clearly marked the places where some corpses had lain.

He and other villagers blamed the Americans for the bombing, because they associate the air war with the planes, though in fact most air cover in this area is provided by the South Vietnamese.

The U.S. district adviser in Trang-bang refused to discuss the incident. "It's their war," he said. "I'm just an adviser."

**[From the New York Times, May 3, 1972]**

**THE AIR WAR OVER INDOCHINA—TIP OF THE ICEBERG**

(By Raphael Littauer)

ITHACA, N. Y.—The American people are learning, many with surprise, that their President has been telling them the truth about his commitment of U.S. air power to the Indochina conflict. Mr. Nixon evidently means business with his bombers. However, the spectacular air strikes which occasioned this surprise are only the tip of the iceberg. The other nine-tenths of the monster are submerged—the ton-a-minute, workaday blasting of Indochina.

For the last year a team of researchers at Cornell University has painstakingly collecting and collating the facts about the biggest air war in history. Their findings confirm what was known to some already: the U.S. has been systematically bombing not only Vietnam but all of Indochina.

The sustained campaign to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail is not a surgically isolated operation against purely military targets, as is so often claimed. Instead, for technical reasons, the ground-to-air duel entails widespread attacks on the surrounding regions, "protective reaction" strikes, and bombing of targets within North Vietnam itself. Escalation is built in.

The trend to computerized warfare increases remoteness and removes the last psychological inhibitions which might have had a humanizing influence. Vast territories under enemy control are subjected to sustained bombarding to deny the enemy the fruits of his victory—the population resources he has come to control. An uglier phrase for this is *scorched-earth policy*. An unspeakable price is exacted from the people of Indochina in return for "saving" them.

The threat of retaliation against North Vietnam, an explicit element of U.S. air war policy, requires frequent saber-rattling to maintain "credibility." The cost must be reckoned not only in the lives of the victims but in a hardening of positions on both sides. The Communists, after decades of struggle, are in no mood to be deterred. The U.S. closes off its options for more moderate, politically oriented policy choices. We back ourselves into a corner from which only a frustrated last gasp is possible.

The tip of the iceberg that came into public view in April was spectacular enough. The character of the air war had been changing, with B-52's delivering
an ever-larger fraction of the bombs (more than half are now carried by the Stratofortresses).

One must know a little about these bombers to appreciate them fully: They carry over 100 bombs each, to a total of 30 tons, and shed them rapidly from close formation flight at high altitude. The bombs explode in a dense pattern covering, for a typical mission of six planes, 1.5 square miles with 150 tons of explosives. Such a B-52 box of distributed tonnage is lethally effective. It is easy to calculate that the blast overpressure will exceed 3 PSI (pounds per square inch) everywhere within the pattern, enough to knock down any residential structures other than reinforced concrete.

[From the Baltimore Sun, May 14, 1972]

HEAVY AIR DAMAGE IN NORTH REPORTED

(By Michael Parks)

SAIGON.—The intensified American bombing of North Vietnam has cut most of the country's important road and rail lines and destroyed vast quantities of fuel, ammunition and other war materiel in the last week, according to military sources.

American officers say that the current campaign against North Vietnamese supply lines has inflicted "significantly heavier damage" than the initial phases of the "Rolling Thunder" campaign of 1965.

But the officers no longer claim, as they confidently did in the 1960's, that the supply routes will stay cut and the southward flow of war materiel will be halted by even the stepped-up bombing ordered last Monday by President Nixon.

"We believe we can make it very difficult and very costly for the enemy," said a senior U.S. officer here. "But we expect that will come largely from the cumulative effect of the bombing rather than spectacular individual strikes.

The raids in North Vietnam began more than a month ago in the area south of the 20th parallel, and most are still concentrated there.

The populous Hanoi-Haiphong area has been hit several times, each time on orders from President Nixon. Tuesday's raid involved more than 800 attack planes in 3 waves and was one of the heaviest of the war, military sources say.

The current series of strikes in the Hanoi-Haiphong region, called "Operation Linebacker," is very similar to the "Rolling Thunder" campaign begun by President Johnson.

Its targets, lines of communication and storage facilities, are selected not by the U.S. command here but by the U.S. Pacific Command in Honolulu and the Pentagon in Washington.

The raids in the North Vietnamese Panhandle, now include "armed reconnaissance" patrols by bombers authorized to attack certain "targets of opportunity." Those directly above the border demarcation zone are under the control of the command in Saigon now with looser White House restrictions.

FRONTLAND RAIDS

Another series of strikes called "Ironhand" raids is aimed at air defense facilities.

[Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said yesterday in Newport News, Va., that United States bombing has cut the petroleum pipeline leading from Vinh in North Vietnam and used to supply invasion forces, the Associated Press reported.]

[He also said, in response to a question at an impromptu news conference, that a series of strategic bridges had been destroyed, including the Thanh Hoa Bridge south of Hanoi. The bridge has been the unsuccessful target of American bombers for many years.]

[Admiral Moorer described the loss of American aircraft as "very, very low in light of the fact the North Vietnamese have fired an extremely large number of missiles.

In the last week, United States Air Force and Navy bombers severed Hanoi's two railroad links with China, temporarily cut all the major roads leading from
the port of Haiphong, making them impassable for a time, and destroyed the last
of the pumping stations for the Vinh pipeline, which carried fuel south to the
border demarcation zone and into Laos.

American Air Force officers now believe the pipeline system, capable of
carrying 1,180 metric tons of fuel a day, is out of operation at least for several
weeks until the pumping station and the pipeline are repaired or rebuilt. The
pipeline itself has been cut in more than 20 places by air strikes, according to
military sources.

North Vietnam's northwest rail line to China was cut by bombing two key
bridges about 60 miles from Hanoi, according to military sources. The north-
east line was cut when Air Force fighter-bombers knocked out another bridge.
The attacks on railroad lines, switching yards and sidings used for unload-
ing increased with President Nixon's order for intensified bombing Monday,
military sources say. They have been hit by both warplanes and gunfire from
U.S. 7th Fleet cruisers and destroyers off the coast.

Rail lines leading out of the port of Haiphong were cut, military sources
say, in the heavy strikes Tuesday. American officers hope this will prevent
some of the supplies now in the port's warehouses from being sent south.

In addition, pilots report destroying or damaging more than 70 locomotives
and freight cars in the last week and heavily damaging an important railroad
yard at Quang Nop, which is north of the industrial city of Thanh Hoa and
80 miles south of Hanoi.

"These cuts can be fixed, some quite quickly probably," said an American
intelligence analyst. But it costs them significantly more in time, effort and
money to repair the damage than it does us to cause it."

"In absolute terms, this type of bombing campaign probably does not appear
to be cost-effective—you put out a lot to get what seems to be only a little.
But what is little to us is a lot to the enemy."

Air Force officers are similarly defensive about results of the past and pres-
cent campaigns in North Vietnam. The damage assessments released so far
by the U.S. command suggest that only one in two strikes causes militarily
significant damage.

Last weeks' strikes, for example averaged more than 250 a day but produced
an average of less than 25 secondary explosions and 25 secondary fires a day
in raids on warehouses, ammunition depots and fuel storage areas, according
to preliminary damage assessments. There have been about 4,000 strikes in
North Vietnam since March 30.

"When we hit a warehouse and there is a secondary explosion and fire,
we have no way of knowing whether we have just destroyed several million
dollars worth of surface-to-air missiles or some relatively cheap kerosene for
lanterns," said one squadron commander.

"Besides that, a lot of our effort is going into protecting ourselves right
now by hitting missile sites, antiaircraft artillery sites, radar and the enemy's
airfields."

In last week's attacks, the airfield at Cat Bi south of Haiphong was damaged,
but the extent is not known, according to military sources. The runway at
the airfield at Bai Thong, west of Thanh Hoa, was reported to have been
damaged by bombs at both ends and in the middle.

**MISSILES REPORTED DESTROYED**

Pilots also reported destroying six surface-to-air missiles and damaging a
seventh in the Hanoi area destroying three more probably with their launchers.
In attacks against missile sites directly north of the border demarcation zone
and two other missiles about-to-be launched at sites elsewhere in the country.

Although wary of the missiles, U.S. pilots say they have proved surprisingly
ineffective in the latest raids over North Vietnam. More than 1,000 have been
fired since March 30, the start of the Communist offensive, but they have
downed only 11 planes.

"Ordinarily, air defense planners expect to get one plane for every two or
three or no more than four missiles fired," one U.S. staff officer said.

"Their average is one plane for about every 100."

American officials estimate the cost of each of the Russian-made surface-to-air
missiles at $250,000—$320 million for those fired since the start of the offensive.
North Vietnamese MiG fighters also continue to approach the raiding Ameri-
can planes in groups ranging from 2 to 20 according to pilots, but generally lurk away from the main force of U.S. aircraft, apparently hoping to catch one or two alone.

The most frequently used plane, pilots say, is not North Vietnam’s Soviet-made MIG-21 its best, but the older MIG-17. It is basically an improved model of the Korean War communist fighters, with a high climb rate and a tight-turning radius, making it nimble in a dogfight.

Four U.S. warplanes were lost over North Vietnam last week, according to the U.S. command.

