

Thieu's Palace Bombed by South Viet Jet

Saigon

A camouflaged jet plane of the South Vietnamese Air Force bombed the downtown palace of President Nguyen Van Thieu today, shattering windows in the modern four-story building.

Witnesses said the U.S.-made FZ5 flew over the palace at 2000 feet and dropped at least two and possibly four 500-pound bombs.

Nguyen Quoc Cuong, the chief government spokesman, reported that Thieu and his family were not injured. Palace sources said two persons were killed and three were wounded, but it was not known if they were in the palace or surrounding gardens.

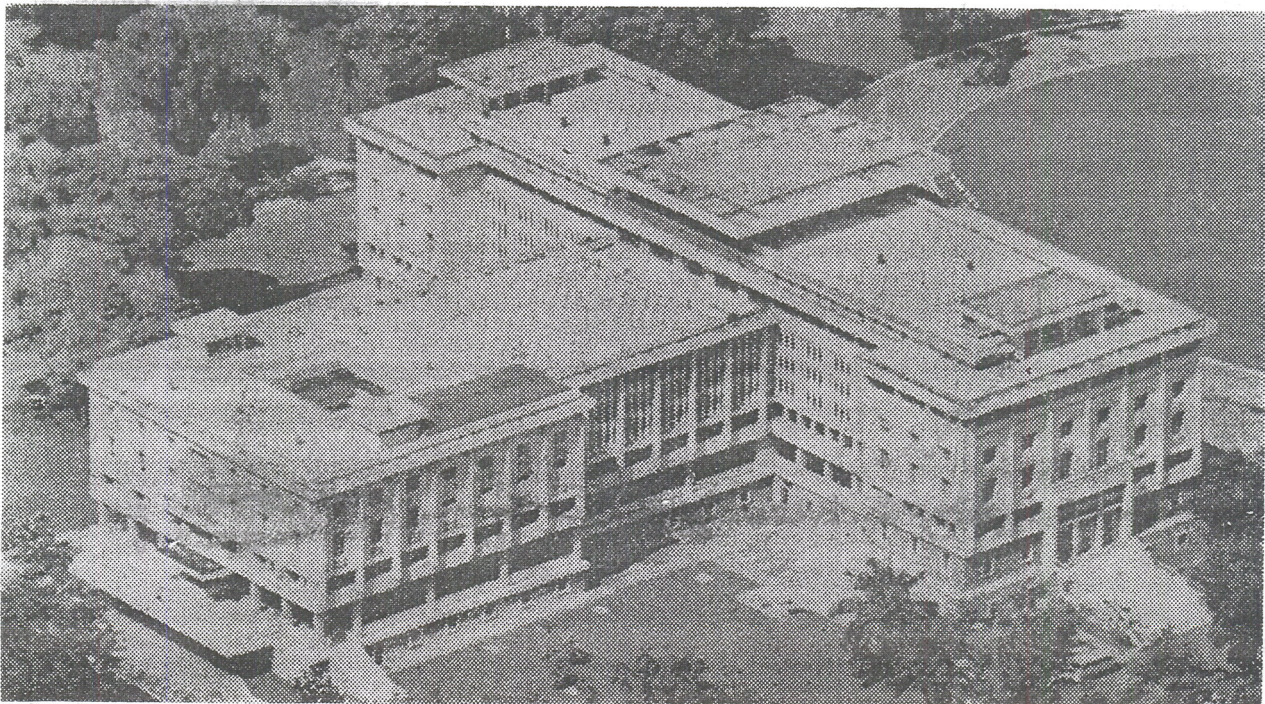
"With God's blessing, my family and myself are safe," Thieu said in a brief radio address three hours after the attack.

Thieu is under intense political pressure to resign because of the worsening battlefield situation.

Western sources said two F-5 jets took off from Bien Hoa Air Base 5 miles northeast of Saigon for an attack on Viet Cong positions. The sources said one peeled off and attacked the palace.

Saigon radio announced a 24-hour curfew for Saigon and its three million inhabitants and there were massive traffic jams as the people headed for home. Schools closed, stores were locked with their shutters drawn and loudspeaker vans circulated through the snarled traffic, advising residents that they must stay inside until the curfew is lifted.

The Air Force commander at Ton Son Nhut airport, Brigadier General Phan Phung Tien, a confidante of both Thieu and former premier Nguyen Cao Ky, was arrested and the airport sealed off. Ky is a former commander of the Air Force.



UPI Telephoto

The Presidential Palace in downtown Saigon apparently was damaged slightly by the attack

Guards erected steel barriers around the airport, and only persons with passes could enter. Airport sources said some commercial planes were still leaving the field but they did not know if

Back Page Col. 4

PALACE

From Page 1

any inbound craft would be permitted to land.

By noon the streets were nearly deserted, and thousands of soldiers, paratroopers and rangers were in position around the palace and on the rooftops of nearby buildings.

There was no immediate indication if the bombing was the act of one angry pilot or part of a larger plot to oust Thieu.

A witness said he could see windows blown out on the top three floors of one wing of the place. Others reported

More Vietnam news
on Pages 8 and 9

on bomb hit a sandbagged tent used by members of Thieu's palace guards.

Soon after the bombing, small-arms fire was heard in the vicinity of the concrete and steel palace but it ended quickly. Police cordoned off the palace, located in a walled park the size of several city blocks, and 20-m m. anti-aircraft guns were wheeled into beside the walls.

Opposition politicians have been demanding that Thieu step down. They blame him for failing to halt the month-long Communist-led offensive that has captured three-quarters of South Viet-

nam from government troops and left the military demoralized. The Viet Cong has also demanded Thieu's resignation, saying it would not negotiate peace with his regime.

North Vietnamese-Viet Cong forces have made no major move against Saigon, but they increased their attacks yesterday on district capitals in the Mekong Delta, the southern quarter of the country still under Saigon's control.

They also hit a fuel center only six miles from Saigon with 60 rocket and mortar shells.

There were no reports of major moves on Saigon itself, as has been feared since the Communist offensive began five weeks ago.

Military sources said the increased Communist activity in the rice-rich Mekong Delta, home for one-third of South Vietnam's 20 million people, consisted mostly of rocket and mortar attacks that wounded about 50 civilians.

Most of the shelling was in Dinh Tuong province, about 35 miles south of Saigon.

The fuel depot shelled by the Communists was Nha Be, where there are tank farms that have been targets of shelling and attacks by demolition teams many times through the long years of the war. Five government soldiers and one civilian were reported wounded and minor damage was said to have been caused to pipeline networks.

On the political front, Nguyen Ba Can, named by President Thieu last week as premier and given the task of forming a new cabinet, opened the summer session of the lower house of the National Assembly. Can, who is house speaker, made only a few formal remarks at the session and did not touch on the prospect of putting together a government.

Sources said Can has been meeting with political and religious groups, and predicted he would announce a cabinet lineup later in the week. Many here believe that even if he is successful it will do little to quiet opposition demands that Thieu himself step down.

Associated Press