

# A HIGHWAY IS CUT

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## Point Is 37 Miles From Saigon—U.S. Raids of 'Limited Duration'

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Friday, April 7—American planes and destroyers began systematic bombardment of surface-to-air missile sites in North Vietnam yesterday.

The Communist forces that have invaded the South continued to press their attacks on Quangtri Province, adjacent to the demilitarized zone; on positions west of Hue, and in Binhlong Province only 50 miles north of Saigon.

There, some 8,000 North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops cut Route 13 at a point 37 miles north of Saigon yesterday morning. Two provincial centers were under attack.

### Announcement by the U.S.

The United States command announced that "in response to the invasion of the Republic of Vietnam by North Vietnamese forces across the demilitarized zone, U.S. Air Force tactical aircraft and Navy components are attacking military targets in the area north of the demilitarized zone in order to help protect the lives of the diminishing U.S. forces in South Vietnam."

The statement, which did not elaborate, said the raids would be of "limited duration."

[For the first time in the war the North Vietnamese fired a surface-to-air missile from South Vietnamese soil, The Associated Press reported. Witnesses on the northern front said the missile was directed at an allied plane from one of the several bases abandoned by the South Vietnamese.]

American pilots in Danang said in telephone interviews that the 20-odd active surface-to-air missile sites just north of

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the demilitarized zone were the immediate targets of the aerial campaign, which in its initial stages is limited to the area south of the 18th Parallel.

Informed American officers say that after the missile threat has been dealt with, the next phase of the retaliatory bombing will involve attacks on North Vietnamese troop concentrations and supply lines in the panhandle region north of the DMZ. The main North Vietnamese force there is the 308th Division, which is believed to be hidden in the jungle-covered mountains and foothills just north of the central part of the zone.

Raids farther north, including the bombing of the port of Haiphong, which is the arrival point for most of the enemy's military supplies, are also among the options open, according to high officials in Washington.

Pilots and military officers here did not speculate on such an extension of the raids, but, as one of them noted, "That wouldn't help the South Vietnamese in Quangtri Province or in the Central Highlands very much now."

The missile sites, each of which has three to four launchers, have been firing at American and South Vietnamese planes bombing North Vietnamese troops, which have penetrated 10 miles from the demilitarized zone. Continued cloudy weather limited the air strikes on the launchers and numerous missiles were being fired.

### 'We Just Have No Choice'

"The opposition up here is really strong," said a pilot, Lieut. Col. John P. O'Gorman, a squadron commander, "but we just have no choice. We've got to take them on."

Heavy American air losses are considered likely. The North Vietnamese radio contended that 10 American aircraft were shot down yesterday, but no losses have been reported by the United States command, which withholds announcement until the end of rescue efforts.

The South Vietnamese forces south of the demilitarized zone were reported to be holding the defensive line at Quangtri and Doncha under continued intense artillery attack. The newest North Vietnamese attacks in Binhlong Province, on the Cambodian border north of Saigon, were being regarded with increasing concern by American and South Vietnamese officials.

The attacking forces, which the Saigon military command said had infiltrated from eastern Cambodia, were in control of most of the northern part of the province from Chonthanhan. It was there that a force estimated at a battalion cut Route 13.

### Foe's Roadblock Holds

A South Vietnamese armored column tried but failed to break through the roadblock, according to reporters at the scene, who said the tanks and personnel carriers returned to the base at Laikhe. The base came under shelling and ground attack Wednesday, the command said.

The town of Locninh, the district headquarters, was reported by American officials here to be under attack, with the center of resistance the district compound, where a handful of American advisers were among the defenders. A North Vietnamese tank was reported destroyed by South Vietnamese artillery half a mile southwest of Locninh Wednesday.

The town of Anloc, a few miles to the south on Route 13, was also under attack, and the airfield at Quanloi, four miles northwest of Anloc and 60 miles north of Saigon, was abandoned by the South Vietnamese.

Another enemy force a few miles west, in northern Tayninh Province, clashed with South Vietnamese forces just south-

west of Thienngon Wednesday, the Saigon command said, and 37 enemy soldiers were killed.

The upsurge in enemy activity in the provinces north and northwest of Saigon was not yet considered by American commanders here to be of the same magnitude as the actions in Quangtri Province.

The air armada that the United States is putting into action in the area of the demilitarized zone numbers about 500 tactical fighter-bombers, plus 60 B-52's. The three aircraft carriers on station in the Gulf of Tonkin — the Kitty Hawk, the Coral Sea and the Hancock — will be reinforced by the Constellation, according to military officers. The other planes are flying from Danang and from five bases in Thailand.

Because of the persistent poor weather — it is expected to get even worse — only a small part of the force has been committed so far.

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During the 24 hours that ended at 6 A.M. yesterday, before the strikes on the North began, the United States command said, Air Force and Navy fighter-bombers flew 287 tactical air strikes in Vietnam—58 of them in the area north and northwest of Saigon and 142 south of the demilitarized zone.

The naval bombardment that was directed at targets north of the demilitarized zone was the first such action by the Seventh Fleet since the bombing halt of November, 1968, when the battleship New Jersey was offshore with her 16-inch guns. Five destroyers with 5-inch guns are in the gulf now.

As the enemy drive persists, a major offensive by elements of the 320th Division and independent artillery and infantry regiments is expected in the next few days in the Central Highlands province of Kontum. So far, although enemy action has been mounting there, there have been no major attacks.

#### Determined Effort by Enemy

The major center of action continues to be the Quangtri-Thuathien front, where, in the view of South Vietnamese and American officials, the North Vietnamese are making a determined effort to take over the two northernmost provinces and the historic city of Hue, the ancient seat of the Vietnamese empire.

A stunning reverse was handed to the South Vietnamese Third Infantry Division, which left all the forward defense lines in the face of the quick North Vietnamese assault that began in earnest over the weekend. Further, the South Vietnamese First Division, which had been claiming success in forestalling an attack from the mountains southwest of Hue, has been pushed onto the defensive. Yesterday, according to American officers in the field, it was driven from Fire Base Veghel, three miles north of another artillery base, called Phuan, 19 miles southwest of Hue.

Farther north in Quangtri, it was reported, all remaining civilians were ordered out of the provincial capital yesterday. According to a Reuters dispatch from Hue, a correspondent who called from Quangtri city late last night said that most of the people of the city, which had a population of 20,000 before the North Vietnamese sweep down to Dongha, eight miles north of Quangtri, had already left.

The Third Division, which had been charged with the northern defenses, suffered heavy losses in the weekend attacks, according to American officers in Danang.

One regiment scattered before the enemy and hundreds of soldiers deserted and fled south, according to one officer.

The two other regiments also suffered losses but were described as usable. However, the main burden of the reinforced defenses both west and east of Route 1 leading to Quangtri city has been given to two brigades of marines flown from Saigon Monday and Tuesday.



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U.S. is bombing missile sites north of the DMZ (1). Saigon is reinforcing its troops in the Quangtri area (2). Fighting in Binhlung Province (3) has been spreading.