[From the Washington Post, May 17, 1972]

U.S. CITES HEAVY N. VIET BOMB DAMAGE

(By Leo Lescace)

SAIGON, May 17.—American bombers have cut North Vietnam’s road and rail network at 71 points, destroyed or damaged scores of boats, warehouses and railroad cars, and damaged the country’s main air defense headquarters near Hanoi since President Nixon ordered the interdiction of North Vietnam’s supply lines on May 8, the American military command announced Tuesday.

In a lengthy “preliminary bomb damage assessment,” the U.S. Command said the results of the strikes against North Vietnam’s surface transportation lines included the destruction of or heavy damage to eight bridges. The report said 1,800 sorties have been carried out over North Vietnam since the interdiction campaign began.

No major new Communist attacks were reported in South Vietnam by government military spokesmen. The battle at Anloc, 60 miles north of Saigon continues with heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire and with Communist troops still occupying the northwest portion of the town.

Around Hue and Kontum where large-scale North Vietnamese attacks are still expected, there was little fighting reported.

The first detailed account of the new American bombing campaign against North Vietnam codenamed “Linebacker” shows that targets have been struck from 30 miles north of Hanoi to the Demilitarized Zone.

More than 128 trucks and 31 field guns have been destroyed or damaged and seven surface-to-air missile sites have been demolished and another damaged, the command said.

Principal targets, however, have been the railways and roads in keeping with President Nixon’s order to prevent supplies from reaching North Vietnamese troops fighting in northern South Vietnam.

The six-page catalogue of targets destroyed or damaged includes: 65 boats, 182 railway cars, 40 warehouses and North Vietnam’s petroleum pipeline to the south.

The report said several structures at the North Vietnamese air defense headquarters at Bachmai airfield a few miles south of Hanoi were destroyed in a raid by Air Force Phantoms. Soviet technicians have been known in the past to be working at Bachmai. During the height of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the administration of President Johnson, reliable sources said, several of the Soviet technicians were killed in U.S. raids.

The impact of the interdiction campaign is not expected to be known for 30 days, a U.S. Command spokesman said. The North Vietnamese are believed to have stockpiled a month’s supply of fuel for their tanks and vehicles near the battlefields in the south.

During the bombing of the late 1960s, North Vietnam mobilized peasants to repair damage throughout the countryside. China sent a 50,000-man work force to maintain the rail system in the northern part of the country. By one way or another, North Vietnam was consistently able to keep much of its transportation functioning.

During the air offensive, which has included strikes at Hanoi and the port of Haiphong, North Vietnam’s two major cities, seven U.S. planes have been lost and 11 North Vietnamese Migs have been shot down, the command said.

Each day since the President’s speech on national television an average of about 250 sorties have been flown by U.S. Air Force and Navy jets over the North.
U.S. B-52s, which have been credited by South Vietnamese and American military officials as playing the most important role in checking North Vietnam's current offensive, kept flying roughly one mission an hour against targets in South Vietnam as they have done in recent weeks.

All but two of the 25 B-52 missions flown in the 24 hours ending at noon yesterday were around the three major battle areas of the offensive—Anloc, Kontum in the Central Highlands and Hue and Quangtri near the Demilitarized Zone.

The two exceptions were strikes at targets 67 miles southwest of Saigon where the Mekong Delta borders Cambodia in Kien Tuong Province.

South Vietnam has stripped the Delta of more than one division of troops in order to reinforce its defenders around Anloc, and recently there have been intelligence reports that the North Vietnamese are infiltrating back to some of their former strongholds in the Delta.

The Communist offensive has not yet included major efforts in the Delta where more than a third of South Vietnam's people live.

However, military sources believe there is a good chance the Communists will try to take advantage of the reduced government military strength in the Delta before the current offensive is over.

In the Central Highlands, North Vietnamese forces have again cut Highway 19 which connects Pleiku with the coastal city of Quinhon by blowing a culvert.

Enemy troops blew up the main ammunition dump in Pleiku early Wednesday, robbing the Central Highlands capital with a series of artillery explosions that were still going off five hours after the attack. There was no information available on casualties.

The airfield at Kontum was hit during the night by 15 to 30 rounds of 122-mm rocket fire. One South Vietnamese C-130 transport plane and two U.S. helicopters were destroyed. Six Americans were injured.

South Vietnamese infantrymen who landed at the mined Firebase Bastogne 12 miles southwest of Hue Monday were reported Tuesday still combing the area looking for Communist units and supply caches.

They reported killing 78 North Vietnamese in two separate actions in the area, according to a South Vietnamese military spokesman.

South Vietnamese commanders have no intention of trying to rebuild Bastogne into a defensive position. It was largely destroyed by air strikes after its garrison pulled out April 29 under Communist pressure.

However, military sources in Saigon said the commanders hope to continue sweeping the area in an effort to keep the North Vietnamese off balance and to provide early warning should the Communist troops begin a major advance toward Hue.

[From the Washington Post, May 23, 1972]

BOMBING OF NORTH SPREADS TO NONMILITARY TARGETS

(By Peter Osnos)

SAIGON, May 24.—U.S. Air Force and Navy jet fighters carried out their heaviest raids so far on North Vietnam over the weekend, expanding again the scope of their targets and the range of the attacks, the U.S. Command said Tuesday.

An average of more than 380 strikes a day were flown in a three-day period ending Monday evening, the command said, including attacks on bridges and rail lines only 40 miles from the border of China.

In addition to the strictly military installations and transportation facilities that had been the principal targets up to now, the command confirmed that a power transformer eight miles northwest of Hanoi had also been attacked.

[Several thousand South Vietnamese marines launched a combined amphibious and helicopter assault Wednesday on the coastal strip called the "Street Without Joy" east of Quangtri City, AP reported.]

Senior U.S. officers said the justification for hitting the power plant was that it supplied electricity to many truck repair shops and small factories in the Hanoi area providing war-related services. They said the transformer was 75-per-cent destroyed.
Well-informed American sources said a cement factory in the vicinity of the port city of Halphong was also hit, but this raid was not-included in the command's latest listing of bomb damage.

[In Washington, Defense Department spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim confirmed the bombing of nonmilitary installations and said U.S. bombers "will be hitting some of the other targets, such as power plants and some of the industrial facilities which support the military effort of the north."

[Friedheim told newsmen that U.S. commanders "probably have more flexibility in their targeting than was exercised in the 1967-1968 period."]

The renewed regular bombing of North Vietnam, codenamed "Linebacker" by the Pentagon, coupled with the mining of the country's seven ports and, heavy naval bombardment has now surpassed anything mounted by the United States in past years.

Despite failures in the previous bombing campaign to stop the flow of men and equipment to the South, officers believe this time the effect will be greater. "We are doing better," said one very senior commander. The greatest impact on Hanoi's war-making capability, U.S. officers believe, will be the failure to get supplies from the sea routes, a direct result of the U.S. mining of harbors.

[The official North Vietnam News Agency said antiaircraft crews and planes shot down eight American warplanes over North Vietnam, four of them over Ha Bac Province, UPI reported.

[U.S. Air Force and Navy fighters shot down four Soviet-built MiG interceptors over North Vietnam Tuesday, AP reported, citing U.S. military sources.

[Communist gunners fired 14 rockets into Bienhoa airbase, 15 miles north of Saigon, overnight, Reuter reporter. First reports said one South Vietnamese soldier was killed and 16 persons, including four U.S. servicemen, were wounded.]

In the two weeks since "Linebacker" began, Hanoi and Halphong have been hit as many times as they were in the 1965-1968 period, according to the informal records of military statisticians.

"There is nothing inviolate," said one ranking officer responsible for the conduct of the air war. "If someone says we want that target up there . . . we go get it."

Moreover, the commanders maintain that the bombing is substantially more effective than it was in the past because of improvements on the conventional 2,000-3,000-pound bombs that have been fitted with laser-guided and electro-optical homing devices. These bombs can be released, from altitudes as high as 20,000 feet and still store accurate hits in up to 80 per cent of the strikes. Air Force journals have reported.

The "smart bombs" have been responsible for the success in knocking out bridges, rail lines and other targets that had once proved troublesome to pilots who kept having to come back to them.

The important rail and vehicular Thanh Hoa Bridge, 80 miles south of Hanoi, for example, was struck many times in 1965-68, but never rendered useless for a significant time period.

The bridge was hit again on May 13 and the Air Force maintains it has been put out of action for the foreseeable future.

"The simple fact is that he (North Vietnam) can still repair these things," said a senior Air Force officer. "But I can take them out in just a few minutes. It takes about two minutes for each bridge. It's a relatively clean, surgical operation. Bombing is very precise with these weapons."

The officer said that the attacks 40 miles from China destroyed six bridges with only eight planes.

"Smart bombs" have been in the Air Force and Navy arsenals for as long as two years, but they were not used extensively in operations over the Ho Chi Minh Trail or inside South Vietnam. Other high-priced equipment—computers, sensors and the like—is also credited with improving results.

While commanders maintain that fewer planes are now necessary to accomplish greater objectives, they are at no-loss for assets. Since the buildup began in mid-February, air strength in Southeast Asia has risen to the level of the peak years of "Rolling Thunder."

