

boundaries. Nor could the Vietcong cause be anything but harmed if it were to be recognized openly in the South as an instrument of the North Vietnamese regime.

However, in building up the Vietcong forces for a decisive challenge, the authorities in North Vietnam have increasingly dropped the disguises that gave their earlier support a clandestine character.

Through 1963, the bulk of the arms infiltrated from the North were old French and American models acquired prior to 1954 in Indochina and Korea. Now, the flow of weapons from North Vietnam consists almost entirely of the latest arms acquired from Communist China; and the flow is large enough to have entirely re-equipped the main force units, despite the capture this year by government forces of thousands of these weapons and millions of rounds of the new ammunition.

Likewise, through 1963, nearly all the personnel infiltrating through Laos, trained and equipped in the North and ordered South, were former Southerners. But in the last 18 months, the great majority of the infiltrators—more than 10,000 of them—have been ethnic Northerners, mostly draftees ordered into the People's Army of Vietnam for duty in the South. And it now appears that, starting their journey through Laos last December, from one to three regiments of a North Vietnamese regular division, the 325th Division of the North Vietnamese Army, have deployed into the Central Highlands of South Vietnam for combat alongside the Vietcong.

Thus, despite all its reasons for secrecy, Hanoi's desire for decisive results this summer has forced it to reveal its hand even more openly.

The United States during the last 4 years has steadily increased its help to the people of South Vietnam in an effort to counter this ever-increasing scale of Communist aggression. These efforts achieved some measure of success during 1962. The South Vietnamese forces in that year made good progress in suppressing the Vietcong insurrection. Although combat deaths suffered by these forces in 1962 rose by 11 percent over the 1961 level (from about 4,000 to 4,450), Vietcong combat deaths increased by 72 percent (from about 12,000 to 21,000). Weapons lost by the South Vietnamese fell from 5,900 in 1961 to 5,200 in 1962, while the number lost by the Vietcong rose from 2,750 to 4,050. The Government's new Strategic Hamlet program was just getting underway and was showing promise. The economy was growing and the Government seemed firmly in control. Therefore, when I appeared before this committee in early 1963, I was able to say:

* * * victory over the Vietcong will most likely take many years. But now, as a result of the operations of the last year, there is a new feeling of confidence, not only on the part of the Government of South Vietnam but also among the populace, that victory is possible.

But at the same time I also cautioned:

We are not unmindful of the fact that the pressures on South Vietnam may well continue through infiltration via the Laos corridor. Nor are we unmindful of the possibility that the Communists, sensing defeat in their covert efforts, might resort to overt aggression from North Vietnam. Obviously, this latter contingency could require a greater direct participation by the United States. The survival of an independent government in South Vietnam is so important to the security of all of southeast Asia and to the free world that we must be prepared to take all necessary measures within our capability to prevent a Communist victory.