

NEW ENEMY OFFENSIVE REPORTED, DRIVE TOWARD QUANGTRI GOES ON; THIEU SEES BATTLE FOR 'SURVIVAL'

APR 6 1972

ACTION NEAR HUE

Other Key Points Are
Also Pressed—U.S.
Said to Shift Units

NYTimes

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Thursday, April 6—North Vietnamese troops reportedly opened a new drive in South Vietnam yesterday, striking in Binhlong Province, 75 miles north of Saigon.

At the same time, troops and tanks from the North were reported to be pressing closer to Quangtri City, capital of South Vietnam's northernmost province.

The attacks in northern Binhlong, near the Cambodian border, reportedly included tanks as well as infantry. Earlier, intelligence sources had said that elements of the Third, Fifth and Ninth North Vietnamese Divisions were believed to have been moving east through Cambodia toward South Vietnam.

[In the Binhlong action, a tank-led enemy force drove close to Locninh, a district capital 75 miles north of Saigon, and then shelled it, The Associated Press reported. South Vietnamese troops withdrew from Quanloi, a district town 60 miles north of Saigon, Reuters reported, after a North Vietnamese thrust from Cambodia with two regiments and tanks. United States sources added that eight American advisers had been airlifted by helicopter out of Quanloi. The provincial capital of Anloc also was reportedly attacked and a Government patrol clashed with an enemy force nearby.]



Associated Press

IN THE COMBAT ZONE: South Vietnamese soldiers atop a tank watching yesterday as smoke rose from allied air strikes on enemy positions across the river from Dongha.

Hue Seems Under Pressure

In the action south of the demilitarized zone, pressure also appears to be building on Hue, capital of Thuathien, the next province south from Quangtri. Two fire bases southwest and south-southwest of Hue were shelled, and there were reports of enemy activity in the Ashau Valley, west of the city.

An American official said that Hue appeared to be calm on the surface but that he had noted "a great undercurrent of anxiety."

"Quite a few people have already left," he added.

Meanwhile, President Nguyen Van Thieu went on television to declare that "the decisive battle" of the war was under way.

"This is the decisive moment where the survival or loss of our country is at stake," he said in an unusually strong and direct statement. "The present battle is the decisive battle, the outcome of which will determine the loss or survival of the people of South Vietnam."

As the battle intensified, the United States, apparently in

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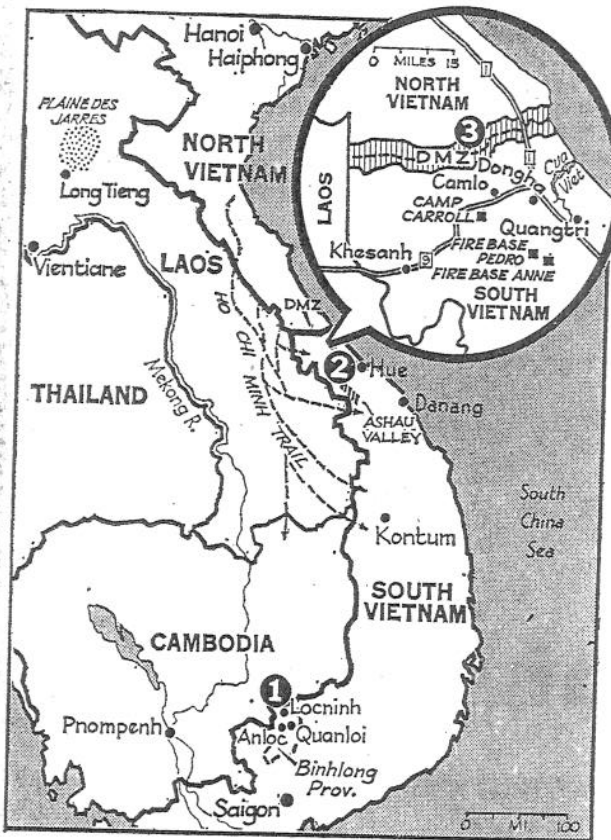
line with the announced plan of keeping its options open, was reported to have shifted the Seventh Fleet's amphibious landing force to Vietnamese waters.

Navy spokesman in Saigon would not comment on the composition of the landing force standing offshore, but such a component usually includes a helicopter carrier and regimental landing team of 2,000 marines.

