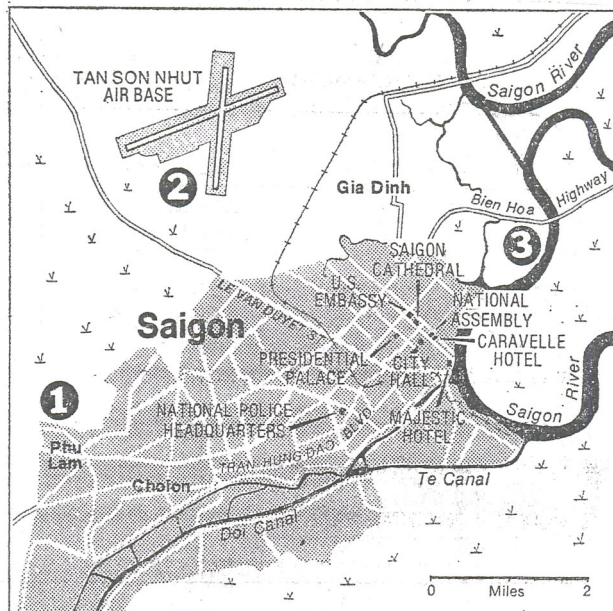


REDS ATTACK SAIGON DEFENSE LINE; ROCKETS AND BOMBS HIT AIRPORT; FIRST MINH TRUCE PLAN REJECTED



Associated Press

South Vietnamese soldiers hurrying to take cover yesterday after coming under Communist fire at Newport, on the outskirts of Saigon. Newport, on the road to Bien Hoa, was formerly a United States port complex.



The New York Times/April 29, 1975

Communist troops, attacking the western defenses of Saigon, launched assaults at Phu Lam (1), following rocket attacks on Tan Son Nhut air base (2). On the northeast of town, Communists blew up an oil dump (3).

2 American Marines Are Reported Killed— U. S. Plane Blasted

By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, April 29—Communist-led troops advancing behind rocket barrages on Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base attacked the western defenses of the city before dawn today.

Two American marines guarding the United States Defense Attaché's office at the base were reported killed in the shelling.

The rockets, thudding into Tan Son Nhut on the northern edge of the capital, destroyed a United States Air Force C-130 cargo plane waiting near the runway to pick up refugees seeking to flee South Vietnam. Officials who reported the hit on the big plane said none of the crewmen had been hurt and no passengers had been aboard.

Airlift Suspended

Thousands of Vietnamese and some Americans were gathered at the airport for the evacuation airlift that had been suspended hours earlier because of an attack by unidentified A-37 light bombers on the base. A second suspension was announced because of the new assault.

[At least two South Vietnamese Air Force planes were reported shot down on the edge of Saigon, possibly by Soviet-made surface-to-air missiles, United Press International reported.]

Vietcong demolition units—small teams of infiltrators specially trained in explosives—were reported operating around Tan Son Nhut and one South Vietnamese general said that "the situation has become difficult."

North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops have cut the highway between Saigon and the Bien Hoa air base, 15 miles to the northeast, leaving Tan Son Nhut as the only field available for large planes to fly into and out of Saigon.

Many Americans Remain

If Tan Son Nhut should be closed, it would force an air-sea evacuation of the 954 Americans listed as remaining here. There is a possibility that United States Marines might have to be landed to secure helicopter zones for the final evacuation. More than 40 vessels of the United States Seventh Fleet were reported standing off South Vietnam.

Ground attacks were reported against Government-held positions of Phu Lam, five miles southwest of central Saigon, and Hoc Mon, 10 miles to the northwest.

The rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut began at 4 A.M., with scores of Soviet-made missiles crashing into the base. Shelling was heavy for more than an hour and then continued intermittently. One strong explosion

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that jarred Saigon indicated that fuel or ammunition dumps had been hit and a huge fireball rose over the base.

From roofs of buildings in downtown Saigon, rockets could be seen streaking through the night and striking the base, where there was a red glow from fires.

Communists Near City

By FOX BUTTERFIELD
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, April 29—Unidentified planes bombed Tan Son Nhut Air Base yesterday and North Vietnamese troops advanced to within a mile of the city's limits in a tense, confusing day here.

