

# South Vietnam Puts the Drive Into Laos at 22 Miles

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 18—The South Vietnamese command reported today that the forward units of its forces advancing across Communist supply trails in southern Laos were now operating 22 miles from the border.

A spokesman said that the slowness of the advance into Laos, which began from the

northern part of South Vietnam on Feb. 8, was a result more of the care employed in searching the enemy supply dumps than of enemy ground resistance.

However, a South Vietnamese spokesman at the combat base in Quangtri, South Vietnam's northernmost province, said that 95 enemy soldiers had been killed in the last 24 hours. The South Vietnamese toll was put at eight.

At the same time, there was more evidence of the strength of the enemy's anti-aircraft fire. An American briefing office at Quangtri reported that three United States helicopters had been downed during the day while supporting the South Vietnamese drive. The two-man crew of one, a Cobra gunship, was reported rescued.

The Saigon spokesman said that there now were 15,000 to 16,000 South Vietnamese troops inside Laos and that they were operating "in the same general area" as yesterday. With forward units 22 miles from the border, they apparently were still a few miles short of the devastated town of Tchepone, which has been a principal marshaling center of the North Vietnamese supply network.

At a combat base 11 miles inside Laos, South Vietnamese troops displayed a Soviet-built PT-76 tank captured after it

had been hit by rockets, presumably fired by American helicopter gunships.

No action was reported from the area in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam where an American company at an artillery base called Fire Support Base Scotch is said to have been surrounded since Tuesday. American fighter-bombers flew 18 sorties in support of the unit Tuesday night, but efforts to reinforce the company yesterday failed because of bad weather.

Outside Quangtri, an American ammunition dump blew up from unknown causes this morning, with the loss of 500 tons of artillery shells and tear gas canisters. Explosions were reported to have continued for several hours.

Far to the south, South Vietnamese troops operating in Cambodia reportedly repulsed two North Vietnamese attacks on their positions near the town of Suong with the aid of artillery and air strikes. A command spokesman said that the attackers left behind 116 dead. He said that the South Vietnamese losses in the two actions were three killed and 25 wounded.

## Reinforcements Sought

The Washington Star

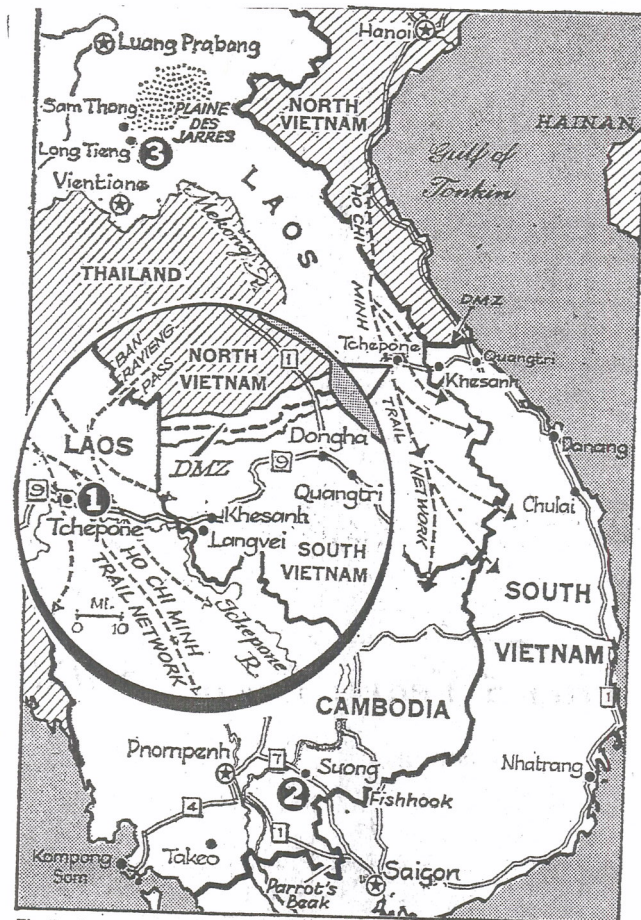
VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 18—Laotian military sources reported today that the United States

had asked Thailand for more troops to shore up the battered defenses of the American backed base at Long Tieng near the Plaine des Jarres.

