

# RELIEF UNITS NEAR BESIEGED OUTPOST

*NY TIMES*  
Advance Elements of Saigon  
Reinforcements Reported  
a Mile From Fire Base

14 APR 71

By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 13 — Advance elements of a 3,000-man South Vietnamese relief force were reported today to have pushed to within a mile of Fire Base 6, the outpost in the Central Highlands that has been under siege by the North Vietnamese for two weeks.

The relief operation was said to have begun after large-scale United States Air Force B-52 strikes—heaviest in the highlands in nearly a year — against the area a mile east of the base.

In addition, two United States C-130 cargo planes reportedly dropped two more seven-and-a-half-ton bombs in an area west of the base, which is six miles east of the junction of the South Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian borders. Two of the bombs were reported dropped yesterday. They had been used previously only to blast out heavy jungle growth so that helicopters could land.

The B-52's reportedly struck six times to clear the way for the relief force, dropping some 600 tons of explosives.

There was no report of fighting at the base or around it, as has been the case almost daily since the first North Vietnamese attack March 31. It was considered possible that the enemy forces had pulled back to regroup and get supplies, although there were no solid intelligence reports to confirm this.

The relief force was said to be composed of four infantry battalions, with United States advisers, and one airborne bat-

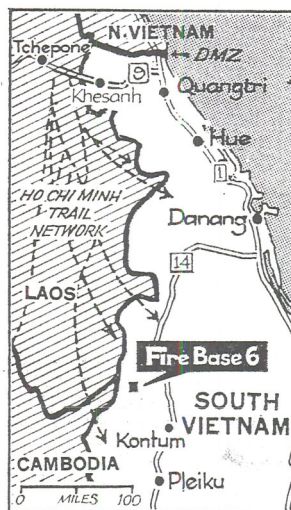
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alion. Four more South Vietnamese battalions—2,000 or 2,500 men—were reported being held in reserve.

Fewer than 1,000 South Vietnamese troops and a few United States advisers were reported at the base, 300 miles north of Saigon, focal point of fighting in South Vietnam since the end of Saigon's campaign in Laos last month, is one of a string of Central Highlands hill-top outposts blocking some infiltration routes of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Elements of two North Vietnamese infantry regiments and one artillery regiment—7,000 or 8,000 men—have been reported in the area. Some commanders believe that their offensive is in retaliation for the



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Relief force was reported  
approaching Fire Base 6.

incursion into Laos, which began in February, although Hanoi's troops have mounted attacks in the Highlands at this time of the year for the last few years.

Small-scale fighting was reported elsewhere in South Vietnam. The United States command said that two F-105 fighter-bombers had attacked two North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile sites inside Laos, three to five miles southwest of the Mugia Pass, a mountain pass leading from North Vietnam into the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The command said that the planes fired two missiles at the sites after radar on the planes indicated that the missile sites had "locked on" the planes and were preparing to fire. Results of the strikes were not known, the command said.