

Pnompenh Is Hit by 100 Rockets; 10 Killed in Major Attack by Foe

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By United Press International

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PNOMPENH, Cambodia, Tuesday, March 21—Enemy troops launched a major rocket attack against Pnompenh today, killing at least 10 persons and setting blocks of houses on fire.

At least 100 rockets struck the capital city and its suburbs over a period of several hours beginning at 1:30 A.M. By 4 A.M. relative quiet had settled over the city.

There were reports of fighting at the site of a radio transmitter.

Flames from burning buildings lit the predawn skies. Ambulances drove through the streets and rescue teams worked to find the dead and injured. First reports indicated that there were many wounded.

Ten rockets fell near the Ministry of National Defense and set several homes afire.

There were no immediate reports about foreigners in the city, but the United States Embassy did not appear to have been hit.

Meanwhile, the military situation in the southeastern province of Preyveng was described as "serious" by the Cambodian command after enemy gunners hit two towns yesterday. A South Vietnamese ammunition dump was destroyed, six persons were killed and at least 24 were wounded.

The command said that Route 15, a secondary road linking the two towns of Neakluong and Preyveng, had been cut off, leaving Preyveng "isolated." Efforts to open the road,

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Vast fires were touched off at Pnompenh (1). In Laos, Long Tieng (2) was under heavy attack. In North Vietnam (3), a U.S. jet bombed a radar base.

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30 miles southeast of Pnompenh, were unsuccessful yesterday, despite close American and Cambodian air support and ammunition air drops.

Field officers on the road said they had called for help from South Vietnamese troops more than 50 miles away at the town of Chipoo on Route 1 linking Saigon and Pnompenh.

Key Base Besieged

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 20 (AP)—A major enemy attempt to capture the key Government base at Long Tieng, just south of the Plaine des Jarres, was reported under way today.

"The situation is critical,"

one official source said. Other sources said Long Tieng, headquarters of Gen. Vang Pao and his American-supported guerrilla army of Meo tribesmen, was "all but lost."

Long Tieng, which has also served as a base for the operations of the United States Central Intelligence Agency in northern Laos, has frequently come under enemy attack in recent years. But the assaults so far this year — in January and again in recent days — appear to have been carried out with greater force than ever before.

The current all-out offensive was reportedly begun on Saturday morning by 4,500 to 6,000 North Vietnamese troops backed by four tanks and heavy artillery. Informed sources said that the enemy forces first routed Laotian and Thai defenders from all positions in the vicinity of the main support base at Sam Thong, six miles northwest of Long Tieng, and seized control of a commanding position on Skyline Ridge, a 1,500-foot-high natural barrier that overlooks the Long Tieng airstrip. The ridge forms the northern defenses of Long Tieng.

By yesterday afternoon, the informants here reported, North Vietnamese infantrymen had seized three Laotian helicopter pads along the ridge.

Enemy gunners reportedly closed the Long Tieng airstrip today by firing 82-mm. mortars and DK-82 recoilless rifles from the heights into the valley. Other enemy units were said to be pounding the base with long-range 130-mm. artillery from the southern tip of the Plaine des Jarres.

The fall of Long Tieng would be a heavy psychological blow to the Laotian Government. It would mark the farthest southward advance by enemy forces in northern Laos and would open the way, if the enemy chose to take it, to push toward Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos, nearly 80 miles to the south.

New Strikes in North

SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 20 (AP)—The United States command reported today that the 100th "protective reaction" air strike of the year was flown last night over North Vietnam.

The command said a Navy A-6 fighter-bomber made the attack against a radar site about 35 miles north of the demilitarized zone straddling the border between the two Vietnams.

Two other United States jet planes raided an anti-aircraft battery and a radar site in the North earlier yesterday. Pilots said they believed the emplacement had been destroyed.

The United States command said the North Vietnamese guns had opened fire on a United States reconnaissance plane before the American planes fired their missiles. The two radar sites were said to be tracking other United States planes.

In other war developments, South Vietnamese forces on the 11th day of their drive to smash enemy base camps in eastern Cambodia reported that they had uncovered more large caches of food and weapons in an area 85 to 100 miles northeast of Saigon and 10 to 15 miles inside Cambodia.