

ENEMY SABOTEURS INVADE U.S. BASE AND BLOW UP FUEL

Demolition Team Slips Into
Camranh and Destroys
1.5 Million Gallons

NO CASUALTIES LISTED

Attack the Latest in Series
—Laxity by G.I.'s Feared
as the War Winds Down
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, May 24—Enemy demolition experts crept into the huge American base at Camranh Bay last night and blew up one and a half million gallons of aviation fuel, the United States command announced today.

No contact was made with the enemy, the command said, and no American casualties were reported as a result of the explosions and fires.

The attack was the latest in a series of enemy breaches of American base security, and it underscored concern among commanders here that United States troops are becoming lax and therefore vulnerable as the country withdraws from the war.

'Got Past Someone'

Army officers here agreed that, as one put it, the enemy demolition men "obviously got past someone who should have spotted them."

[Six hours after the attack, which was staged by half a dozen men, enemy gunners fired 30 mortar rounds into another part of the base, but reportedly caused no casualties or damage, The Associated Press said.]

In similar attacks by enemy demolition experts recently, the ammunition storage area at Quangtri combat base, in South Vietnam's northernmost province, was successfully infiltrated twice in the last six weeks. A limited amount of ammunition was blown up in each case.

The worst such attack of the year occurred at Fire Base May Anne south of Chulai in late March, where 44 American soldiers were killed and 71 wounded in a ground attack that came after enemy demolition men had broken through the camp's defenses with explosive charges.

Abrams Reported Angered

It was reliably reported that after the attack, General Creighton Abrams, the United States commander in Vietnam, charged that there had been a lack of proper security precautions, such as perimeter guards and patrols.

General Abrams was similarly angered last Saturday when almost 30 American soldiers were killed by a single enemy rocket that exploded inside a bunker at Fire Base Charlie 2, just south of the demilitarized zone.

The men had ignored a fundamental Army rule against "bunching up," or gathering close together, where a single shell could take more lives than if the men had remained scattered in different shelters.

"We were treated to a real Abrams broadside," Deputy Ambassador William E. Colby said at a meeting of military and civilian officials after the briefing at which General Abrams had expressed his anger.

The Base at Camranh Bay was one considered the safest place in South Vietnam. It was so described in 1966 and 1967 when President Lyndon B. Johnson paid visits there.

While the command put the

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fuel loss at 1.5 million gallons, informed sources at Camranh said that the figure actually was more than 1.8 million—1.6 million gallons of jet fuel and 216,000 gallons of gasoline for propeller planes.