There were unconfirmed reports that two companies of about 150 men each of the United States First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) had been airlifted from their usual base northwest of Saigon to a South Vietnamese base just north of Hue. Their mission, which also could not be immediately confirmed, was said to be to help provide security for the base.

So far heavy cloud cover and drizzling rain have hampered American air raids below the demilitarized zone, but a total of 217 tactical air strikes were flown yesterday. Informed American sources say the number will reach at least 500 a day if the skies clear.

Thieu, on TV, Tells South Vietnamese That 'Decisive Battle' of the War Is On



The New York Times/April 6, 1972
Enemy opened drive on Locninh and Anloc (1). Pressure appears to be building against defenders of Hue (2). U.S. jets struck northern part of the DMZ (3).

"Right now," an American official in the northern provinces said, "the South Vietnamese troops are praying for good flying weather. A good many of them seem to think American bombers are the only thing that can save them."

B-52's, which fly high above the clouds and drop their payloads in response to electronic signal on targets their pilots never see, have been used intensively over Quangtri Province since the attacks began. There were five more B-52 strikes on the area yesterday.

More Planes Moved In

To bolster its air power the United States has moved 20 additional B-52's to Southeast Asia and added a third aircraft carrier, with about 60 jet bombers, to the waters off South Vietnam.

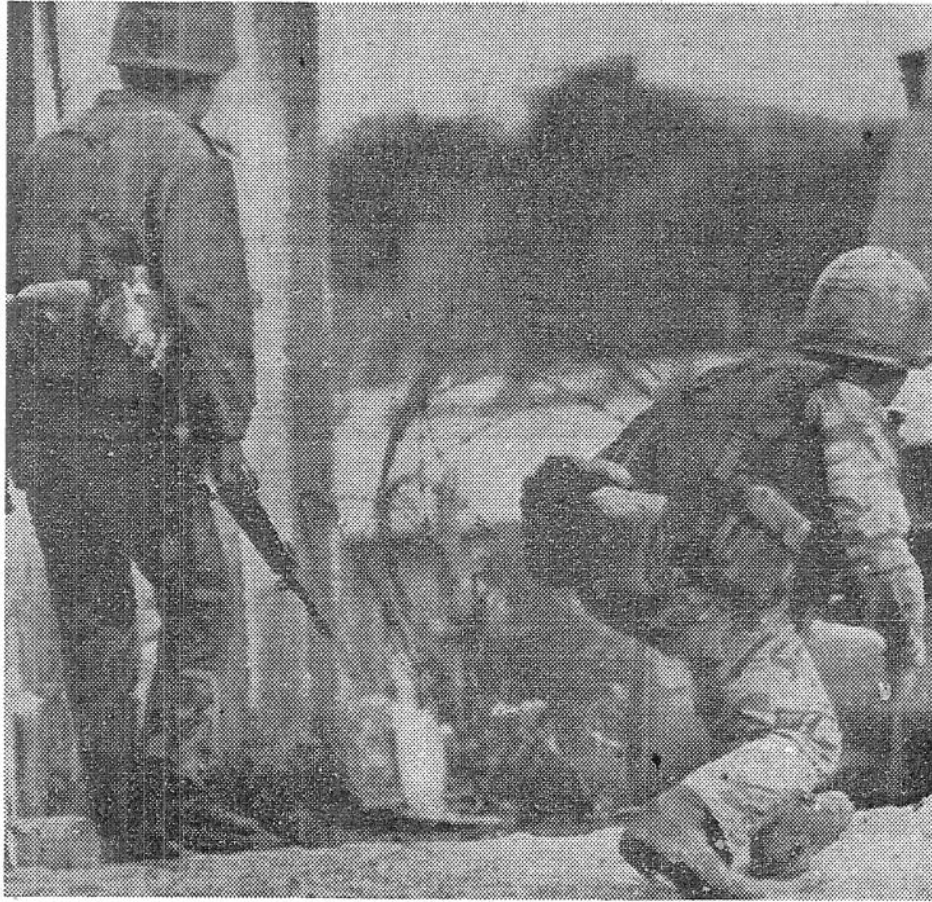
American military and civilian leaders have withheld public comment on the North Vietnamese attacks, which began in the far north of South Vietnam a week ago.