Fighters and bombers operate from six bases in Thailand, (one was recently reopened), anywhere from five to seven aircraft carriers and some B-52s are based on Guam. There are Air Force and Marine squadrons based at Danang and Bienhoa, inside South Vietnam.
Through careful manipulation of the manpower commitment, Pentagon planners have managed to avoid sending so many people to South Vietnam that the steadily dropping troop strength figures would be reversed.

Many of the additional planes (the overall total is about 1,100) are deployed inside South Vietnam where the air offensive also continues to expand. The total number of sorties in May is likely to come close to the figure for May, 1968, the highest of the war. That month, the daily average was about 400.

Tuesday, Air Force and Navy Jets flew 426 sorties. For the entire month of January, 1972, 169 U.S. sorties were flown inside South Vietnam.

[From the Evening Star, April 19, 1972]

COMMANDERS PICK TARGETS—NEW POLICY ON VIET BOMBING

(By Orr Kelly)

Top American military commanders in Saigon have been given a free hand in selecting and striking military targets anywhere in North Vietnam.

The new bombing policy was revealed almost casually by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird yesterday during a session with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that went on nonstop for almost four and one-half hours.

Laird also said that all of North Vietnam was subject to attack as long as the invasion of the South continues and that the possibility of blocking North Vietnam and mining the harbor at Haiphong are under consideration.

All through the bombing campaign of 1965-1968, a tight control was retained in Washington over the selection of targets in the North and the timing and nature of attacks.

TACTICAL SITUATION

But Laird told the committee yesterday that authority has now been given to the commanders in Vietnam to use both tactical fighter bombers and big B52 bombers anywhere in North Vietnam "as the tactical situation develops."

The White House said recently that although President Nixon was making the over-all policy decisions on U.S. reaction to the offensive, the choice of targets for bombing strikes was being delegated to others.

Pentagon officials, questioned about Laird’s comments, said they should be taken literally—that top commanders in Vietnam can now use the full range of American air power as they see fit.

In effect, this places unprecedented control over the use of more than 600 planes in the hands of General Creighton W. Abrams, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, and the commander of the Seventh Air Force, who is also his deputy for air power.

That position was filled last week by General John W. Vogt, Jr., 52, who was director of the joint staff for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon until his new assignment.

In his new job, and under the new ground rules, he controls not only the limited number of American planes still remaining in Vietnam, but also B52 bombers stationed in Thailand and on Guam, Air Force fighter bombers in Thailand, marine fighter bombers stationed at Da Nang and Navy planes on four carriers off-shore.

Pentagon press spokesman Jerry W. Friedhelm said that the decision to give control over the air power resources to the military men in Saigon did not involve any change in the rules of engagement, long in effect, designed to minimize civilian casualties.

This contrasts sharply with previous policy which set buffer zones around Hanoi and Haiphong, barred strikes near the Chinese border and protected foreign shipping in the port of Haiphong.

Laird demonstrated the administration’s changed attitude when he told the senators he was sorry if some Russian ships were hit during the weekend raid but indicated he wasn’t greatly worried about such damage. He noted that it might very well have come from falling debris from the North Vietnamese anti-aircraft system.

At another point in his testimony, he said the mining of the Haiphong harbor and a naval blockade of North Vietnam were both under consideration. Both of
these options were thought about early in the war but rejected because of possible conflicts with other nations.

NAVAL POWER

Neither during the session nor when questioned afterward did Laird or Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, say how actively the possibility of mining and a blockade were being considered.

But Pentagon officials said later that the United States now clearly has enough naval power in the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea to impose a blockade and make it stick—if the political decisions were made that the risk was worth taking.

In addition to its four aircraft carriers, the United States has a cruiser and about two dozen destroyers and frigates in the area.

Laird said the USS Newport News—a cruiser with 9 eight-inch guns that is the closest thing to a battleship left in the Navy—was en route to the scene.

Also on their way across the Pacific are two more carriers, although it is not yet clear whether they will reinforce or replace those now on the line at Yankee Station.

Laird's testimony, taken together with Monday's appearance by Secretary of State William P. Rogers, clearly indicated that the administration has determined to crack the North Vietnamese offensive and that it is willing to take some serious risks in its relations with the Soviet Union to do so.

In an early morning closed-door session with the Senate Armed Services Committee, Laird said the South Vietnamese had blunted the enemy offensive on the ground and he later told the Foreign Relations Committee that the past two weeks had proved the success of the Vietnamization program.

One senator after another pressed Laird for some assurance that the United States is not simply repeating the history of the mid-1960's when the use of air power was quickly followed by a massive commitment of manpower.

But several seemed more restrained than in the past about criticizing the administration because it now says it is reacting to a much more visible kind of invasion than in the past.

[From the New York Times, May 15, 1972]

SIGNS OF WAR EVERYWHERE IN NORTH VIETNAM CAPITAL

HANOI, NORTH VIETNAM, May 14.—At 1:30 this afternoon antiaircraft guns were heard. Seconds later the sirens sounded over Hanoi.

In the Thong Nhat (Reunification) Hotel, chambermaids and waitresses grabbed helmets and rifles. They took up posts in the hotel garden, watching for American planes.

The hotel guests—mostly East Europeans, North Koreans, and Chinese, with a few Western correspondents—headed for the hotel’s shelter. It is 20 feet below the ground and consists of four small concrete rooms with low ceilings. Two small electric fans stirred the muggy air.

The all-clear sounded 15 minutes later. Apparently it was just reconnaissance planes.

BRIDGE A WAR CASUALTY

The recent bombing and the threat of more are inescapable facts of life in Hanoi today. Within minutes of arrival a visitor sees one casualty: the Red River bridge, 1,000 yards long and Hanoi’s main road and rail link to the north and the east.

The bridge was reportedly hit Wednesday. It is still standing, but cannot be used by vehicles. Some foreign experts say it will take months to repair.

Traffic crosses the broad, muddy river on a pontoon bridge—boards covered with metal plates on steel pontoons. It is one-way only, so bicycles and carts filled with vegetables wait their turn along with trucks.

RAIL LINES REPORTED HIT

The Hanoi airport across the river from the city has not been hit. Some think this is because Soviet and Chinese airlines stop here on commercial flights. In any case, mobile antiaircraft guns can be seen under the trees nearby.
Informed non-Vietnamese sources say that recent bombing has hit the main railroad line both south and north of Hanoi, as well as the line linking Hanoi and Haiphong. The Government has made no public statement on this.

It did, however, publish details of what was described as a bomb attack Wednesday on a Soviet ship, the Grisha Akopyan, at Campha, the country's chief coal port. Foreign sources said the ship exploded Friday night after burning three days. No Soviet statement on this attack has been published here.

The intensified bombing of the last week was reported to have hit many nonmilitary targets in and near Hanoi.

On Thursday the Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Hospital, about a half mile from the Thong Nhat Hotel, was reported to have been damaged. North Vietnamese officials said the hospital, which stands on spacious grounds near the river, was marked with a Red Cross on the roof.

This morning this correspondent approached the hospital grounds just as loudspeakers gave the alert indicating that planes were 30 miles away. Four patients in blue hospital gowns were waiting outside to go into the shelter as the siren sounded.

One patient, 50 years old, questioned through an interpreter, said a rocket attack came at 9 o'clock Thursday and wrecked one wing. "We were going to shelters," he said, "but six people were wounded by fragments."

A small outdoor cafe just behind Hanoi's zoo and botanical garden was reported hit on the day the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong resumed — Sunday, April 16.

On Sundays dance song and classical theater performances are usually scheduled under palms and live oaks in the zoo garden. But today it was nearly deserted, like most of the city's parks. A keeper was exercising two small bears, or possibly training them for the circus, which also was closed.

Visual reminders of the bombing and war are everywhere. In Hangdau Park a children's playground is now marked with mounds — shelters.

The streets are full of individual shelters. These are just holes in the ground about two feet in diameter and four feet deep. They are lined with concrete cylinders and are covered with concrete lids. Men could be seen digging more of the shelters today and hundreds of the concrete sections were piled up in one square.

"Individual shelters look unpleasant," a North Vietnamese official said. "Westerners see insects in them. But they are not so dangerous as the American bombing."

In the face of the bombing and years of war, it is impossible for this visitor to detect any atmosphere of fear.

One diplomat learned the other day that his translator's children were in a village just bombed near Hanoi. He told her to take the day off to look for them. She worked through the day and rode her bicycle that night to see them. She cycled 12 miles each way and spent hours waiting at the Red River.

A European Communist said he was near Haiphong when the area was heavily bombed last week. He said the family he was visiting kept eating right through the bombing, asking him about the faraway country.

"What strange people," this man said, "their tranquility, their detachment after 25 years of this. We would not last a fortnight."

There are jokes, too. One is that a bombing is unlikely before 9 Sunday mornings because Seventh Fleet pilots are entitled to coffee first.

The scene in Hanoi is a mixture of the tranquil and the martial. It remains very much a tropical colonial city in appearance, with characteristic cream-colored three-story buildings and streets lined with trees. Locusts begin singing at 3 daily and their are gladioli in the markets.

**BICYCLES, CARTS AND CARS**

The traffic is mostly bicycles, many ridden by attractive women in pajama-like black-silk trousers. There is an occasional cart pushed by a peasant or pulled by a water buffalo. Soviet-built cars and jeeps rush by, horns tooting.

