

# Enemy Fires 25 Rockets At Base of Allied Sweep

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 14—Enemy gunners reportedly fired 25 rockets at Dongha early today, near the nerve center of the South Vietnamese sweep of 12,000 troops moving slowly into the network of North Vietnamese supply trails in Laos.

The South Vietnamese command post at the Dongha combat base was not hit, the military command in Saigon said, but one civilian was reported killed and seven wounded in the city nearby.

Meanwhile, an authoritative American military source reported that in addition to the 13 United States helicopters lost in the Laotian operation since Jan. 30 in both South Vietnam and Laos, 37 United States helicopters downed by North Vietnamese batteries had been recovered and could be repaired.

[Reliable sources in Vientiane said that American planes had mistakenly bombed a United States Central Intelligence Agency base at Long Tieng, Laos, causing heavy casualties and damage. Page 4.]

The South Vietnamese military spokesman reported that

the situation in the over-all Laotian operation had changed little over the last few days. "The deepest point of our advance into Laos is now around 20 kilometers [12 miles] east of Tchepone," the military spokesman said.

Vietnamese troops have so far killed 262 enemy soldiers in the area and have suffered 38 deaths and 129 wounded, the command said.

Tchepone, a key road junction, is about 25 air miles from the South Vietnamese border, but farther by the winding, dusty trace of the French colonial Route 9 that the Vietnamese are following.

They have been inching toward Tchepone since the border crossing last Monday, have crossed camouflaged sections of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network and have discovered supply caches, including one containing more than 30,000 gallons of gasoline.

On Saturday, North Vietnamese gunners fired at an unspecified South Vietnamese artillery base in Laos, inflicting what the military command here called "light" casualties

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# Enemy Fires at Nerve Center Of Saigon's Laotian Operation

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about 12 miles inside the border.

In scattered actions since then, Vietnamese troops in Laos have killed 16 enemy soldiers and captured six while suffering light casualties, the command here said.

The U.S. military command has disclosed part of the full extent of its massive air support of the South Vietnamese operation, saying that a total of 4,500 helicopter flights have carried Vietnamese troops into Laos, provided air cover for them, and resupplied them since the border crossing.

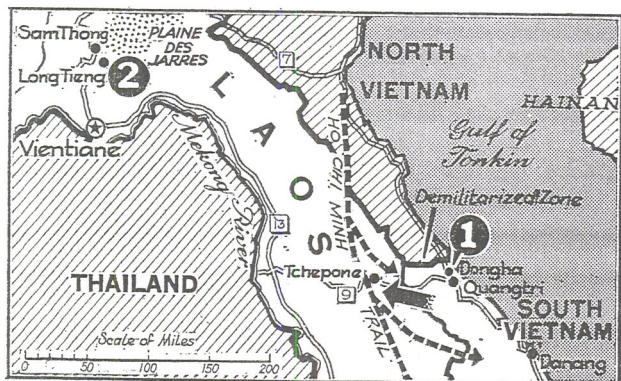
Small bombers and B-52's have also flown missions over Laos, but the command has not disclosed how many.

Because of heavy anti-aircraft fire north of the main advance along Route 9, a total of seven United States helicopters have been lost in the operation in Laos since then, according to the command's figures, and six have been shot down in South Vietnam.

No new helicopter losses were reported today. Saigon has reported that two South Vietnamese helicopters have been lost over Laos, but military sources here say that actually seven have gone down. One of the helicopters that was reported lost crashed on Wednesday with four photographers aboard.

At the end of the first full week of the South Vietnamese operations in Laos, their intentions and future targets are still unclear. The dry season in Laos will end in May and the dusty roads will become quagmires.

Resistance has been light on the South Vietnamese side of the border, surprisingly so in view of allied intelligence reports that thousands of North Vietnamese troops were in the hills in the western part of Quangtri Province before the operation started from the Quangtri combat base on Jan. 30. But it has been picking up in the last few days, with shelling attacks and ambushes on Route 9 leading to Khesanh and the Laotian border.



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Enemy rockets hit Dongha (1). U.S. bombers reportedly hit C.I.A.-operated base at Long Tieng (2) by mistake.