

South Viet Forces Repulse Two Thrusts Near Saigon

Armor Is Rushed to Meet Reds

Saigon

Ordered to fight at any cost to save the remaining quarter of the country, South Vietnamese forces turned back heavy assaults yesterday against strong holds northeast and southwest of Saigon.

With Saigon itself at stake, military sources said President Nguyen Van Thieu sent hundreds of armored vehicles into the battle for Xuan Loc, the provincial capital 40 miles east of the capital which has practically been leveled by five days of fighting. Casualties were reported heavy on both sides.

Associated Press special correspondent Peter Arnett reported from Xuan Loc that the South Vietnamese army was holding against a concerted push by Communist forces.

While Saigon waited and hoped for more military aid from the United States, an ammunition dump filled



Helicopters brought in supplies to Xuan Loc's defenders

with new American-supplied arms to re-equip a South Vietnamese division exploded yesterday near Saigon, United Press reported.

(The dump was at Ben Luc, 12 miles southwest of Saigon. Included in the equipment destroyed were 105-m.m. howitzers flown here in U.S. transports last week.

(Guards outside the dump said they believed Communist infiltrators slipped into the facility and planted explosive charges. But other sources said government troops were cooking food too close to the dump and sparks or flames possibly touched off the blast.

(The arms and ammunition had been destined for the 22nd Infantry Division, routed when Communist forces occupied the coastal city of Qui Nhon recently. The division now is in the Saigon region being rearmed.

(Officers said they did not know how many casualties resulted when the dump

Back Page Col. 2

From Page 1

blew up, sending a huge column of smoke over the area.)

Huynh Minh Trinh reported from Tan Hoi hamlet, 30 miles southwest of Saigon, that South Vietnamese forces appeared to have turned back a major North Vietnamese attempt to cut Highway 4 and isolate Saigon from its food supplies in the Mekong delta.

The Saigon command said Communist guns also shelled Can Tho, the capital of the Mekong Delta, 80 miles southwest of Saigon, killing nine persons, wound-



ing 42 others and setting 50 homes afire.

Colonel Dang Phuong Thanh, commander of the 12th Regiment of the South

Vietnamese Seventh Infantry Division, told a government-sponsored press trip there: "We have wiped out a North Vietnamese regiment."

He claimed his men had killed 500 North Vietnamese troops and captured 30 others.

Only 20 bodies were seen lying on the roadside but villagers said there were others which were lying in the ruins of their homes when they returned after the four-day battle.

South Vietnamese losses were 37 men killed and 90 wounded, Thanh said.

Associated Press