

Saigon Commandos Raid Enemy Base In Foray Into Laos

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By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, April 7—Two hundred South Vietnamese commandos were landed in Laos behind a smoke screen yesterday for a 10-hour attack on a base area on the enemy's supply-trail network.

The raiders, who were transported by United States helicopters, reported that they had killed 15 North Vietnamese soldiers, destroyed nine tons of rice and other food and captured nine weapons. They described their own casualties as light.

Military spokesmen said no American helicopters were lost in the raid, the second by South Vietnamese commandos in a week.

Smoke Screen Laid Down

There was speculation here that the South Vietnamese would continue raiding Laos until the beginning of the monsoon rains in early May. Such a move had been indicated when the 45-day thrust against the Ho Chi Minh Trail network ended last month.

The commandos took off at daybreak from Quangtri in the northeastern corner of South Vietnam. They were ferried into Laos to a point just south of Khesanh, which is in the northwestern part of South Vietnam. This was the same general area of the 26-hour commando raid of last Wednesday and Thursday.

They were lifted into the target area behind circling helicopters that laid down a smoke screen.

"The most difficult part of

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the operation was finding the landing zone," one helicopter pilot said.

In the late afternoon, United States helicopters lifted the troops out and returned them to Hue, the northern headquarters of the South Vietnamese First Infantry Division to which the commandos are attached.

During the raid into Laos, the last United States troops pulled out of Khesanh, the

major American support base for the 45-day operation in Laos.

They left nothing behind that the enemy could use. Bunkers were blown up and salted with long-lasting tear gas crystals that are intended to discourage the North Vietnamese from occupying the position for at least two years.

Helicopter gunships flew overhead as the convoy of jeeps, trucks and armored personnel carriers, loaded with equipment and 300 men, pulled out at dawn and reached Quangtri without incident.

Khesanh, which withstood a 77-day siege in 1968 when the United States Marines occupied it, was reopened by the Army

Jan. 30 while the South Vietnamese forces were gathering for the thrust into Laos.

Frontier Posts Attacked

Farther south, North Vietnamese forces kept up pressure against South Vietnamese frontier posts in the central highlands near the border juncture of Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam, among them Five Base 6.

Enemy troops shelled and launched a ground attack against a forward command post of the South Vietnamese 22d Infantry Division at Tancanh, about 300 miles north of Saigon. A Saigon military spokesman said that the North Vietnamese were thrown back

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with 56 killed and four captured. Saigon's casualties were given as three wounded.

The North Vietnamese were also reported to have moved up a fresh regiment—2,000 men if at full strength—to continue the offensive against the string of South Vietnamese artillery fire bases on mountain tops in the triborder sector. The veteran North Vietnamese troops have been on the attack in the highlands since last Wednesday, when they occupied Fire Base 6 briefly.

Cambodian Troops in Clash

KOMPONGCHAM, Cambodia, April 6 (Reuters)—Cambodian troops reportedly killed more than 130 Vietcong soldiers in a

fierce battle today across the Mekong River from this provincial capital in eastern Cambodia.

Officers at the headquarters of the military region said that the fighting began shortly after midnight and ended four hours later at dawn.

They put the Cambodian casualties at six killed and 34 wounded. They said one villager was killed and 24 were wounded in the fighting.

Minister Blesses a Pub

BRIGHTON, England (AP)—Rev. Richard Chambers blessed a newly refurbished pub here and then doffed his clerical collar and put on a barman's white coat to pull the first pint.