Posters record the shooting down of American planes or urge greater productivity for the war effort.

Although official announcements speak of the "liberation forces" fighting in the South, identification of the North with the war effort is clear enough.
One huge poster is a military map depicting how Quangtri was won. Women speak of husbands or sons "at the front."

Hoan Kiem Lake is in a lovely park with royal poinciana trees and an old temple. Today a loudspeaker broadcast a girls' song that sounded like something from "The Mikado." But its words were translated: "We are fighting for victories in the South."

[From the New York Times, May 20, 1972]

THE VIEW FROM HANOI

(By Anthony Lewis)

HANOI, May 19.—Writing from North Vietnam is a strange experience. A reporter seldom goes to a country with which his own is actively at war. But it is not only the emotions that are confusing. There is the problems of facts.

Ordinarily it is tedious and self-important for newspapermen to write about their own concerns. Like politicians, they asked for the job and deserve no sympathy. But the difficulty of forming accurate judgments about North Vietnam is not just a newspaper problem; it has been at the heart of the whole American entanglement in this war for seven years.

Consider the question of fear. I have been in North Vietnam a week now and during a considerable part of that time I have been afraid. Other Europeans here say the same—French, Swedish, Russian, Italian, British, East German. It is no fun being in a small country while the most powerful on earth is bombing it.

But in the bomb shelters, while the Europeans look especially pale, the Vietnamese chatter and laugh. Does this mean they are not afraid? Of course anything may become more bearable over time, but they clearly still know fear. They explain that they have no choice except to fight until the Americans go away. When a young girl says that, does it represent some general truth about Vietnamese attitudes?

That leads to the central question of this country's determination. It is simply impossible for an outsider to find anyone who expresses feelings other than a confident stoicism about the war. One asks a frail elderly man, a historian and poet, whether North Vietnam would fight on if America escalated the bombing further. He replies:

"In 1945 and '46 we had a famine in which two million people died. The war has done nothing like that, so you see that we can stand much worse."

Is that attitude a result of Communist indoctrination and repression? Or does it spring genuinely from Vietnamese history, from the thousands of years of fighting against Chinese and other invaders? One can only offer the judgment—supported by the Western diplomats and other observers here—that it is genuine.

Propaganda is incessant, naturally. The newspapers are full of stories of great victories in the South and the shooting down of American planes. There is no immediate way to judge the accuracy of a claim unless one happens to see with one's own eyes.

When American bombers hit civilian targets in Hanoi, correspondents are taken to see the damage. But sometimes after a raid officials refuse to say what has been hit; the likely conclusion is that it was military targets.

Restrictions and propaganda are hardly unusual in wartime, in any country. The curious thing is that the North Vietnamese have allowed reports on some military matters to go out uncensored when a correspondent happened to see something—for example the observation that the bombers had succeeded in cutting a bridge here.

The other day in Haiphong officials told this correspondent that they were sweeping and defusing American mines and that ships were going in and out of the port. The Pentagon denounced the claim, saying reconnaissance showed no ships entering or leaving. The only way to be certain would be extended investigation or observation of the harbor which the North Vietnamese would not allow. So the claim could be mere bravado.

On the other hand, propaganda is not all on one side. The same American reconnaissance system that watches Haiphong also selects bombing targets. The announcements in Saigon and Washington always speak of attacks on military targets. How does it happen, then, that a large hospital standing...
alone in the middle of rice fields has been hit not once but twice in the last six months.

After seven years of this war most Americans recognize that truth is difficult to establish in Vietnam. For both newspapermen and the public the right attitude is skepticism toward all official claims.

[From the New York Times, May 22, 1972]

DEATH IN PHULOC

(By Anthony Lewis)

PHULOC, NORTH VIETNAM.—At the southern boundary of the city of Halphong the rice fields begin. The vista of watery green stretches out to the horizon, broken only by the occasional island of a tiny village.

About five miles out, down a dirt track in the middle of nowhere, is the village of Phu Loc. In Vietnamese Phuc means peace and happiness; Loc means prosperity.

The houses in Phu Loc, as in most villages of the Red River delta, are made of mud with straw roofs. Until April 16 the population was 611.

At 2:20 A.M. on Sunday, April 16, according to the North Vietnamese, American B-52's bombed Phu Loc, killing 63 people and injuring 61. Of the 121 houses in the village, 78 were destroyed.

That is what the North Vietnamese say. After a visit to Phu Loc one has no reason to doubt that such an attack occurred. The rubble and bomb craters are still there, a month after the attack, with some new houses built or going up and amid the wreckage. But the physical evidence is less convincing than the emotional.

As we entered the village there was an old frail woman sitting on a pile of rubble, moaning and swaying. When she saw the foreigner she started to come over. My interpreter, embarrassed, took her gently by the arm to another mound where she stood, still wailing. The interpreter came back and explained: “Since the loss of her family she is mad.”

Another woman, who refused to be kept away from me, was Mrs. Pham Thi Viet, 38 years old but looking much older. She said she was away the night of the bombing and came back to find four of her six children dead. So were her father, uncle, sister-in-law, niece and nephew.

“Why does Nixon send B-52’s to kill our children while they are asleep?” she asked.

Often in North Vietnam people whom the authorities arrange for an American correspondent to meet say they know there are different kinds of Americans—some against the war. That did not happen in Phu Loc.

The American strategists of the Vietnam war tend to think in large abstractions uncluttered by human beings. They say the war is necessary to preserve the prestige of the President, or to assure the sea routes to Australia—Walt Rostow wrote that recently. But would those objectives seem “so persuasive” if the cost in human terms were really understood?

Death is always less painful in the abstract. I was critical of the means used by the United States in this war before coming here. But tallying the numbers of bomb craters is not the same as seeing Phu Loc.

The North Vietnamese believe that American bombing of such targets as villages and hospitals is done intentionally to terrorize the population. I do not; I think it is a mistake. But that does not resolve the moral problem.

If Phu Loc was hit by mistake, there is still the question of why it happened. Was American intelligence wrong? Were the pilots careless? Or is it simply impossible for men flying planes five miles above the earth in the middle of the night to know exactly what they are going to hit?

We cannot call back that early morning of April 16. But we can stop talking about precision bombing of military targets. We can avoid saying what others have after wars: We did not know.
EXPLOSIVES USED BY U.S. IN ASIA DOUBLED WWI'S

NEW YORK (Reuters) - In the seven years of participation in the Indochina war United States forces have exploded an average of 118 pounds of ordnance every second during the war—a total that amounts to twice the explosives used during all of World War II.

A survey of U.S. action in the war published in the latest issue of *Scientific American* reports the amount of explosives used equals 584 pounds for every man, woman, and child in Indochina and 142 pounds for every acre of land. Twenty-six billion pounds have been exploded in the area.

In Vietnam alone the total amount of explosives equals 21 billion pounds. That comes to 497 pounds for every acre of land and 1,215 pounds for every person.

The survey was done for the Scientists' Institute for Public Information by Dr. Arthur E. Westing and Dr. E. W. Pfeiffer. Dr. Westing is a biologist at Windham College in Vermont. Dr. Pfeiffer is a zoologist at the University of Montana.

The information was based on Defense Department statistics and involved a field trip to Vietnam.

There are an estimated 21 million bomb and artillery craters in South Vietnam alone. B-52 raids produce an additional 100,000 craters every month since bombing has been increased by President Nixon.

The effects of the bombing have been enormous and have created permanent physical scars on the countryside, turning it into a moonscape, Dr. Westing and Dr. Pfeiffer report.

The average crater from a 500-pound bomb is about 30 feet in diameter and 5 to 20 feet deep. In the South the bombs broke through the water table and the craters are filled with stagnant water.

The water has so increased breeding grounds for mosquitoes that there is a marked increase in malaria and dengue fever directly attributable to the bombing.

Useless grass grows in the old craters and farmers will not try to cultivate crops in the bombed area. Slivers of sharp metal cut the feet of the farmers and the hooves of their cattle. There are also thousands of unexploded bombs and shells in the areas. One of the principal industries of South Vietnam was timber. It has been virtually destroyed by the bombing. In one area four out of five felled trees contained metal fragments that broke saw blades.

Those areas not cleared by defoliation and explosives are cleared by huge bulldozers that also create permanent scars on the land.

STIFF CURBS ON BOMBING URGED BY THE RED CROSS

(Geneva, May 3.-The All-Swiss International Committee of the Red Cross proposed today that severe restrictions on the bombardment of civilians be added to the four Geneva conventions of 1949 for the protection of war victims.

The suggestion was in a supplementary agreement, or protocol, submitted at the opening of a conference attended by governmental experts from 70 countries. The International Committee, which called the conference, submitted a second protocol intended to extend the protection of the Geneva conventions to captured guerrillas or other combatants in civil wars.

The United States and other major Western powers had no comment on the International Committee's proposals. Some delegates said they were unhappy over the decision to keep the proceedings secret except for briefings of the press.

The conference is expected to last a month. The protocols, if accepted, will be considered at a Red Cross conference at Teheran in October, 1973, and put in final form and signed the following year.

The proposals do not take account of demands by Red Cross experts from Sweden and several other countries for a ban on area bombing, napalm or specific weapons.

