

# HALF OF PROVINCE IN SOUTH VIETNAM LOST TO INVADERS

Saigon's Troops Pull Back  
From Northern Quangtri  
—A Few Posts Hang On

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CLOUD COVER HOLDING

Bombers Still Prevented  
From Reaching Enemy's  
Artillery and Tanks

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Monday, April 3—South Vietnamese forces abandoned the northern half of Quangtri Province to a North Vietnamese force, estimated at 12,000 to 15,000 men, that was still advancing southward yesterday behind tanks and intense artillery barrages. A cloud cover has made American and South Vietnamese bombing ineffective since Thursday.

The only South Vietnamese positions still holding in the northern part of the province last night were at Dongha city, Quangtri city, and the Quangtri combat base, all reported under heavy attack.

After the combat base was struck by more than a thousand 122-mm. rockets and long-range 130-mm. artillery shells, Brig. Gen. Vu Van Giai, commander of the South Vietnamese Third Infantry Division, moved his staff three miles south to the citadel at Quangtri city, which is believed to be the objective of the North Vietnamese drive.

## Other Posts Fall

The combat base was the headquarters of an American infantry division until last summer and since then had been the Third Division's command post.

The last of the remaining defense posts, Mailoc and Camp Carroll, in the foothills of the Annamite Mountains 12 miles west of Dongha, crumbled yesterday afternoon, according to United States officials in Da-nang.

Here in Saigon, military sources said that casualty figures were no longer being reported because of the confusion of the situation in the north. So far, it has been reported that 560 enemy soldiers, 48 South Vietnamese soldiers and 13 civilians have been killed.

The several hundred South Vietnamese defenders of Camp Carroll left behind four long-range 175-mm. artillery pieces and some smaller guns that were said to have been put out of commission as the Government troops fled. Carroll was a large artillery emplacement that had also been used as a staging area for South Vietnamese sweeps of the jungle

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mountains in the western sector of Quangtri Province.

Civilian refugees, estimated at 20,000 to 40,000 people from the towns of Camlo District, east of Camp Carroll, and along the coastal plain above Dongha, were streaming south on Route 1 past Quangtri toward the old imperial capital of Hue. Several thousand had arrived yesterday, according to American officials.

## Advisers' Evacuation Due

About 200 American advisers and civilian Government officials in Quangtri Province were expected to be evacuated soon from Quangtri city, the provincial capital.

The roads were clogged with refugee and military traffic today and communications with the besieged area were difficult. But sections of Dongha city, and the combat base, now the northwesternmost Government-held position, eight miles south of the demilitarized zone, were heavily damaged after a battle between tanks only 500 yards north of the city.

In the tank battle, at 1:30 P.M. yesterday, two North Vietnamese tanks were destroyed, according to the Saigon command, which said that its own troops were using heavy M-48 tanks provided recently by the Americans.

## Highway Bridge Blown

Afterward, the highway bridge from Dongha north across a branch of the Cua Viet was blown up by the Government forces to prevent the North Vietnamese from moving their tanks and 130-mm. artillery farther south.

According to military sources in Saigon, the Cua Viet now marks the South Vietnamese northern line of defenses in Quangtri Province. The North Vietnamese control all of the area to the north and most of the mountainous area a few miles to the west of Dongha.

The North Vietnamese force is believed made up mostly of men of the 304th Division, which reportedly began infiltrating in force through the demilitarized zone in the last three weeks, reinforced by elements of the 324-B Division.

## Hanoi Reports Strafing

The American officials here assert that they have no intention of providing any support to the Vietnamese besides air support, which they have been unable to provide. For the last four days, a surge in the northeast monsoon has brought rain and low ceilings to Quangtri Province and the North Vietnamese panhandle north of the demilitarized zone.

Yesterday, however, the North Vietnamese radio broadcast a statement alleging that Saturday, "waves" of planes had strafed Vinhlinh in the northern part of the buffer zone and that three planes had been shot down.

The United States command has reported no losses of fighter-bombers, but said today that an F-105 that was escorting other planes over the Ho Chi Minh trail had fired missiles at an antiaircraft radar site



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Only positions still held by the South Vietnamese in area of enemy offensive are Dongha (1) and Quangtri (2).

miles southeast of Donghoi, close to the zone, early yesterday morning. The command also said that two Navy ships, the destroyers Buchanan and Joseph Strauss, had fired at targets in the south of the demilitarized zone and had been fired on by North Vietnamese shore batteries. The ships were not hit, the command said.

The command is known to have plans for heavy retaliatory bombing raids on the North Vietnamese who have come through the buffer zone, and on targets above it, but has been thwarted by the weather.

Thus the North Vietnamese have been able to advance openly, in large units, with tanks and artillery strung along the roads and fields where peasants farmed.

They have passed what until this weekend was "the northern tier of defenses, some of it including the McNamara Line," which the Americans had

North Vietnamese reportedly used tanks in that battle, too, but were later repulsed, with 151 killed, according to the Vietnamese military command.

Saigon's forces reported five men killed and 27 wounded in the action, the command said. Thirty-five Communist troops were killed and 17 South Vietnamese soldiers were wounded in three other engagements in Tayninh Province Saturday, the command asserted.

Though American intelligence reports had predicted a major North Vietnamese offensive in the Central Highlands region west of Kontum and Pleiku, no large-scale enemy attacks there had been reported by late afternoon yesterday.

Most American officials argue that in the north the North Vietnamese use of artillery—more than 10,000 rounds since Thursday in their heaviest concentrated bombardment of the war—was more "ambitious," as one source put it, than had