

SECRET

of invasion along the border area has no natural defenses after the enemy passes through the Annam Chain. This is a soft area for defensive purposes. Either one, or a combination of both, of the above routes is possible and feasible. Above the 17th parallel the Viet Minh have 200,000 regular troops and 250,000 regional troops. Secretary Quarles raised the question as to restriction on those forces by the Geneva Accords. It was stated that there is no restriction on the numbers. The troops, however, have been given modernized equipment and training by the Chinese Communists and their re-equipment is a violation of the Geneva Accords. President Ngo also stated the Russians are particularly concerned with the training of these forces and in accordance with Russian practice have emphasized artillery to the point that they have three times as much as Viet-Nam. He stated that the Viet-Minh air force has been training in Communist China since 1951.

The Vietnamese do not have sufficient forces to guard the entire border. Laos has a weak army, very poor roads and is lightly populated. Infiltration through Laos is both easy and dangerous to Viet-Nam. It is believed possible that the Viet Minh could infiltrate this interior route with as many as a 100,000 troops disguised as coolies which could be very dangerous. President Ngo views a strictly defensive plan as unsatisfactory if only because of the demoralizing factor. He feels the plan must be both offensive and defensive. He covered this concept as follows: (1) Vietnamese do not know the SEATO Plan. (2) The General Staff first conceived a defensive plan which was considered demoralizing. (3) They have now conceived an offensive-defensive plan which has been referred to General Williams. (4) Population of the North is against Communism. If free to move it would move out to the South. In the North soldiers are the principals in the privileged class. (5) It is believed necessary in the event of aggression to bring airborne troops into the high plateau area of Laos-Viet-Nam, and also conduct airborne operations to pin down the Viet Minh and make possible an offensive to the North. In addition the line of the 17th parallel must be held as this is the route of refugees. Any airborne landings must be Vietnamese troops not foreign troops. Foreign troops should be limited to use below the 17th parallel as support forces.

Big question for Vietnamese is when do they get the foreign troops. Thai forces will be otherwise occupied. The civil guard is poorly equipped and would not be effective. There are no other ground forces available in the Southeast