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[From the Baltimore Sun, May 20, 1972]

[From the New York Times, May 4, 1972]
SOME WEAPONS DENOUNCED

Under a draft resolution submitted by the International Committee, however, the conference would express the belief that all governments should renounce "weapons of mass destruction, blind, poisonous and particularly cruel weapons, and weapons with indiscriminate effect."

The draft expresses the hope that the prohibition of such weapons would lead to general and complete disarmament and urges parties to the Geneva conventions "to spare no effort for the preservation of peace."

Although there was no comment from committee sources, aspects of the proposed definition of "objects of a civilian character"—which would be immune from attack—appear to strike at United States' practices in Vietnam.

One paragraph says that in case of doubt as to whether objectives are entitled to immunity, "crops, provisions and other foodstuffs, drinking-water reserve supplies and dwellings designed for the shelter of the civilian population, or which the latter habitually uses, shall be presumed to be objects of a civilian character."

Civilians stationed at a military objective will have to take their chances, the proposal says in effect. However, it insists that military commands refrain from attacking objectives unless they are identified as military and that "if this precaution cannot be taken, they shall refrain from launching the attack."

WEIGHING GAIN AND LOSS

There should also be no attacks in "probable losses and destruction are disproportionate to the concrete military advantage," the proposal says. It adds that parties to a conflict "shall refrain from attacking as one sole objective, by means of bombardments or any other methods, an area comprising several military objectives which are at some distance from each other and situated in populated regions."

Another draft article, which would forbid blockade to starve an enemy into submission, would require any government that had acceded to the protocol to grant "free passage to relief consignments destined exclusively to the civilian population of another—even if it should be an enemy—contracting party."

The draft protocol regarding victims of "conflicts not of an international character" does not propose drastic changes because of the desire by many governments to have a free hand in dealing with revolts.

It provides that captured guerrillas should be granted treatment similar to that required by the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war from organized military forces. It would prohibit the execution of captured guerrillas "only by reason of having taken part in hostilities or having been members of armed forces."

The protection would be extended only to prisoners who had "distinguished themselves from the civilian population by some distinctive signs or by any other means" and had complied with the protocol.

[From The Washington Post, June 13, 1972]

DANANG: LITTER HEAP OF REFUGEES

(By Laurence Stern, Washington Post Foreign Service)

DANANG, June 12—It is a scene from Goya, this swollen habitation that can no longer be called a city but is rather an urban litter heap of nearly a million souls, fugitives from the battles of the present and the past.

"If you think it's bad now, you should have seen it a month ago. It seemed unlikely that the place would avoid pure anarchy," said one American official. "It was ghastly," said another. "The city was on the verge of going under."

Since the latest torrent of refugees from the northern part of South Vietnam started in May, Danang's population of more than 400,000 has increased by another 400,000. Schools, churches, pagodas, abandoned military installations, sidewalks, alleys are still teeming with fugitives from Dongha, Quangtri, Cunto, Goliinh—the free fire zones of the combatants, all just south of the Demilitarized Zone.
On the edge of the populated limits are acres of debris through which the
most desperate of Danang stoop and pick as though sowing a crop. The misery
of their upheaval is so vast that it becomes almost banal in the telling of it.

Here are some typical refugee stories:

1. “My name is Phuc. I am 11. I list my leg in Tet four years ago when
our village was shelled by the 7th Fleet.”

2. “On the fourth of April, we left our village of Giole when the VC started
rocketing. My home was destroyed. Now, my wife and nine children are here.
We walked 15 miles to Hue and then to this place along the main road.”

3. “Our houses were destroyed by the B-52 strikes. There were strikes
times three in three days, because I suppose there were many VC in the area.
I already started to run away and saw the bombing of my village. Many were
killed.”

And so on.

The refugee tide has begun to reverse itself now and is ebbing back over the
Haivan Pass. It will continue if the South Vietnamese marines, airborne and
1st Division maintain their ground under the umbrella of American air and
naval firepower.

South of Hue, the fields are full of homing refugees, some of whom live and
sleep only 300 yards from the battle. In the worst of times a month ago, Hue’s
population had drained down to about 25,000. Now, it is back to 100,000, or half
its normal size.

Even by South Vietnamese standards, Danang’s population is under the tight
grip of police authority. There have been hundreds of arrests (no one seems to
know precisely how many) of suspected terrorists and political dissidents under
the Phoenix program for “neutralization” of the Vietcong and the broadened
police powers of the martial law decree.

But when the police come, even tea girls in the bar of the Grand Hotel—grand
for Danang but unspeakably decrepit by any other standard—become frightened
and take cover.

The government fears infiltration by Communist guerrillas, of the refugees,
but so far there have been no incidents attributable to terrorists.

One morning last week at breakfast time, a cluster of Communist rockets
crashed on the east side of the river that runs through the city. The traffic
on the street and card game on the hotel steps went on imperturbably.

Danang’s wealthiest families have fled to Saigon and to less threatened points.
And so Danang is now a vast barrio of the poor, the displaced and the stratum of
civilian and military authority that holds the volatile mass together.

That mass is confined within the minor portion of space that is not occupied
by Saigon government installations and the giant American air base from which
the jet fighters roar off every few minutes to join the air war against the North
Vietnamese.

Even before the current offensive, Danang’s population was already congested
with refugees of the 1968 Tet offensive. They came from the north and also from
the embattled villages of Quangngai and Binhdinh provinces just to the south,
the region of central Vietnam in which the Vietminh revolutionary movement
was cradled and resistance to Saigon government control has always been most
most stubborn.

It has become irrelevant, American officials here concede, to discuss the statis-
tics of pacification in those provinces of Military Region I that remain pre-
dominantly under government control: Quangnam, Quangngai, Quangtin, and
the city of Hue. After the North Vietnamese onslaught, one official said, “the
scores became meaningless.”

In Quangngai Province, a “model” pacification project near the site of the
Mylai massacre has been wrecked by Communist guerrillas, according to gov-
ernment sources. A main force Communist battalion has played havoc with paci-
fication on the Batangan Peninsula along the Quangngai coast.

On the main battle fronts north and west of Hue, the marines, airborne and
1st Division are more than holding their own and Communist pressure has
slackedened.

“American air power has been the deciding factor,” asserts an American
official here. “If it were not for the B-52 and tactical air and naval gunfire along
the coast day in and day out, the stabilization we’re enjoying now would not be
present. They’re taking casualties they never dreamed of.”
Unless the enemy has something up his sleeve, I think they will probably withdraw into the hills. I expect the friendlies to reoccupy large portions of Quangtri... The B-52 strikes are down to an exact science. They are fantastic in time-line, precision and ruthlessness."

Politically, the Catholic and Buddhist blocs which have been in the vanguard of opposition to policies of the government of President Nguyen Van Thieu are far more subdued in the regions of central Vietnam under direct military challenge from the North Vietnamese.

Caught between the bombs and bullets of the American and North Vietnamese armies, some of the Bru tribesmen fled to the Ho Chi Minh Trail and into Communist captivity. Others escaped to the Cua Valley. Many died on the spot.

In April and May, the war swept into their new settlements in the Cua area, and once again some fled while others stayed behind.

Today in a roadside refugee camp in Danang, there are 300 Brus left who had managed to trek through the jungles from Cua to Hue and then to Danang.

One of their number, a 35-year-old minor government clerk named Mien, described a month-long odyssey fleeing through the jungle with his wife and five children—part of the time under the surveillance of armed Vietcong guards.

"We were without rice or vegetables for six days while we were in the captivity of the Vietcong. I was afraid of the VC mainly because of my government job. We finally escaped the column when I told them one of the children was sick, and they allowed me to stay behind for a day."

The former district chief of Cua, also a Bru, articulated the helplessness of the highland tribe in a recent interview with a correspondent of the French newspaper Le Monde.

"I tried to let the Americans know about Cua," he said, "but I am now out of power and a refugee, too. I went to my province chief and told him I hoped the Americans would not bomb Cua because there were still more than 6,000 Brus there.

"I hope he went to the 3d Division commander. And I hope the 3d Division commander went to the corps commander. And I hope that the corps commander went to the Americans. I do not know."

[From the Washington Post, June 14, 1972]

A VISIT TO A GRAVEYARD—THE SMELL OF DEATH Pervades Anlooo

(By Tran Huu Trong)

ANLOC, June 13.—The marketplace of Anloc is a graveyard today with row upon row of brown dirt mounds where the vegetable stalls of a bustling rubber plantation town used to be.

Someone has roughly scratched the words "The Fatherland Is Grateful to You," on a concrete slab nearby.

I arrived in Anloc yesterday by motor-bike—the third man sitting at the back—after jumping off a helicopter which flew to a point about a mile south of the town to pick up some of the scores of wounded.

A desperate scene followed on the Highway 18 landing pad as bandaged, limping South Vietnamese soldiers scrambled to get on board. Only the more agile, lightly wounded made it.

A man with a broken leg clung grimly to the skids as the helicopter—after hovering momentarily a few inches from the ground—rose quickly. He fell back with a cry of pain.

Death and destruction were everywhere in Anloc. There could be no more than 10 houses, some just shells, left standing as a result of the North Vietnamese siege which has now lasted about 70 days.

The North Vietnamese were driven from their roadblock around the town jail to the extreme south of the city last night, but rocketing and shelling from the Communist troops around the town continues.

