

FIGHTING IS HEAVY NEAR FIRE BASE 6

APR 15 1971

Saigon Relief Force Joins
Action—U.S. Aides Flown
Out of Frontier Post

NYTimes

By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 14—A South Vietnamese relief force engaged enemy units in heavy fighting half a mile from the besieged Fire Base 6 in the Central Highlands today. Some of the base's defenders tried to flee on the landing skids of a United States helicopter taking out American advisers.

The helicopter lifted out four of the five American military advisers at the frontier base close to the borders of Laos and Cambodia.

Many Forced Off

Field reports said that three other United States advisers attached to the South Vietnamese relief force that engaged the North Vietnamese near the base were missing. These reports, however, lacked official confirmation and the United States command in Saigon said it had no word of missing advisers.

At the hilltop base itself, about 40 South Vietnamese soldiers swarmed around the

Continued on Page 6, Column 1

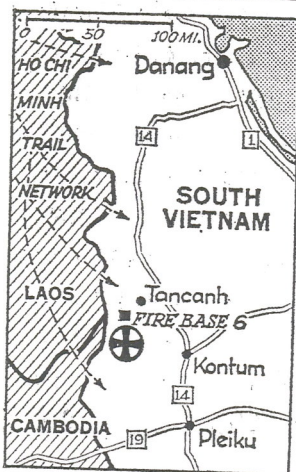
The lone remaining adviser, an officer, volunteered to stay behind with some 500 weary South Vietnamese defenders, newly bolstered by a 4,000-man relief force that is deployed nearby. A lead element of the relief force reached the base Tuesday night.

It was one of the units of the South Vietnamese relief force that engaged the North Vietnamese a half mile northwest of Fire Base 6.

The South Vietnamese command in Saigon reported 96 North Vietnamese were killed in the 16 hours of fighting.

Casualties Listed

A command spokesman, Lieut. Col. Le Trung Hien, said about 50 of the total were killed by United States and South



The New York Times April 15, 1971
South Vietnamese relief force fought the enemy near fire base (cross).

Vietnamese air strikes and artillery fire. Colonel Hien said South Vietnamese losses were 4 killed, 6 missing and 37 wounded. He said 32 enemy weapons were captured.

From Tancanh, seven miles northeast of Fire Base 6 and headquarters for the South Vietnamese forces in the highlands, it was reported that enemy gunners had fired two rockets into the headquarters base, wounding two Americans and several South Vietnamese soldiers.

Except for the South Vietnamese troops that fought the long engagement a half mile from Fire Base 6, the other reinforcing troops advanced into positions in the area without resistance.

Paratroopers Flown In

Reports from Pleiku, where the United States support helicopters are based, said the reinforcement unit sent in was a South Vietnamese paratrooper battalion. It reportedly was lifted into a landing zone two and a half miles southeast of Fire Base 6 by American helicopters, and drew no fire from the North Vietnamese.

The reinforcements brought to eight the number of battalions now committed by the South Vietnamese command to the relief of the base.

The action in the Central Highlands dominated the war situation in South Vietnam but Saigon headquarters reported fresh enemy shelling of South Vietnamese forces in eastern Cambodia. Headquarters said enemy gunners fired more than 200 rounds of mortar, rocket and recoilless rifle fire into a command post of a South Vietnamese task force and two field positions along Route 7 and north of it.

A communiqué said the South Vietnamese had suffered light casualties but no fatalities.

Marines Deactivated

—The Third Marine Amphibious Force was deactivated today at a ceremony in Danang, where the marines first landed in March, 1965. The force, the largest ever deployed by the Marine Corps overseas, once numbered 80,000 men fighting the Vietcong in the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam.

The marines left behind them memories of the first savage thrust in 1967 into the southern half of the demilitarized zone that straddles the border between North and South Vietnam. They also left memories of such places as Conthien, where they withstood a sustained North Vietnamese shelling south of the buffer zone in the same year, and Khesanh, which they held through a 77-day siege in 1968.

Although they were involved in such forced movement of population as the ouster of 10,000 civilians from their homes in the demilitarized zone, their civic action work among rural Vietnamese was considered the most effective of all American pacification efforts.

Twelve-man platoons lived, worked in and defended 183 villages—each divided into several hamlets—in an area with a population of more than a million.

Only one Marine brigade of a few thousand men, activated today at the same ceremony, will remain in this area.

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

United States helicopter that evacuated the four Americans.

Eight of them jumped aboard and were flown with the advisers to a rear headquarters. Others tried to cling to the helicopter's landing skids and fly out the way some South Vietnamese troops did during the recent withdrawal from Laos. But the helicopter's crew shoved and kicked them off.

No reason was announced for lifting out the four American advisers. Correspondents in the fighting sector speculated that they were exhausted by the siege, which has entered its third week, and were brought out for a rest.