

An Opinion for Anyone

These three articles are all from the October 31, 1963 Chicago Tribune
It appears that trying to offer news that would make everyone happy.

Vietnam Version of Mission Accomplished

1,000 Viet Nam GIs Home by Christmas: General

TOKYO, Oct. 31 [Thursday] (AP) — America's top military commander in South Viet Nam said today that at least 1,000 of the 15,000 American troops in Viet Nam will be on their way home within two months.

The statement by Gen. Paul D. Harkins, made in Saigon to a correspondent of the Pacific edition of the armed forces newspaper Stars and Stripes, was in line with a White House announcement earlier this month.

Victory "Months Away"

The White House said after an inspection trip by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara to South Viet Nam that 1,000 American military personnel who have been training Vietnamese troops probably could be withdrawn by the end of this year.

Harkins told the Stars and Stripes, "Victory in the sense it would apply to this kind of war" is just months away.

McNamara and Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, chairman of the United States joint chiefs of staff, reported after a one-week visit to Viet Nam last month that they believed the need for major American involvement in the war there would be ended by December, 1965.

McNamara and Taylor told President Kennedy they were convinced the communist Viet Cong could be defeated by them, or, failing that, Vietnamese government forces would be able by then to suppress the Communists without outside assistance.

Believes Job Complete

Steve Stibbens, Stars and Stripes correspondent, said Harkins' personnel chief told him detailed plans for reduction of United States troops in Viet Nam already have been drawn up and that approval of these is expected "within a few days" from Pacific command headquarters at Honolulu.

Stibbens also quoted Maj. Gen. Charles J. Timmes, who commands the United States military assistance advisory group in Viet Nam, as saying he believes "we have completed" the job of training South Viet Nam's armed forces."

NOTES

All three were captured on October 29, 1963.

CPT Humbert R. Versace was declared dead on September 26, 1966—body not recovered.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humbert_Roque_Versace

1LT James N. Rowe was one of only 34 American prisoners to escape captivity during the Vietnam War. He was rescued on December 31, 1968.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_N._Rowe

SGT Daniel L. Pitzer was returned on November 29, 1963.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=12285371>

Opinion Divided on Early Victory in Viet Nam War

3 Yanks Seized Caution Urged by Reds; Saigon Unit Whipped in Predicting End in 1965

SAIGON, Viet Nam, Oct. 30 (P)—Three United States military advisers are believed to have been captured by commu-



* Versace (left) and Rowe
nist guerrillas who whipped a South Vietnamese company 140 miles southwest of Saigon yesterday.

Two American officers and an enlisted medic disappeared in the skirmish, fought in a marshy area of rice fields, canals, and jungle on the peninsula south of the Mekong river delta.

Both Officers Wounded

Vietnamese survivors said both officers were wounded early in the fight, one in the head and the other in a leg. Twelve Vietnamese also were listed as missing.

In Washington, the defense department identified the captured Americans as Capt. Humbert R. Versace, Baltimore, Md.; 1st Lt. James N. Rowe, McAllen, Tex., and Sgt. Daniel L. Pitzer, Spring Lake, N.C.]

The Red blow fell on a 120-man company forming the left flank of a 300-man task force probing the countryside north-east of the South Vietnamese base at Tan Phu.

Block Rescue Signals

Approaching a grove of trees near a canal, the company ran into a wall of fire. Screened by parapets, the guerrillas fired mortars, machine guns, and small arms. They were estimated to number 500.

American military authorities

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[The editor of The Tribune, mindful of unproved charges that American correspondents covering Viet Nam have failed to report all sides of our involvement there, asked Reuters, the British news agency with world-wide outlets, to assess the situation in that southeast Asian nation torn by communist war. This is the first article of a series by Reuters' veteran correspondent there discussing the pros and cons of the war, American involvement, the Buddhist question, the ruling Ngo family, and other aspects of the complicated situation.]

BY NICHOLAS TURNER

SAIGON, Viet Nam, Oct. 30 [Reuters]—Predicting the outcome of a guerrilla war, said an American general gazing out over rice fields south of Saigon recently, is about as difficult as fighting one.

He was asked the question that has been raised repeatedly since Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Gen. Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the joint



McNamara (left) and Taylor
chiefs of staff, made their recent tour and reported to President Kennedy on the war situation in South Viet Nam.

The question was: "Will the war against the communist guerrillas be over by 1965?"

All American sources in South Viet Nam urge the greatest caution in emphasizing the date

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REDS CAPTURE 3 YANK'S IN VIET SKIRMISH

(Continued from first page)

said communist bombers knocked out both the main and alternate channels on all local military radios. This blocked signals that could have brought the company support from government artillery and from the rest of the task force, which was operating nearby.

