

Red Troops in Da Nang --

Situation Called Hopeless

'Breakdown of Discipline'

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Commandos Infiltrate City

Saigon

Communist troops moved into Da Nang under cover of a heavy artillery barrage early today and sources said the situation in South Vietnam's second largest city was "hopeless."

The sources said there had been a "total breakdown of discipline" among the government troops in the city, 370 miles north of Saigon on the coast of the South China Sea.

All communications with the city were lost except for a single civilian telex machine.

More than 1.5 million persons are located in the Da Nang area, two-thirds of them refugees desperately trying to flee to the south.

South Vietnamese military commanders and American officials reportedly transferred operations to a ship offshore.

The South Vietnamese command in Saigon said there was rioting in the city and Communist commandos had infiltrated Da Nang under cover of shellfire.

Military sources said units of a Marine division were still fighting in foothills above Da Nang, along with part of the government's First Infantry Division.

But sources said the entire Second Division and elements of other outfits numbering at least 100,000 men were out of action.

"The situation is hopeless," one source said.

The South Vietnamese military command in Saigon said today at least eight persons were killed in rioting in Da Nang and thousands of persons trying

to get aboard evacuation planes forced a sharp reduction in the number of mercy flights out of the city.

The situation in Da Nang is very serious," command spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Le Trung Hien told reporters in Saigon.

"Because of the refugees, Communist sappers (demolition teams) were able to penetrate the city very easily. The security problem is very difficult."

South Vietnamese commander Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, U.S. consul General Albert Francis and the rest of his staff took refuge on a ship anchored offshore in the South China Sea at about midnight yesterday, military sources said.

It was not immediately clear whether Truong, who was under direct orders

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from South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu to defend Da Nang, intended to order his troops out of the port city or make them stand and fight.

Truong, then a brigadier general commanding the First Division, played a major role in the defense of Hue in 1958.

After the North Vietnamese assault of 1972, Truong was given command of the northern region of South

rounded by Communist troops to the north, west and south — the South China Sea lies to the east. But the Communists did not open fire on Da Nang itself until after the capture yesterday of the provincial capital of Hoi An, 15 miles to the south.

In the south, the growing Communist offensive swept up a 12th South Vietnamese province 90 miles northeast of Saigon.

The South Vietnamese

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Vietnam. He directed the successful defense of Hue and the recapture of Quang Tri later that year.

Truong on Thursday had vowed to fight for Da Nang and restore order within 48 hours. He issued an order to shoot troublemakers on sight.

Telephone operators refused to work, making communications difficult, and street battles broke out between soldiers and refugees who were looting or mobbing every conceivable type of transportation to flee the city.

Military sources said Communist troops within three miles of Da Nang fired at least 70 rocket and mortar shells into the city late yesterday and early today. The refugee airlift was halted earlier in the day.

Da Nang, 370 miles north of Saigon, is South Vietnam's second largest city, with a normal population of about half a million. Its population has been swelled by about one million refugees from other areas in northern South Vietnam abandoned by government forces this month.

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Thousands of refugees left Da Nang by ship yesterday in chaotic scenes in the harbor. Some 10,000 persons sailed on the American freighter Pioneer while 8000 others were being loaded aboard a U.S. Navy vessel, the Miller, which was manned by a civilian crew.

National China was sending 20 landing craft capable of carrying thousands of persons each.

Vietnamese and U.S. AID officials were reported to be chartering civilian vessels in Saigon and other South Vietnamese port at high prices. All were ordered to head for Da Nang at full speed to evacuate as many people as possible.