Hanoi Says Communists Raided Saigon Airport With U.S. Planes

HONG KONG, May 8 (Reuters — North Vietnam made public an account today of what it described as one of the South Vietnamese Communists' boldest exploits in the last days of the Vietnam war — the bombing of Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport by captured United States built planes.

On the day of the raid, April 28, there were conflicting reports about the bombing of the airport. The attack coincided with the installation of President Duong Van Minh and aroused speculation in some quarters that "hawk" generals were warning him against capitulating to the Communists.

Former Premier Nguyen Cao Ky said he believed the planes had been captured at Da Nang and were flown by Communist pilots during the Tan Son Nhut raid.

The North Vietnamese press account said that when Saigon's forces collapsed in the north and the Central Highlands in March, the Communists captured five United States-built A-37 fighter-bombers.

The Communists trained pilots to fly the planes and, in the last days of the war they flew to attack Tan Son Nhut.

When they arrived over the base, the control tower operators became confused and asked the A-37's for identification, the report said.

Not until the planes had dropped their first bombs did the tower operators realize the airport was under attack.

The surrender of the South Vietnamese government came just two days after the raid.