Shortly after 6 P.M., three A-37 light jet bombers struck the military side of the airport, causing devastating damage and explosions that rocked the city. A-37's are the mainstay of the South Vietnamese Air Force.

American officials expressed deep concern and mystification over the bombings. They said they tended to discount the possibility that the North Vietnamese were responsible and believed the attack must have been made by renegade Government pilots. But they said they had no firm evidence.

Vietcong Role Denied

Former Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, reached by telephone at his home inside the air base, said that as far as he knew the raids had not been carried out by members of the South Vietnamese Air Force. There had been speculation that the bombings were part of an attempted coup led by Mr. Ky, who was believed to be unhappy with the inauguration last evening of Gen. Du-

ong Van Minh as President of South Vietnam.

A spokesman for the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, also reached by telephone, denied that Communist planes had taken part in the attack.

It was thought possible that the Communists might have used A-37's captured when they seized the former Government air bases at Pleiku, Da Nang or Phan Rang. A number of the small jet planes are known to have fallen into North Vietnamese hands.

Soldiers Fire Back

According to military informants, three F-5 jet fighters, three C-47 transports, several helicopters and another military passenger plane were destroyed in the Tan Son Nhut bombing.

Downtown Saigon erupted into pandemonium as anti-aircraft guns and soldiers with M-16 automatic rifles fired back at the planes all over the city. Heavy clouds of black smoke, apparently rising from the airport, were visible in downtown Saigon.

Several minutes after the first planes dropped their bombs, other aircraft swooped in low over the city heading for the base. A correspondent saw two other jets—fighters—flying at about 1,500 feet over the Saigon Cathedral. The planes, with delta-shaped wings and distinctive tail surfaces, strongly resembled MIG-21's, which are used by the North Vietnamese Air Force.

Strong explosions continued to shake the capital for more than an hour after the initial bombing.

In a statement read over the Saigon radio at 9 P.M., the military governor of the capital, Lieut. Gen. Nguyen Van Minh, said it was not known where the planes had come from.

North Vietnamese troops con-

tinued their inexorable advance toward Saigon, at one point yesterday morning moving to within sight of the city.

A small group of Communist commandos seized the far side of a bridge over the Saigon River at Newport, a large navy and port complex built by Americans on the northeastern side of town. Heavy clouds of black and white smoke rose throughout the day from an oil storage dump and a warehouse that the Communists blew up at the base.

Copters Used in Counterattack

Despite repeated strikes by South Vietnamese helicopter gunships firing rockets, the commandos held the far side of the bridge, only a mile from the city limits, until late in the afternoon.

Other North Vietnamese troops, who have been moving

with blitzkrieg-like speed and daring over the last few days, continued to block all the roads leading into and out of Saigon.

To the northeast, Communist forces cut the main six-lane Saigon-Bien Hoa highway at Newport and three miles farther north at Cat Lai. To the west, Route 1, the road to Tay Ninh, was cut at Cu Chi.

And to the south, Route 4, the vital road that links Saigon with its major source of food in the populous Mekong River delta, was still severed around Ben Luc in Long An Province, 15 miles south of the city.

It was clear to nearly everyone in Saigon that the powerful North Vietnamese force assembled around the city, estimated at upwards of 10 divisions, had the capital in a strange hold and could overrun it in a matter of hours, if the Communist leadership wanted.

Other Towns Under Fire

Almost all the major towns around Saigon still under Government control also came under Communist attack.

North Vietnamese gunners shelled the capitals of four provinces — Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, Bien Hoa and Long An — as well as four district seats, all within 50 miles of Saigon.

The worst hit was Tay Ninh city, where 30 122-mm. rockets landed, killing five civilians and destroying over 400 houses, reports from the scene said. In addition, informants said, North Vietnamese troops sneaked into a Cao Dai Buddhist temple in Tay Ninh and abducted 40 monks.

Tay Ninh is the seat of the Cao Dai sect, one of several militant and eclectic Buddhist groupings in South Vietnam.

Other North Vietnamese troops fought a series of battles with Government forces in Dinh Tuong Province in the center of the Mekong delta.

Twelve civilians riding on a bus on Route 4 near Cai Lay in the delta were wounded when a mine blew up the vehicle.