You had to keep moving as rockets fell with a purr and a shattering explosion. Someone was killed or injured but was left behind in the hurry to seek shelter.

The smell of death made one gag.

Near a gutted T-54 tank, I saw bodies of North Vietnamese soldiers decomposed to near skeletons by the neglect of days and weeks of sun and rain.
A group of refugees, pale and thin came straggling back into the city. They started to head south along the highway but the North Vietnamese were still ambushing the road so they came back.

A man asked me for a cigarette. The going price for a packet of even the cheapest brand was nearly 16 times its original price.

The refugees were living in the bunkers with the soldiers sharing their rations and waiting for the day they could escape. Some 10,000 have already made it to safety.

At least 3,000 civilians have been killed, wounded or are missing according to official figures.

A South Vietnamese official told me that to his comrades the battle for Anloc has been as decisive as Dienbienphu was in the defeat of the French in 1954.

They say the North Vietnamese bombardment of rockets, shells and mortars which at its peak reached as high as 10,000 rounds on one day, was twice as heavy as the attack against the French garrison.

But then Anloc has had major support by U.S. and South Vietnamese air strikes which have dropped thousands of tons of bombs in the rubber plantations surrounding the town where the North Vietnamese were based.

I found the commander of Anloc, Gen. Le Van Hung, but could scarcely recognize him. He was much more gaunt than the pictures I had seen in the Saigon press.

The uniform of a U.S. adviser with him was so dirty and worn by the underground bunker existence of the troops that I only recognized he was a colonel by the markings on his helmet.

Another U.S. adviser, a captain, was grateful for a few bits of French bread I brought from Saigon even though it was 24-hours old. He covered it with jam and peanut butter from his ration cans.

There was an optimism that the worst was over, that the North Vietnamese are pulling back. The troops were moving around inside the city and able to man the perimeter more effectively.

No one knew where the North Vietnamese were. The jungle is on the edge of the town and there must be huge sanctuaries to the east.

A helicopter with fresh government troops arrived in the town and suddenly rockets and artillery shells started pounding the area nearby. The dust cleared and a soldier sat in the dust waving at his comrades for help. He could not walk. But the troops rushed by to take up positions behind sandbagged shelters.

The troops in Anloc gave me at least 50 letters to mail to their families.

After spending the night in the shell of a house with government forces I caught a helicopter back to the south toward Saigon.

[From the New York Times, June 15, 1972]

DEATH STALKS REFUGEES ON ROAD FROM ANLOC

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

CHONTHANGH, South Vietnam, June 18—They had survived the nightmarish shelling and bombing of Anloc. Now the more than 50 women, children and old men lay bleeding and dying in front of the church here.

A few hours earlier today, they had been part of a ragged column of about 800 refugees from Anloc who had walked to within six miles of this district town—a relatively safe place—when enemy soldiers opened fire on them.

Rockets and rifle grenades were fired into the refugees at close range. Some tried to run. But most, bewildered by yet another attack, just kept walking. Most of those who with critical wounds were carried by others. But in the panic some of the wounded were left behind.

30 MILES TO A HOSPITAL

About a mile farther down the road, the refugees reached a South Vietnamese Army position and were driven here in military ambulances and trucks. But the vehicles could not be spared for the 80-mile trip to the nearest provincial hospital, and so the wounded were left on the grass in front of the church and three South Vietnamese Army medics and a doctor began trying to give them first aid.
The incident recalled the experiences of the refugees fleeing Quangtri in early May who had to find their way south through North Vietnamese rockets and artillery fire.

In the tangle of bodies in front of the church, an old man gently spooned sweetened milk into the quivering lips of a woman who had metal splinters in one arm and both legs. A teen-age boy who had been wounded in the leg last month rolled on his side to ease the pressure on his back, which had several holes the size of a quarter in it.

**WOMEN IN STATE OF SHOCK**

A teen-age girl lay on a canvas stretcher beneath a tree with a bottle of saline solution tied to a branch.

Another ambulance pulled up. A woman of about 35 was lifted out. Her fists were tightly clenched, her arms crossed over her chest and her legs drawn up. She moaned incoherently. She had not been hit, a doctor said, she was suffering shock.

Another ambulance. An old man of about 60, smeared with blood. The medics lifted him onto the ground. In a few minutes he sighed and was dead.

One child with a deep gash at the base of the skull died quietly in her mother's arms. For several minutes the mother kept pressing the child's breast and wrists, searching for a trace of life. Later, the father came and wrapped the child in a tattered piece of cloth.

**DETAILS ARE DESCRIBED**

Vu Duc Phu, a 50-year-old farmer who was wounded in his right foot, drew softly on his first cigarette in six weeks and talked about the attack.

Early in the morning, he said, there had been fighting on the 15 miles of Route 13 between Anloc and Chonthanh.

South Vietnamese soldiers, he said, "advised us to stop and rest until the fighting was over."

After about an hour they were told to go ahead, he said, "but they warned us to be careful and to go very quickly when we got to the part of the road that crosses the Tano river."

"As we walked down the road our artillery was still firing," he said, and the enemy troops were firing back.

When they got to the Tano, about noon, he said, the Communist opened fire.

"I don't know why they fired on us," the old man went on, since it was clear they were not soldiers.

He said there was no thought of turning back toward Anloc when the shooting started.

"Just think of what we would have to go back to," he said. "There are no houses now. We had to stay in bunkers all the time and almost every day people were killed by the shelling. Kids were dying from diarrhea and the grownups who got wounded would die later because they had no medical treatment."

By late afternoon, the worst of the wounded refugees finally were taken to the provincial hospital in Binhduong. There an orderly clanged an alarm bell and several doctors and nurses swarmed around the arrivals.

During the long ride to the hospital, a young woman with a small child had kept her wounded elderly mother propped up in the cab of the huge army truck. When the older woman was placed onto a stretcher a nurse went running for a doctor.

The doctor knelt over the woman, and pressed a stethoscope to her chest. Then he stood up with a blank look and the young mother began wailing.

[From the New York Times, June 18, 1972]

**FOR THE CIVILIANS OF ANLOC: DAYS AND NIGHTS OF TERROR**

*(By Joseph B. Treaster)*

PHUCUONG, South Vietnam, June 15.—One afternoon during the North Vietnamese seige of Anloc an artillery shell killed eight people in the house to the left
of where Vu Van Nam and his family were staying. The next morning another shell killed 12 people in the house on the right.

"With so many people killed on both sides of us we dared not stay where we were," Mr. Nam said today.

So with heavy shells crashing all around, Mr. Nam grabbed his 2-year-old son, a teen-age son took his 4-year-old brother piggyback and the family dashed to a nearby pagoda. But the pagoda was filled with wounded and Mr. Nam and his seven children had to move on.

That was one of five moves that Mr. Nam and his family made during the nearly 10 weeks that they were caught in Anloc as it underwent the most devastating shelling and bombing any South Vietnamese town has suffered. Some other families in the plantation town of 22,000, gripped by fear and panic, moved even more frequently.

**THE SEARCH FOR SAFETY**

Mr. Nam and his children stayed together, but some families were separated as terrified husbands and wives and children ran in different directions. Those who survived are now searching for their relatives in refugee camps.

No one really knew where he was running, said Mr. Nam, a small man with a sturdy, angular face and a shock of black hair. "I might go to one house to stay and the owner of that house might go to my house," he said.

Concern for goods and property was forgotten, Mr. Nam said, adding, "it seemed that no one worried about anything but their lives."

Mr. Nam came through unharmed. But a hunk of jagged, flying metal tore off the left forearm of his 12-year-old son and another son and two daughters were peppered with steel splinters.

The frame house Mr. Nam had built was destroyed and the plantation near Anloc where he had worked was closed indefinitely. The 42-year-old widower arrived here, 45 miles south of Anloc, yesterday with no belongings and just a few piasters. He and his children are sharing a six-foot square concrete stall in the district market place, with a family of six until they can all be admitted to a Government refugee camp.

**HOW DAYS WERE SPENT**

During the siege, Mr. Nam said, he and his neighbors spent about 15 hours a day in their bunkers and did little but eat, sleep, talk and worry.

"We cooked, ate and sat at the opening of the bunkers," he said. "And we always slept inside."

One of the most frequent arguments, Mr. Nam said, was over whether they should stay in Anloc or try to get out. The majority stayed until the shelling eased greatly a few days ago.

Some of the survivors of Anloc have told of days when their only food was manioc roots. But Mr. Nam said his family and friends always had more rice than they needed and at least once piled bags of it on top of their bunkers like so many bags of sand.

Mr. Nam said Government troops gave him and his neighbors rice and tinned meat and fish. He also said he always found plenty of water for drinking and bathing. Other people said they had been unable to bathe for the entire period they were under fire and one family told of drinking muddy water from shell craters.

Somewhere around the first of June—Mr. Nam says he cannot be precise about the dates—the incoming shells were being counted in the hundreds instead of in the thousands.

They began to think seriously about getting out. Twice, toward the beginning of the siege, they had been turned back, once by Communist soldiers, once by a wall of bombs—which had been ordered after a helicopter was shot down. Now Government soldiers told them it might be safe to go.

