

Laos Invasion

Hanoi Version of Saigon Losses

Tokyo

North Vietnam said yesterday that 15,400 South Vietnamese died in the Laos incursion, nearly three times the total casualties reported by Saigon.

In a broadcast monitored in Tokyo, Hanoi's Vietnam News Agency said the South Vietnamese drive was "completely smashed" by "liberation forces."

South Vietnam has said it accomplished its mission of disrupting Communist traffic on the Ho Chi Minh supply trail and that its total casualties were 5642 dead, wounded or missing.

Sources with access to the figures, however, have said the total figure is closer to 10,000, including 3800 dead.

The South Vietnamese also said there were about 24,000 government troops in the incursion. Hanoi said the figure was 45,000.

The North Vietnamese broadcast said "liberation forces" captured 1000 men in addition to those killed and "wiped out two paratroop brigades ... decimated an infantry regiment ... wiped out eight artillery battalions

and badly mauled five others."

The United States and South Vietnam lost 496 planes, 586 military vehicles including 318 tanks and armored cars, and 144 artillery pieces, the broadcast said in its report on the incursion.

"By March 23, the whole operation was completely smashed," the report said.

"When the operation got bogged down, the enemy sent reinforcements from Cambodia and South Vietnam. The total force involved was in the area of 45,000 men at the peak of the operation."

United Press