

# Saigon Sends Airborne To City Cut Off by Reds

## Saigon

South Vietnamese paratroopers leapfrogged Communist lines outside Saigon aboard an armada of American-made helicopters in a gamble to save a threatened provincial capital.

More than 3000 paratroopers were flown from Saigon to the edge of Xuan Loc, 38 miles northeast of Saigon on Highway 1, where heavy fighting is reported under way.

Radio messages from Xuan Loc said its defenders had thrown back two human-wave attacks by Communist forces who attacked with tank and artillery support. The defenders are bracing for a third attack.

The operation was seen as a major gamble by government commanders to obtain a badly needed and morale boosting victory. By moving more than 3000 elite troops out of Saigon, the Joint General Staff stripped the capital of half its regular defense force and left 4000 soldiers manning the inner defenses of Saigon.

The paratroopers flew over Communist lines aboard nearly 50 helicopters, including six big twin-rotor CH-47 Chinooks, which flew through heavy anti-aircraft fire to the western edge of Xuan Loc.

South Vietnamese military spokesmen here said nearly 1000 North Vietnamese and

Viet Cong soldiers have been killed in two days of fighting in the Xuan Loc sector. They listed government casualties as 17 dead and 110 wounded.

A Hanoi Radio broadcast claimed a Communist victory at Xuan Loc and said government forces were on the run. But field reports said heavy fighting was still under way at dark.

UPI correspondent Leon Daniel reported from Hung Nghia, ten miles west of Xuan Loc, that government units counterattacking along Highway 1 were meeting stiff resistance in their attempt to link up with the paratroopers.

South Vietnamese Air Force planes made heavy bombing attacks in support

of the ground troops but dug-in Communist units were slowing the infantry advance, Daniel said.

He said refugees fleeing the fighting along Highway 1 were being killed and maimed as they moved westward.

At Bau Ca village, several rockets wounded at least 11 civilians, one of whom was a young boy who died of his wounds. The wounded were carried to the village market by relatives.

Most of the refugees were moving so slowly on foot that they remained constantly within range of the guns of the advancing Communist forces.

South Vietnamese air attacks in Long Khanh province, of which Xuan Loc is the capital, and two coastal provinces recently captured by the Communists, Binh Thuan and Ninh Thuan, killed 247 Communist troops, destroyed five tanks and 51 trucks, the Saigon command said.

Meanwhile, eight big U.S. Air Force C-141 Starlifter jet transports landed at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airbase carrying tons of military and other equipment for South Vietnamese troops under the emergency American supply airlift.

When the planes flew out during the afternoon, some carried orphans bound for new homes in the United States and American civilians pulling out because of the Communist threat to Saigon.

The American radio in Saigon broadcast announcements to U.S. citizens informing them of the flights and urging them to report to Tan Son Nhut.

United Press