The bombing of Tan Son Nhut Air Base caused an uproar in Saigon. People dashed for cover as the crash of bombs shook buildings and then dozens of antiaircraft guns opened fire.

24-Hour Curfew Ordered

An hour and a half later, Gen. Nguyen Van Minh, the military governor, ordered a 24-hour curfew effective immediately.

Even before his order, many owners of shops and restaurants had pulled down their metal shutters and closed for the evening.

Rumors quickly spread that the North Vietnamese had attacked the city.

One angry or bewildered South Vietnamese soldier shot at a passing taxicab and, when he missed, turned his .45-caliber pistol on a CBS television newsmen. The pistol misfired. He then hit the newsmen on the head with the gun.

Although there was no way to confirm that Russian-made MIG-21 fighters had actually appeared over Saigon, the sighting accorded with two other sightings made by other newsmen on the road to Bien Hoa earlier in the day.

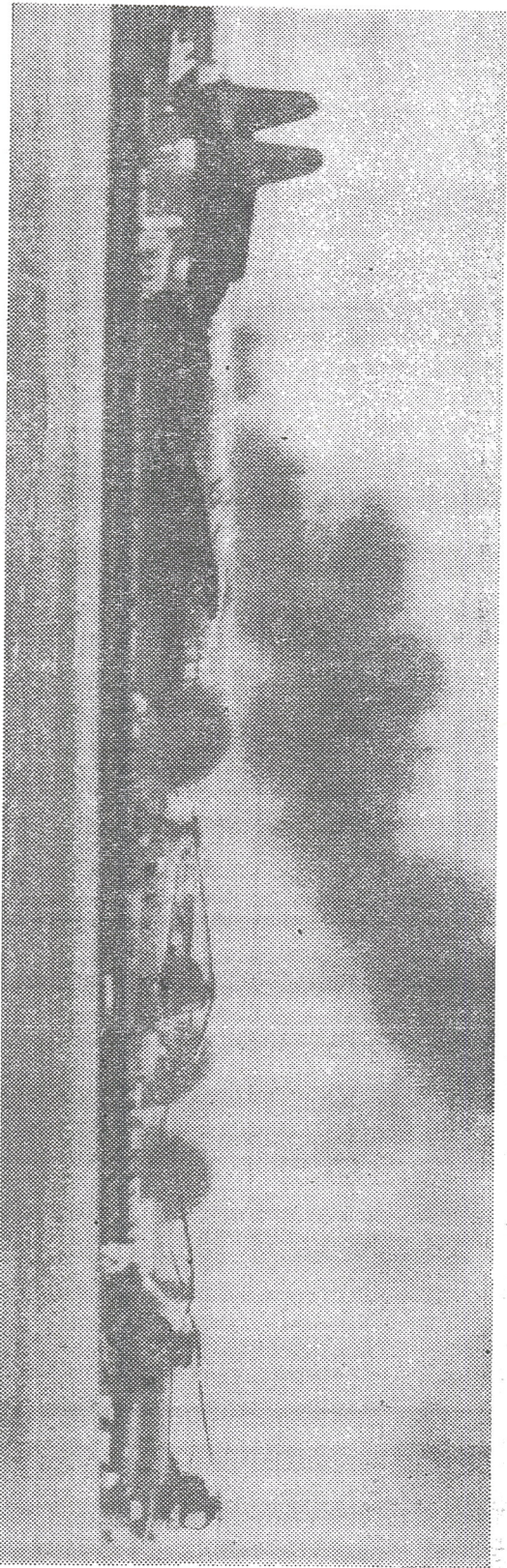
Intelligence officials have said for several weeks that the North Vietnamese had moved some of their MIG fighters into captured air bases in the south, at Da Nang, at Phu Bai, near Hue, and possibly at Pleiku.

The confusion surrounding the bombing of Tan Son Nhut was further compounded by a severe thunderstorm that struck the area just as the bombs began to hit the base. Many people thought at first that the sound of the bombs was thunder.



The New York Times/April 29, 1975

Communist forces encircling Saigon cut highway to delta at Ben Luc (1) and attacked Nhon Trach (2). Road to Tay Ninh was cut at Cu Chi (3).



Smoke rising from the South Vietnamese airport at Tan Son Nhut, near Saigon, after it was attacked by bombing planes yesterday

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