

Doc 3/2/67

# Reds Shell U.S. Guns; 'Miraculously' Miss

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, March 1—Communist forces launched a heavy mortar assault on U.S. artillery emplacements two miles south of the Demilitarized Zone yesterday in a futile attempt to knock out the big guns shelling North Vietnam.

A U.S. military spokesman said 475 81 mm. mortar shells were fired at the American positions. He said that "miraculously," the self-propelled 175 mm. guns were undamaged and U.S. troops manning and guarding the artillery suffered only light casualties.

The 175mm. guns, with a range of 20 miles, began firing across the 6-mile-wide DMZ, last week.

Ten miles south of the DMZ, near Camlo, U.S. Marines yesterday pursued two 500-man battalions of North Vietnamese regulars they drove from fortified Hill 124 in nearly two days of repeated attacks.

A U.S. spokesman said the entrenched North Vietnamese lobbed an estimated 1000 mortar shells at the attacking Marines before withdrawing from the hill Tuesday night. The Marines called in artillery, Marine jets and helicopter gun-ships to suppress the barrage. Two of the five Marine companies involved suffered heavy casualties.

At least 150 Communist dead have been counted following Tuesday's battle between the Vietcong and units of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division along the Cambodian border, in War Zone C. In that action, 70 miles northwest of Saigon and 20 miles northeast of Tayninh, more than half of one company of 178 U.S. infantrymen were killed or wounded.

It was the third company of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division to be hard hit since 45,000 U.S. troops launched Operation Junction City on Feb. 22. U.S. spokesmen said the Communists have lost at least 271 dead. But a senior U.S.

officer in the field noted that American losses from all causes—including booby traps and sniper fire—almost certainly exceed the Communist casualties.

Air Force Capt. James S. Walbridge of Williamsport, Pa., dangled for an hour and a half from a tree north of Mugia Pass in North Vietnam yesterday, before being plucked to safety by a helicopter.

"It was a storybook rescue," said Walbridge, who had bailed out of his disabled F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber after attacking trucks on North Vietnam's Route 15.

A report that the Vietcong are losing heart came from North Vietnamese Army Lt. Truong Hiep, captured by Korean troops earlier this week. Truong, held at a prison camp in the Central Highlands, told an interviewer the Vietcong morale fell sharply when the lunar New Year truce earlier this month failed to produce peace talks.

Truong said he infiltrated from Hanoi a year ago, by way of Laos and Cambodia.

## S. Vietnam Court Head Denies Bribe Charges

SAIGON, March 1 (UPI) The president of the special military court appointed by Premier Nguyen Cao Ky to stamp out corruption in South Vietnam today denied the tribunal sought or accepted bribes to acquit Americans accused of economic crimes.

Maj. Nguyen Cao Quyen claimed no member of the court was involved in corruption allegations made by Americans in a Saigon prison, but said one Vietnamese lawyer was under investigation.

The accusations were made by several of nine Americans arrested on charges of violating South Vietnamese currency regulations. Three were released earlier this week and others were reportedly on a hunger strike to protest their treatment.