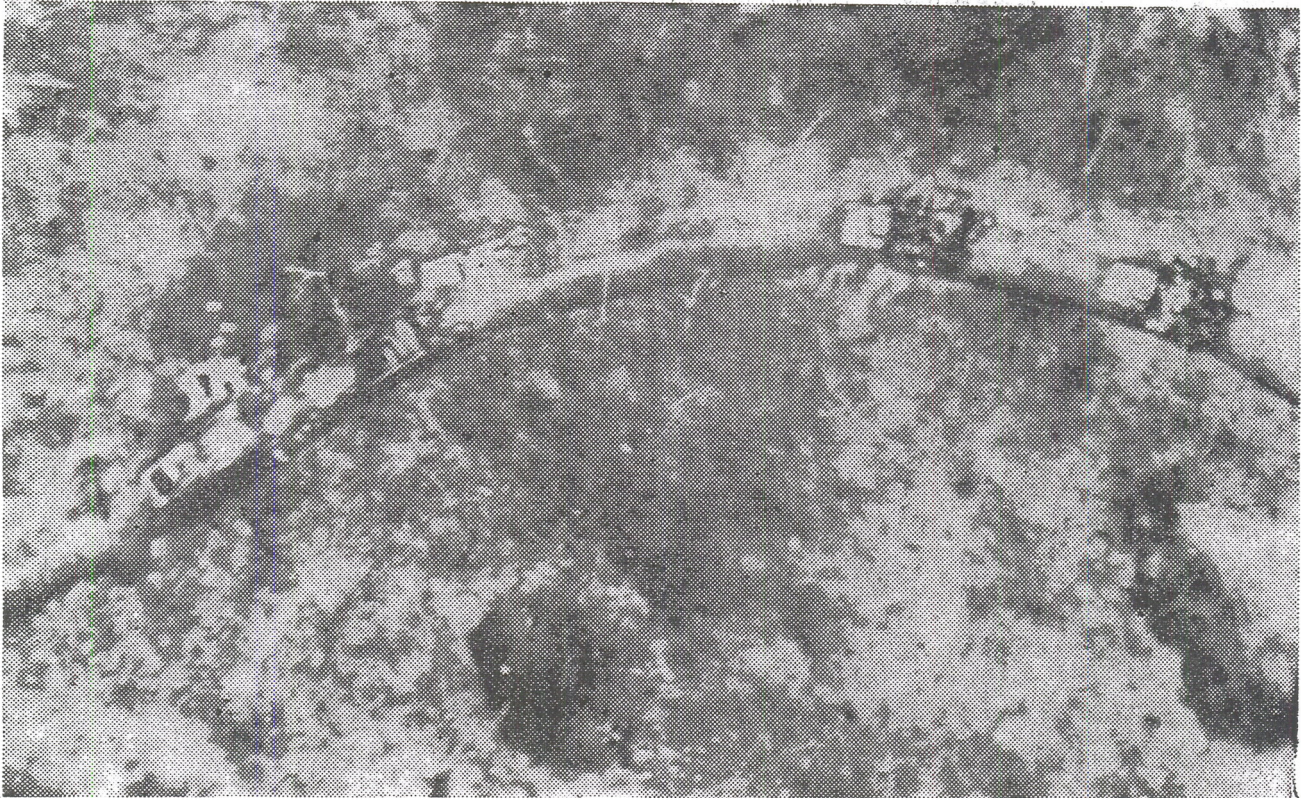
The informants said that 1,600 Thai troops had arrived at Long Tieng aboard United States transport planes to reinforce Thai artillery groups and a security company already there.

According to the Laotian sources, the request for Thai troops is being handled through the American Central Intelligence Agency, which has used the Long Tieng base to monitor Hanoi communications and to direct its efforts throughout Laos.

2-19-71  
NYT



The New York Times Feb. 19, 1971  
 South Vietnamese forward units in Laos were officially reported 22 miles from border (1). In Cambodia, Saigon units fought off heavy attacks near Suong (2). In northern Laos, aid reportedly reaching Long Tieng (3).



Associated Press

**TRUCKS DESTROYED ON THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL:** This photograph, issued yesterday in Saigon by the United State Air Force, shows vehicles that were hit as they traveled along the supply route earlier this month.