Two days ago Mr. Nam and his family and several other civilians walked south on Route 18 for five hours to the town of Tankhal. A helicopter brought them here.
From the Washington Post, June 24, 1972

QUANGTRI REFUGEES DENIED U.S.-SUPPLIED FOOD, RELIEF

(By Laurence Stern, Washington Post Foreign Service)

HUE, June 23.—Refusal by the chief of this present frontier province to distribute American-provided rice and relief supplies to refugees from the Quangtri battlefield has touched off a controversy that has echoed back to Washington. Buddhist and Catholic organizations here have petitioned for his dismissal. Complaints have been filed through channels by American officials to the U.S. embassy in Saigon, to the U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington and the case has even come to the attention of White House officials, according to well-informed sources.

But Col. Thu That Khien, who came here from Quangtri’s top province position in February, stands firm on his insistence that the refugees become self-supporting or move on to the already-overcrowded refuge of Danang, 50 miles south of Hue.

“The province chief is very concerned about people living on the dole,” said one American adviser who says he is reserving judgment on the case. “He is concerned about the money going into the wrong hands and as you know, Vietnam is running out of money.”

Col. Thien puts the issue this way: “My position is that anyone from Quangtri who is not able to stay and support himself should be sent to Danang. If we did not stop delivering rice, they would not go out and try to get work.”

On the face of it, the rhetoric of the dispute is reminiscent of welfare controversies in the United States. But the condition of the Quangtri refugees beggars description with that of relief constituencies in most parts of the world.

Of the 40,000 refugees in Thuathien Province (of which Hue is the capital) some 14,000 have escaped from villages and hamlets in Quangtri over the past seven weeks. Many of them have been living in underground bunkers during the fierce artillery and bombing strikes in recent weeks.

Much of eastern Quangtri has been a free fire zone as government forces have sought to reclaim territory from occupying Communist troops.

Quangtri refugees interviewed in camps scattered through Hue tell a uniform story of harrowing escapes from their bunkers with the clothes on their back. All of the dozens of refugees present during a series of interviews at four separate sites said they have received no food from government authorities for weeks.

A worn-looking woman from Ha-liang district along the Street Without Joy sector above the Mychanh River, 20 miles north of Hue, said: “I can’t go to Danang because my baby is sick. I am afraid he will die on the road. If my baby dies, I will have no place to bury him.”

A 37-year old man who said he was a disabled Quangtri soldier described how he trudged three or four kilometers a day to the fields around Hue in hopes of getting work. “In a week’s time, I would get two days work for 200 or 300 piasters.” (The official exchange rate is 425 piasters to the dollar.)

One group of 350 refugees who have been crowded into an unused school building were drafting a petition yesterday to province Chief Khien.

“We are refugees from Quangtri and have been here almost two months. We were ordered to go to Danang and Chuilai but it is difficult because of our special situation,” the petition said.

“We cannot support our families. Please inspect our site, We rely on your help in this time of urgent need.”

Many of the children in the school were covered with sores and skin infections. One woman was starting to apply the contents of an ancient jar of French vitamin drops to the seriously infected eye of her son and a foreign visitor tried to explain it was supposed to be given orally.

The adults at the school said they received a three-day supply of rice on May 14 with orders to proceed to Danang. They have received nothing since, other than food they could beg or scavenge locally.

In the Dieude Pagoda on Hue’s main canal, 73-year-old Nguyen Khac Viet said he and his family lived in underground bunkers for weeks while South Vietnamese marines launched amphibious invasions north of the Mychanh River.
"Our homes were destroyed. All we had were our bunkers. Finally we escaped when the marines came close by. We came here with nothing."

"We are refugees from communism," said another, "We came into the nationalist zone. Hua is the nationalist zone. Why can't we stay here? Why are we not being given food?"

Americans familiar with the case are clearly stung by Col. Khien's refusal to permit feeding of the refugees.

"We don't understand why he's doing it," said one U.S. official. "There are now 2,000 metric tons of rice in the citadel. It's enough to take care of the province for 60 days."

Social welfare activities for the refugees from Quangtri as well as the home province of Thauthien are at a virtual standstill under Khien's policies, according to authoritative sources, despite a relief and social welfare fund of 145 million piasters (about $850,000) available to the province.

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S. VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FLEE SHOWCASE HAMLET

(By Laurence Stern, Washington Post Foreign Service)

PHUOCLE, June 26.—South Vietnam's pioneer refugee relocation hamlet has been abandoned by most of its intended inhabitants. They say they are afraid to go back.

The story of the hamlet of Suoinghe (pronounced Sweeneay) could have major repercussions for the ambitious and controversial government plan to resettle as many as several thousand refugees from the northern war zone of South Vietnam to areas in the south, where it was thought they would be more secure and economically self-sufficient.

Suoinghe's settlers are afraid to go back because they say the government has not been able to secure either the hamlet or even the few miles of road leading into it. The road was named Nguyen Van Thieu Street in honor of the president of South Vietnam.

Nine nights ago, a North Vietnamese raiding party first infiltrated the hamlet without a shot being fired and then dispersed the population, killing seven regional soldiers and refugees. The Communist assault was followed by helicopter and Skyraider air strikes, according to witnesses of the incident.

Both before and after the attack, provincial officials gave assurances to the refugees that conditions in the hamlet were "100 per cent secure." The officials also threatened to cut off refugee rice allotments if they don't go back.

But the majority of Suoinghe Inhabitants, fugitives from embattled Quangtri Province, 450 miles to the north, refuse to budge from their squalid and crowded quarters in this provincial capital of Phuocle, a 90-minute drive from Saigon.

Despite the threat of food cut-off, less than a third of the hamlet's 4,000 population has returned.

"Two days ago the government put us on trucks and told us Suoinghe was safe and secure," one of the refugees said. "But they drove us only two thirds of the way and would not dare take us into the hamlet. They told us to walk the rest of the way through the jungle. We refused and they took us back here."

The anxieties of the refugees were reinforced by official warnings to three visiting American correspondents yesterday not to attempt driving into Suoinghe because of the danger of snipers or ambush along Highway 2. Aside from Highway 15, the main road between Saigon and the beach resort of Vungtau, and a few tributary side roads, there is no Phuocuyen Province road network on which it is deemed wise to travel.

Since the 1968 Tet offensive, many of the refugees brought here for the showcase hamlet experiment have been uprooted seven times. Four years ago the war forced them from the countryside along the Demilitarized Zone to the populated district towns of Camlo and Giointh in Quangtri Province.

And since the start of the new offensive last April, they fled successively to Quangtri City, Hua, Danang, then were flown south to Phuocle, transported to Suoinghe and finally driven back to Phuocle on June 17 by local North Vietnamese forces.

"Each time their belongings get fewer and fewer. Each time they lose property and loved ones," said a refugee leader.
There are now about 4,000 refugees from the north in the Suoinghe pioneer group. They have been joined by some 28,000 native residents of Phuoctuy Province whose villages have been attacked by elements of three North Vietnamese units that have moved into the province since the beginning of the year.

The North Vietnamese conquest of Quangtri Province produced a southward tide of some 250,000 refugees—nearly a third of the total number of South Vietnamese who have been uprooted by the renewal of heavy fighting since the offensive began on April 1.

About 200,000 are crowded into the congested port city of Danang and some 14,000 are seeking refuge in Hue, where provincial authorities have cut off government relief supplies in an effort to force them southward to Danang or to overcrowded or insecure sites in Phuoctuy and neighboring Longkhanh provinces.

The government had hoped that the refugees in Danang and Hue would be attracted southward into new hamlets, of which Suoinghe was to be a prototype, as it were, away from the war zone and abundant in fertile land. The government's effort is called the "Develop-Virgin-Land-and-Construct-Hamlet" program.

"The government doesn't want the refugees in Danang to hear about what happened in Suoinghe," said one of the refugee leaders. "It wants everyone to think that Suoinghe is pacified and everyone is returning."

He continued:

"The purpose of the Vietcong was not to kill the soldiers so much as to chase the people out. The hamlet was a political, not a military, target of the VC. Now that the people realize they are the target they are not eager to return."

This spokesman, who was among the last to leave Suoinghe after the attack, asked that his name not be used for fear that he would no longer be permitted to represent his fellow refugees in their dealings with the government.

The attack on Suoinghe began shortly before midnight on June 10. A group of about 100 North Vietnamese soldiers who slipped into the resettlement ordered the inhabitants to leave for a Communist-controlled area to the north, the region of Binhba.

One witness said the Communist raiding party told them:

"If you remain here, you will be killed by both sides fighting each other. You are living in the houses of the enemy, the QVN (South Vietnam Government). You must leave the enemy's houses and come with us into our secure territory."

The invaders, according to the villagers, did not touch the rice or personal belongings of the villagers.

"The Vietcong tried to discourage us from running back to Phuocle," one refugee said. "They said we could run to Phuocle, but where would we run when they attacked Phuocle. We could run to Saigon, but they said where would we run when they attacked Saigon."

During the night, the Communist forces abducted 20 soldiers and eight youths from Suoinghe and took them to Binhba, their secure zone.

Nearly two hours after the raiding party entered Suoinghe, a government helicopter began circling the hamlet and firing down into the confusion. The villagers, government soldiers and the Communist invaders began streaming out into the jungle in a large mass.

