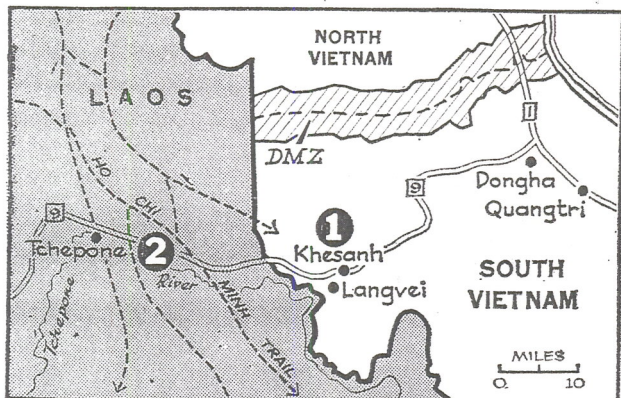


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Missile Sites in North Vietnam Attacked by U.S. 3d Day in Row



The New York Times

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U.S. positions near Khesanh (1) were attacked. Saigon penetration into Laos was still put at 15 miles (2).

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, Feb. 17 (AP)—American fighter-bombers attacked missile sites in North Vietnam yesterday for the third successive day, the United States command announced today.

Headquarters said two Navy A-6 Intruders escorting an unarmed reconnaissance jet fired two Shrike air-to-ground missiles at enemy radar-controlled positions six miles north-northeast of the coastal city of Vinh, about 119 miles north of the demilitarized zone.

Gain by South Vietnamese

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 16—As South Vietnamese troops reportedly continued their slow advance across the Communist supply-trail system in Laos, enemy soldiers stepped up pressure today against American positions on the South Vietnamese side of the border that shield the allied forward base at Khesanh.

Just after dawn, North Vietnamese troops attacked an American encampment about 10 miles northeast of the base. An American spokesman said three United States soldiers were killed in the assault and one was wounded. He reported that the bodies of three enemy soldiers were left behind after the action.

Three other Americans were killed and six wounded in the same area in the northernmost province of South Vietnam when a patrol was ambushed, it was announced. The ambush came 10 miles from Khesanh, near an artillery base called Scotch.

Earlier, the command spokesman at Quangtri reported, American soldiers killed 18 North Vietnamese near the fire support base.

Clash Near Route 9

The command also announced that two American soldiers were killed and one was wounded yesterday in a clash with a Communist unit about seven miles east of Khesanh and north of Route 9.

West of Khesanh, an American artillery position about six

miles from the Laotian border reportedly was fired on by enemy guns inside Laos. A United States spokesman said the American guns fired back, causing a large "secondary" explosion on the other side.

Several hours later, the same United States position was again harassed by enemy artillery fire, the American report said. There were no American casualties in either attack, it added.

Meanwhile, the 12,000 South Vietnamese troops in Laos were reported moving cautiously westward to avoid falling into any enemy trap. They were still said to be about 15 miles west of the South Vietnamese border.

A South Vietnamese military spokesman in Quangtri reported only two significant engagements involving the forces inside Laos in the last 24 hours. He said the incidents accounted for eight enemy soldiers killed and very light South Vietnamese casualties.

Fog Delays Flights

After a week of sunshine, fog settled in again today, delaying flights to Khesanh and west into Laos.

Route 9, the dusty, tortuous road from South Vietnam into Laos that is the chief axis of the South Vietnamese drive west, remained closed to convoy traffic today, apparently because of enemy activity along the road inside Laos. All re-supply is by air.

Summarizing the casualties in the operation thus far, American and South Vietnamese spokesmen at Saigon and the main rear headquarters at Quangtri put American losses on both sides of the border at 31 killed and 65 wounded.

Americans protect key installations in South Vietnam and fly combat support and reconnaissance over Laos. No United States ground forces are supposed to be in Laos.

South Vietnamese losses were put at 71 killed and 238 wounded.

Enemy losses were listed as 501 killed and 5 captured.

Fifteen United States aircraft have been lost in the operation so far, a United States spokesman announced.