

# South Vietnamese Base in Laos Reported Under Heavy Attack

By ALVIN SHUSTER FEB 26 1971  
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 25—Heavy fighting was reported today at a South Vietnamese base in Laos as enemy resistance continued to stiffen against allied efforts to disrupt enemy supply lines there.

Units under attack were reported to be from the South Vietnamese Third Airborne Division and an artillery battalion at Landing Zone 31, north of Route 9 in Laos, about six miles west of the Laotian border. Some observers estimated that casualties on both sides were heavy.

Spokesmen in Saigon had no official word on the action at Landing Zone 31. But military sources near the area said that the North Vietnamese used some tanks and that United States jet bombers were called in to

help ease the pressure on the South Vietnamese troops. An American spokesman at the Quangtri combat base in the northernmost province of South Vietnam said one United States jet was shot down.

Here in the capital, the United States command said that 59 Americans were killed in action in the week ending Feb. 20, the

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highest weekly toll since mid-November, when 65 were reported killed. The latest toll was eight more than the previous week.

In other action in Laos, the South Vietnamese military command reported that three fire support bases and three troop positions in Laos came under fire last night from enemy rockets, mortar and recoilless rifles, causing "light" casualties.

The command spokesman also announced that 1,500 men have been sent into Cambodia in a new operation aimed at destroying enemy sanctuaries, bringing to 24,500 the number of South Vietnamese troops now operating in Cambodia. The newest operation is centered southeast of Kompong Trabek, northwest of Saigon.

The additional forces sent to Cambodia raise the total number of Saigon's troops now operating outside South Vietnam to more than 40,000. Saigon estimates that 16,000 troops are now trying to move against the Ho Chi Minh Trail network in the southern pandhandle of Laos.

## Four-Day Siege

Near Khesanh, the principal forward staging area for troop lift and resupply for the Laotian operation, South Vietnamese officers said that units of the Third Airborne Battalion and other South Vietnamese forces have been under siege at Landing Zone 31 for about four days. They said American helicopters had encountered great difficulty in reaching the base because of heavy antiaircraft fire.

tion, 9,253 dead of nonhostile causes, 295,163 wounded, and 1,453 missing or captured, including 10 missing in air crashes in Laos.

The Saigon Government reported 432 South Vietnamese killed in action last week, 46 fewer than the week before, and 1,446 wounded, 287 more than the previous week. The United States command said allied forces had killed 2,260 North Vietnamese and Vietcong in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, the highest total reported since last May.

Since the South Vietnamese forces crossed the border on Feb. 8, antiaircraft has destroyed 16 American helicopters, according to the United States command. Fourteen Americans have been killed, 16 wounded and 14 are listed as missing in those crashes.

South Vietnamese spokesmen said their troops had advanced no farther than 16 miles west of the border into Laos, with military sources citing as the reasons bad weather, caution and enemy resistance.

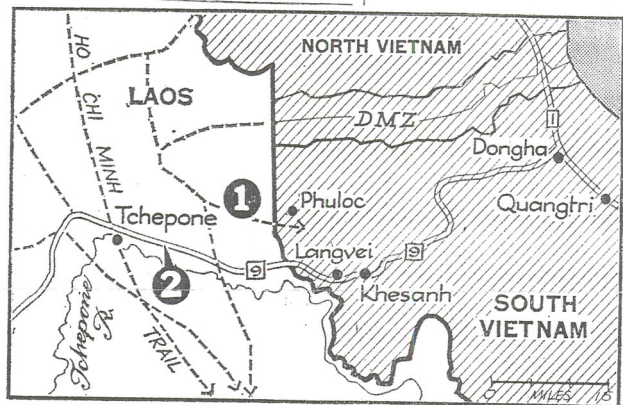
In reporting on the week's 59 United States combat deaths the American command also listed 42 men killed in nonhostile action, including helicopter accidents.

## Highest Since September

The total of 101 deaths was the largest since 125 Americans died during the week of Aug. 30-Sept. 5, when 87 were killed in action and 38 died from accidents and illness.

The command reported 217 Americans wounded in action last week, the same as the week before.

This raised total American casualties in the war since Jan. 1, 1961, to 44,518 killed in ac-



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Base north of Route 9 in Laos (1) was assaulted. Saigon units were still reported 16 miles from border (2). In Cambodia, new drive was under way at Kompong Trabek (3).

## Laotians Report Clashes

VIETIANE, Laos, Feb. 25 (AP)  
—The Defense Ministry today reported five skirmishes between North Vietnamese soldiers and Laotian troops around Dong Hene, on Route 9, about 75 miles west of the South Vietnamese operation.