A refugee spokesman, who wants the government to bomb the Communist jungle positions and pacify the area around Suoinghe, said, "The realities of the situation here seem to be more as the Vietcong state them than as the government does. But it is difficult for me to explain this to the province chief."

Spokesmen for the refugees complain that the government has failed to keep promises made to them when they agreed to embark on the long trip southward as grudging volunteers in the hamlet-construction program.

"We were promised agricultural implements, material to build houses and land—three hectares of land (about seven acres). We were promised 1,000 piasters when we got on the plane. But all we're getting is a half leil (about a pound) of rice a day and salt. And we are in danger of losing that," one of the refugees said.

The majority of the Quangtri refugees are willing to develop the hamlet of Suoinghe if the government secures the surrounding area, a prospect in which they do not presently exhibit great confidence.

However, one group of 40 families taking shelter in the grandstand of Phuocle's soccer field have said they will not go to Suoinghe under any circumstances. The government, they say, has cut off their rice supply.
"We were told the situation was peaceful here. But as soon as we arrived the people were running from Suoi Nghe. And then the people of Binhba came running after they were attacked."

One official said the government is considering three ways of dealing with the group: give each family 1,500 plasters (about $3.20) and let them try to settle in Saigon, simply order them off the road and government grounds, or let them occupy a tract of land along Highway 16 that a Buddhist group has volunteered.

The refugees want to be permitted to settle on the Buddhist tract and are asking for government aid to be resumed until they get started. They are now living on the remnants of their rice and salt allotment.

In the shelter of the grandstand, a young mother and an elderly relative sought to catch the attention of visitors. Each held up one of a pair of infant boy twins. "Their father was a policeman in Quantri, and we don't know where he is," the older woman explained. "With twins we have a problem—one baby can get enough milk from his mother. But she does not have enough milk for two babies. We do not receive any milk. Can you please help us?"

[From the Wall Street Journal, June 27, 1972]

Refugees in Vietnam: Not Just Fatalistic Flotsam of the War

The History of One Group, Now in Its Seventh Camp, Is a Case History of Misery

(By Peter R. Kann)

Phuoc Le, Vietnam—The poor and frightened people packed together in schoolyards or churchyards or abandoned military bases. The little bundles of personal belongings of dented pots and tattered clothes. The rivulets of open sewage. The heat. The swarms of flies—it is the tableau of the time in Vietnam.

More than 87,000 refugees, by official count, have been created, or recreated, since the Communist offensive began on March 31. And while it may be pathetically true to say when you have seen one refugee camp you have seen them all, it is also true that each tale of troubles seems to have a new and bitter twist.

Such is the case of the roughly 4,000 refugees from Suoi Nghe settlement hamlet, who now are seeking refuge in a schoolhouse compound in this provincial capital 40 miles southwest of Saigon. Suoi Nghe, five miles north of town, is simply the latest place from which these people have been forced to flee. They have traveled 460 miles, through six refugee camps, only to arrive at this one.

The refugees of Suoi Nghe are a case study in more than misery. People, not territory, are what the Vietnam war is ultimately all about, and the Communists seem to have chosen these particular people as a military target to make a political point.

A Prototype Hamlet

Some may read their story as an indictment of the Vietcong as a callous enemy and find optimism in the fact that the people of Suoi Nghe are still seeking, if not finding, security under the government of South Vietnam (GVN). Other may read it as a catalog of errors by GVN officialdom and find cause for pessimism in the fear and disillusionment of the people. (The two views, of course, are not really mutually exclusive.) Whatever the view, the case of Suoi Nghe indicates that the Communist offensive is still on in the countryside.

Suoi Nghe was the prototype "resettlement hamlet" of the GVN's "develop virgin land and construct hamlet program" — an effort to encourage chronic refugees from camps in northern Quang Tri Province to resettle on supposedly better, safer land to the south.

The program, conceived last year, was controversial on a number of counts. Critics suggested that the GVN aimed to move several hundred thousand reluctant refugees across vast (by Vietnamese standards) distances for military purposes—in order to turn much of Quang Tri into a free-fire zone.

The program seems somewhat less controversial these days with Quang Tri occupied by the North Vietnamese (and thus largely a free-fire zone) and with a quarter of a million Quang Tri residents, including many who are already
refugees in Quang Tri, crowded into camps in Hue and Danang. The GVN talks of retaking Quang Tri, and perhaps it will, but few observers currently see a peaceful future for that province.

FOLLOWED BY THE WAR

Thus, the 1,341 Quang Tri Refugees who were resettled at Suoi Nghe in January, before the Communist offensive, and the 2,096 Quang Tri refugees who were brought south to Suoi Nghe in May, after the North Vietnamese rolled through Quang Tri, could be considered fortunate—except that the war followed them to Suoi Nghe.

On the night of June 16 about 100 enemy soldiers entered Suoi Nghe under cover of heavy rain. They entered undetected (or at least unopposed) by the battalion of South Vietnamese soldiers supposedly guarding the hamlet. The Vietcong, according to the people, assassinated a number of persons with close GVN connections, rounded up 28 young men who would later be taken away with them, and warned the people of Suoi Nghe that the hamlet would have to be abandoned.

“The Vietcong told us that if we tried to live in Suoi Nghe we would be killed by both sides fighting each other,” says a local leader. “They said the area belonged to them, that it had been temporarily ceded to the Australians (an Australian division operated in this province until early this year) but now it was being reclaimed. They said Suoi Nghe was insecure and that we should move to Binh Ba (a Vietcong-controlled hamlet about five miles away).”

At 1:30 a.m., having been in the hamlet for 90 minutes, the Vietcong shot some sleeping soldiers in the hamlet administration office and men laid siege to the military outpost. A helicopter gunship came in to provide support for the outpost. There was much shooting, and it was near dawn before most of the people were able to flee from the hamlet into the surrounding jungle. From there they made their way here to the province capital of Phuoc Le, not to the Vietcong village of Binh Ba. About 9 a.m., after most Vietcong had apparently also left the hamlet, South Vietnamese planes and artillery shelled a section of Suoi Nghe.

“From the military standpoint, it was a very small battle,” says a hamlet leader. Civilian casualties weren’t high since the Vietcong didn’t indiscriminately shoot civilians and since heavy South Vietnamese firepower was used only after most of the civilians had managed to flee.

Politically, however, the events had some significance. The people, who say they had been told Suoi Nghe was “100% secure” when they first arrived south to resettle, are again being told it is “100% secure” and that they should return to the hamlet. But the people don’t believe it.

Several days after they had fled the fighting at Suoi Nghe the people were loaded on army trucks and driven back toward—but not to—the hamlet. The army drivers halted their trucks about half way (near the intersection with a road called Nguyen Van Thieu Street) and claimed it was too dangerous to drive further. The people were told to walk the rest of the way.

The people refused, and so they were trucked back to this schoolyard camp in Phuoc Le. Local GVN officials then issued formal directives ordering the people to return to Suoi Nghe by June 22. The people did not go. Instead they petitioned GVN and American officials to be permitted to remain in Phuoc Le until a greater degree of security was provided at Suoi Nghe. On June 28, say the people, the GVN failed to deliver the weekly allotment of refugee food staples—rice and salt—to the schoolyard camp. They say they were told assistance would only be given them at Suoi Nghe. Still, as of two days ago, the great majority of the people were refusing to return and re-resettle at the resettlement hamlet.

NOT FATALISTIC FLOTSAM

The continuing resistance of these people runs counter to the common—and perhaps generally valid—view of Vietnamese refugees as docile sufferers, fatalistic flotsam of the war. The people of Suoi Nghe may have been satisfied with Suoi Nghe as a resettlement site. But they don’t want to return to Suoi Nghe now.

“We have moved seven times, and each time we lose everything. We want security, to make a living, to be left alone,” says a middle-aged refugee standing in the
schoolyard camp. "If it is 100% secure, why did we have to flee Suoi Nghe? If it is 100% secure why would the trucks not drive us there?"

"We wouldn't have come south if we had known the situation here," interjects another man.

"The government wants to show that South Vietnam is pacified so they want us to return to Suoi Nghe. But it must be secure," says a leader of the group. He wants the GVN to blast, burn or bulldoze the jungled areas around Suoi Nghe, to force out the Vietcong and to render what now is virgin land cultivable. "Then we will return and protect the hamlet ourselves," he says.

THE MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY

The Suoi Nghe refugees have many other complaints about the gap between GVN promises and performance: Some say they weren't given a 1,000 piaster (about $2.50) family bonus for moving south to resettle; others say they haven't received a daily 20-piaster (about five cents) refugee cash allowance. The leader says that even those refugees who settle in Suoi Nghe in January never got their promised three hectares of rice land. "Then we were promised half a hectare, but we didn't get that either," he says. (They did, however, get small plots for vegetable gardens.)

Some complaints are bitter, others seem to be stated with the resignation of people who, having been refugees a half dozen times before, have seen a host of promises unfulfilled. Indeed, with over 800,000 refugees to care for in a time of military crisis, the GVN may perhaps be excused for a good many failings.

It can even be said to speak well for GVN society that these people are willing and able to voice complaints.

In any case, the crisis of confidence among these people has far less to do with rice plots or piasters than with personal security, which has always been the most precious refugee commodity in Vietnam.