

U.S. Viet Casualties in Week

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, March 2—U.S. officials reported today that 109 American troops were killed and 747 wounded in the seven days ending Saturday night.

The weekly casualty toll was announced as U.S. Marines continued to battle hardcore Vietcong units on a peninsula 400 miles north of Saigon. Marine spokesmen said the Marines had sustained light casualties in their drive to push the Vietcong towards the sea.

The number of American dead is smaller than the 220 killed in a week last November during the battle of the Ladrang Valley, but last week's total of dead and wounded is the highest of the Vietnam war.

South Vietnamese casualties

also rose in the week ending Saturday. Spokesmen reported 379 South Vietnamese troops were killed. Eighteen deaths were reported among forces from South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Vietcong losses declined slightly from the week before. U.S. spokesmen said 1122 Vietcong were killed and 92 captured. The previous week 1327 Vietcong were reported killed and 122 captured.

American deaths in Vietnam since 1961 now total about 2300, adding today's figures to statistics issued earlier by the Pentagon. Almost 11,500 Americans have been wounded.

In addition to the Marine offensive near Hue, U.S. troops continued three sweeps along South Vietnam's central coast.

Briefing officers reported the drives met with little opposition.

Near Bongson, 300 miles northeast of Saigon, South Vietnamese troops were reported to have killed or wounded about 150 Vietcong when they drove the guerrillas onto beaches and cut them

down as helicopters prevented their escape by boat.

U.S. Air cavalrymen captured 33 guerrilla suspects who ducked into caves near Bongson when the cavalrymen surprised them.

U.S. Army officers in Saigon hailed the massive offensive of recent weeks in the

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Bongson area as an unqualified success. They said it had disrupted Vietcong plans for months to come. As of last Monday, 2131 Vietcong had been reported killed in the drive.

In the air war, B-52s from Guam bombed two suspected Vietcong centers around Sai-

gon with 500-and 700-pound bombs. One target was 20 miles northeast and the other 55 miles east of the capital.

Briefing officers said U.S. Air Force and Navy planes continued to strike at North Vietnam, but no details were reported.

Vietcong guerrillas de-

stroyed a Marine helicopter that was forced down by engine failure about 45 miles south of Danang. A second helicopter rescued the four crew members before the Vietcong set the grounded helicopter afire.

(In Peking, the New China

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news agency reported that North Vietnam has accused South Vietnamese and American troops of intruding into the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. The Chinese report said Hanoi had sent a protest note to the International Control Commission.)