Twenty soldiers were reported killed and 30 wounded.

By the time runners contacted the rest of the task force, the guerrillas had withdrawn. Their losses were not determined.

"The day ended with the enemy in command of the field," an American officer said. "He had plenty of time to get his own casualties out of the way, along with the prisoners from our side, before we could get back in."

A relief company of rangers was flown in by helicopter. Ground patrols and reconnaissance planes sought to locate the Red hideout.

Among other developments of the day:

1. American Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, who was to have left by commercial air liner tomorrow for consultations in Washington, decided to go on a special defense department plane Saturday or Sunday.

Seize Girl with Lodge

2. Three members of the United Nations mission investigating charges of religious persecution in South Viet Nam went to the city of Hue, 400 miles north of Saigon, for an overnight inquiry.

Eyewitnesses said a plainclothes policeman arrested a young Vietnamese girl shortly after she posed with Ambassador Lodge for a photograph in front of the Caravelle hotel.

An American photographer arranged the picture. He asked the girl, who was passing on a bicycle, to stop and stand next to the ambassador.

Inside Story of Viet Nam War

Opinion Divided on Predicting Red Defeat

(Continued from first page)

mentioned in a White House policy statement Oct. 3.

One passage in the statement said: "Secretary McNamara and Gen. Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the United States military task can be completed by the end of 1965, altho there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of United States training personnel."

One high American official here said he thought the passage was worded so vaguely as to render the date virtually meaningless. Other sources believed this was perhaps deliberately thrown in for purposes of domestic American politics.

South Viet Nam forces under arms total about 600,000. They are opposed by one-fourth that number, or 150,000 Viet Cong. American help consists of more than 500 million dollars a year and 16,500 military advisers.

Just before McNamara and Taylor left Saigon, they heard Viet Nam's top military commander, Gen. Tran Van Don, express his belief that "we shall achieve victory in South Viet Nam in 1964."

Regarded as Optimistic

This belief is generally regarded as far too optimistic, but there are many here who feel things are going well in President Ngo Dinh Diem's American-backed struggle against the Viet Cong guerrillas.

The president himself, his powerful brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and the chief of the United States military assistance command, Gen. Paul D. Harkins, are among the optimists. They react sharply to reports which indicate that all is not well.

But while in South Viet Nam, the defense secretary and Taylor also heard something of the other view, that the outcome of the war is doubtful, and that serious political problems threaten to hurt the war effort.

Include Military Advisers

The view came from civilian American officials, from Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge on down.

The pessimists also include many of the military advisers slogging thru the rice fields of the Mekong delta, an area with half the country's population and most of its food, which is controlled as much by the Viet Cong as by the government.

When Taylor first came to Viet Nam about two years ago and drew up the proposals which led to a huge American buildup in South Viet Nam, the Viet Cong looked tough to beat.

Reasons to Be Worried

A year later, there were strong signs the communist pressure was at least being held back, and people could talk without excessive optimism of "turning the corner" soon.

But now, two years later, the



thru the government's strategic hamlet program, a project aimed at bringing almost the entire population into fortified villages, where the peasants can defend themselves.

Must Win Minds

The program was inspired by the system the British used to end communist subversion in Malaya.

Military pacification will not be enough to bring about government control and peace in the delta where many of the people have lived under communism for much of their lives.

American officials here are generally agreed the war cannot be won without winning the minds of the peasants. They say the government runs the risk of "winning the war but losing the people."

This is why American civilian officials are pressing for government reforms—for less police state repression and for easing of measures suppressing political criticism.

Desert to Reds

There have been cases in recent weeks where political repression has driven young people from Saigon into the arms of the Viet Cong altho they said they were anti-communist.

The recent politico-religious crisis between the government and the Buddhists made clear to the Americans that a large proportion of the urban population is strongly discontented with the government.

Much of the discontent finds its target in Nhu and his wife. They are associated in the minds of the people with the repressive measures exemplified by the crackdown on Buddhists in August.

government has every reason to be worried.

Tough, well-trained communist units no longer hesitate to engage large government forces supported by American helicopters and aircraft, and the Reds frequently come out on top.

The government used to say, "Soon we will force the Viet Cong to stand and fight—then we will beat them."

Reds Well Armed

The Viet Cong in the delta are standing and fighting, not because they have to but because they want to.

The Reds are heavily armed, using weapons captured in night raids on government static positions, which they overrun with increasing regularity.

In the northern half of the country, the government's military outlook is more hopeful. The mountainous terrain and the historical background of the people make this an easier area to control.

This has largely come about