

FORCE IN VIETNAM CUT 8,000 IN WEEK

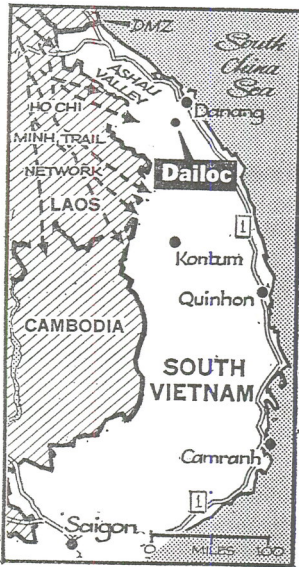
U.S. Level at 273,400—
Drop Is 2d Largest in '71

SAIGON, May 3 (AP)—The United States command said today that American military strength in Vietnam dropped by 8,000 troops last week, the second largest weekly reduction this year.

The weekly summary, covering April 23 to 29 said that 273,400 United States troops were in Vietnam on April 29. The figure was 281,400 on April 22.

The summary gave this breakdown: Army, 208,700; Air Force, 39,700; Marines, 12,800; Navy, 12,100, and Coast Guard, 100.

In addition, there are 17,800 Navy personnel with the Sev-



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**Foe, repulsed at Dailoc,
heavily shelled the area.**

enth Fleet operating off the coast of Vietnam.

The United States must withdraw 89,400 more troops by Dec. 1 to meet the authorized ceiling of 184,000 set recently by President Nixon.

Meanwhile, a South Vietnamese communiqué said that the North Vietnamese had shelled Dailoc, a military district headquarters town 15 miles south of Danang.

The South Vietnamese said that Danang mortar and recoilless-rifle shells had hit the town, but that only one house had been damaged. There were no casualties, they said.

Only 24 hours before, a battalion of the North Vietnamese 38th Regiment attacked Dailoc behind a mortar barrage. Heavy fighting swirled around the town of 42,000 for four hours, then flared up occasionally until this morning.

Saigon headquarters reported that 92 of the enemy had been killed and 2 captured, but a dispatch from Dailoc said that 5 North Vietnamese had been captured.

Bodies of Foe in Ditches

The dispatch said that bodies of enemy soldiers were strewn along ditches, dusty roads, in several houses and on the barbed wire of the defense perimeter in one section of the town.

Fourteen militiamen were killed and 53 wounded, the dispatch reported. Five civilians were killed and 30 wounded.

United States marines had guarded the headquarters, where there are many war refugees, until April 15. When they left, many residents doubted the ability of the militiamen to defend them and moved to the greater safety of the big base at Danang.

"The attack was repulsed, and now the people know their own forces can do the job," said Maj. James H. Bledsoe of St. Clair Shores, Mich., a United States military adviser at Dailoc.

He said that militiamen "did all the fighting."

"We only advised them," he said. "This was their fight, and they didn't have helicopters or artillery for support, either."

However, Saigon headquarters said that United States planes had helped to repulse the North Vietnamese.

Major Bledsoe estimated that the North Vietnamese had attacked with 200 to 300 men against a militia force of 350 to 500.

Meanwhile, ground fighting subsided today across South Vietnam and in the air. Only two B-52 raids were flown in South Vietnam. During the last week there were five to seven strikes daily.

Both new raids struck at the northwest corner of the country close to the Laotian border and just below the demilitarized zone straddling the border between North and South Vietnam. This is an area where some outlets of the Ho Chi Minh Trail feed into South Vietnam.