

Laotians Mutiny

At Big CIA Base

Examiner News Services

VIENTIANE (Laos) — About 1000 Laotian troops involved in the defenses of the CIA base at Long Cheng mutinied this weekend and returned to their homes in the

South, informed sources reported today.

Long Cheng itself was under siege and its defense was doubtful.

North Vietnamese troops in strength attacked Long Cheng today with tanks, heavy artillery, rockets and mortars.

Government sources expressed doubt their troops could hold out despite assistance from Lao Air Force T-28s and giant U.S. B-52 bombers.

The fall of Long Cheng, a big Central Intelligence Agency base 120 miles northeast of Vientiane, could open the way for a North Vietnamese drive on Vientiane itself. The base is headquarters for Meo Gen. Vang Pao, whose Meo tribesmen and Thai mercenary army is supported by the CIA.

Informed sources said the mutineers were in the Laotian special task force regiments known as "Group Mobile," also trained by the CIA, and that they refused to follow their commander, Brig. Gen. Thao Ly, claiming he reneged on a promise to replace them.

The sources said the mutineers belonged to one of two regiments flown from Savannakhet, 175 miles southeast of Vientiane, to Long Cheng. One group of 1000 men was at Long Cheng itself and second group of 1000 took part in an abortive government offensive on the Plain of Jars last month.

The mutineers were quot-

—Turn to Page 16, Col. 1

—From Page 1

ed as saying they were promised they would be returned to Savannakhet within three months.

When the Communists renewed their offensive against Long Cheng last weekend they saw their chances of returning home dwindling and forced 15 truck drivers at gunpoint to take them to Ban Son, a supply base 20 miles southwest of Long Cheng.

They arrived in Vientiane Saturday night and left for home yesterday.

The sources said some members of the Group Mobile, who were airlifted to Buam Long during the weekend for operations north of the Plain of Jars refused to leave camp.

Their status was uncertain, but Gen. Vang Pao was reported trying to mount a diversionary move in the area north of the plain to relieve the pressure on Long Cheng.

A North Vietnamese force estimated as the equivalent of two divisions routed Thai and Laotian defenders from all positions in the vicinity of Sam Thong, six miles northwest of Long Cheng, and seized control of a position on Skyline Ridge, overlooking the Long Cheng airstrip, the sources said.

"The situation is critical," one official source said. Other sources said Long Cheng is "all but lost."

The offensive, believed to involve virtually all North Vietnamese troops in the Plain of Jars area, began early Saturday with simultaneous attacks against Thai and Laotian positions.

By yesterday afternoon North Vietnamese infantrymen had seized three helicopter pads along Skyline Ridge, a 1500-foot-high natural barrier that forms the northern defenses of Long Cheng.