

Saigon Planes Get 4 North Viet Tanks

SAIGON, Jan. 26 (AP)—South Vietnamese planes have destroyed four North Vietnamese tanks in the past two days in the Central Highlands and killed an undetermined number of enemy troops accompanying them, Saigon spokesmen said today.

It was the first time enemy tanks had been involved in combat since 1969, adding to speculation that the North Vietnamese will soon launch an offensive in the hills of the highlands.

Military sources had told yesterday of sighting six Soviet-built T-54 tanks on the Vietnam side of the border, about seven miles south of Ben Het. Spokesmen could not say whether these 40-ton tanks were involved in the attacks.

The tank sightings lent support to what some officials say are growing indications that North Vietnam is planning a major ground offensive in the Central Highlands next month.

The U.S. Command in Saigon announced the 19th attack against North Vietnamese antiaircraft sites this year. Such strikes are now at a record high for any January since the bombing halt in November 1968.

The strike was made yesterday by an Air Force F-4 Phantom near Donghoi, 45 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Vietnams.

It was the ninth protective reaction strike reported since Saturday.

At least 31 Vietcong, 20 South Vietnamese and one American were reported killed as a wave of ground fighting swept the Mekong Delta, a region that has been generally quiet recently.