After two days of intense shelling Thursday and Friday more than a dozen well-fortified bases just below the demilitarized zone were abandoned. The North Vietnamese control more than half of Quangtri Province and are believed to be bent on capturing the capital, Quangtri city, which lies about 15 miles south of the demilitarized zone.

President Thieu, in his 15 minute television address, said the enemy's objective was to seize Quangtri and Thuathien Provinces and to establish a capital for the National Liberation Front.

If the enemy leaders succeed, he added, "they would go on to demand a political solution for the whole of South Vietnam, which would either consist of a coalition government or territorial concession to the Communists toward ultimately taking over all our country."

He said the North Vietnamese also wanted "to cause the failure of the Vietnamization program so as to create political dissension within the United States that would make the



Associated Press

STREET FIGHTING IN DONGHA: South Vietnamese marines moving against North Vietnamese infiltrators who slipped into the city on Tuesday. Dongha, about 10 miles south of the DMZ, is part of a new defensive line that the South Vietnamese established.

Government and people of America cease all aid, military as well as economic, to the Republic of Vietnam."

President Thieu, who visited the northern provinces on Monday, told the television audience that he had ordered his generals to defend Quangtri and Thuathien "at any cost."

So far, however, the South Vietnamese have elected to pull back rather than fight and there has yet to be a pitched battle. In several instances extremely heavy shelling by long-range North Vietnamese artillery has been enough to convince the South Vietnamese to abandon their positions.

In addition to the orders to his forces, Mr. Thieu said, he has asked for maximum United States air, naval, artillery and logistical support.

There has been speculation in the American community in Saigon that heavy air raids on North Vietnam might be renewed.

Pilots flying in the battle zone say that antiaircraft fire has been extremely intense and that several surface-to-air missiles have been directed at them. On Monday and Tuesday American bombers made nine retaliatory strikes at missile-guidance radar sites and artillery positions in the northern half of the demilitarized zone and above the zone in North Vietnam.

Some Recovery Discerned

In the struggle on the ground, military officers say there has been some evidence that the South Vietnamese are reorganizing and have recovered somewhat from the initial surprise of the onslaught. They also say the North Vietnamese are advancing more slowly, though they clearly have the upper hand still.

"Forty-eight hours ago I didn't think the South Vietnamese had a prayer," an American official remarked last night. "Now I think they have a chance."

The South Vietnamese have



Associated Press

TELLS OF BASE'S FALL: Maj. Walt Boomer, after arriving in Quangtri, tells how battalion of South Vietnamese Marines he advised fought man-to-man to save a fire base called Sarge, but were overwhelmed by artillery fire. Half the men were lost before withdrawal.

lost several artillery pieces, to offset which the United States has placed five destroyers armed with 5-inch guns off the coast. The Saigon Government has sent in several tanks with guns that are being used as artillery.

The number of South Vietnamese regular soldiers and marines in Quangtri Province is estimated at 12,000, plus 14,000 to 16,000 militiamen.

As for the strength of the North Vietnamese the military

officers said they have put 102 medium and light amphibious Soviet-made tanks into battle. About half have been destroyed by allied bombs and heavy gunfire, the officers added.

The North Vietnamese are thought to have 15,000 to 21,000 soldiers south of the demilitarized zone in the 304th division and dependent regiments, three artillery regiments and several tank battalions.

The officers say that reinforcements and supplies continue to move across the zone and that some enemy units may be moving toward Quangtri City from the south through the Ashau Valley.

Elements of the 308th North Vietnamese Division are believed to have crossed the demilitarized zone too, but the officers believe that the bulk is being held in reserve.

Hanoi Claims Another B-52

HONG KONG, April 5 (Reuters) — North Vietnam said today that it had shot down a second B-52 bomber in an air raid over North Vietnamese territory. A broadcast said the craft was downed at Vinhlinh, just north of the demilitarized zone.

Denial by Pentagon

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 5 — The Defense Department categorically denied today that the North Vietnamese had shot down a B-52 bomber.

Jerry W. Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, denied that a B-52 had been downed either today or Monday. No B-52 has been downed by the foe in Southeast Asia during the war, according to the Pentagon.

Regarding a charge by Hanoi that B-52's were attacking populated areas, a Defense Department spokesman reiterated that it is American policy not to bomb populated areas.