

# **SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCE LOSES A DISTRICT CAPITAL; BOMBINGS SLOW INVASION**

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## **BUT DRIVES GO ON**

NYTimes

Town Near Cambodia  
Falls and Road in  
Highlands Is Cut

By **CRAIG R. WHITNEY**

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Saturday, April 8—South Vietnamese troops gave up a district capital 60 miles north of Saigon yesterday in the third day of a North Vietnamese push near the Cambodia border.

The fall of Locninh, in Binh-long Province, in the first sizable Communist advances in the area since 1968, came as the North Vietnamese invasion of northern Quangtri Province slowed under the pressure of hundreds of American and South Vietnamese air strikes. Cloud cover that has hindered air activity gave way to clear skies.

As for what is expected to develop into a third front of heavy North Vietnamese attacks, the Central Highlands area west of Kontum, senior American officers said Communist forces had cut the main highway between Kontum and Pleiku in several places.

Intelligence sources said a new enemy division—the second North Vietnamese Division—had joined the 320th Division and independent regiments and was moving toward Kontum.

[Heavy fighting was reported for the Dakto airstrip and United States military sources predicted that the North Vietnamese might try to push ward to link up with Vietcong guerrillas on the east coast, cutting the country in two, Reuters reported.]

### Delta Outposts Attacked

In a series of scattered but coordinated small attacks on militia and army outposts throughout the Mekong Delta southwest of Saigon, the Communists killed a score of Government soldiers. The South Vietnamese reported killing 40 of the enemy.

The attacks appeared to signal the beginning of a general offensive involving guerrillas acting in concert with the North Vietnamese main-force units farther north.

More than 500 United States fighter-bombers and B-52's struck heavily yesterday at North Vietnamese troop concentrations and surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft sites both above and just below the demilitarized zone.

The targets in North Vietnam include roads, bridges, storage areas and one or more of the three recently improved airfields in the southern part of the panhandle around Donghoi, according to military sources in Saigon.

Three aircraft carriers offshore were joined by a fourth, the Constellation, and the five

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destroyers that are shelling targets in and near the demilitarized zone were reinforced by two cruisers. The cruisers—the Oklahoma City, flagship of the Seventh Fleet, and the Chicago—have 6-inch guns with a range of 13 miles.

The destroyer Lloyd Thomas suffered light damage and three minor casualties when hit by a 105-mm. howitzer shell on Thursday.

A military officer in Saigon said the shell was fired from south of the demilitarized zone, presumably by enemy troops using one of the 50 American-made howitzers abandoned by retreating Government forces last weekend. The destroyer was holed seven feet above the waterline.

Reinforced South Vietnamese infantry men and marines appear to be holding their improvised defense lines along the Cua Viet east and west of Dongha, in the hills southwest of Hue. Heavy battles have been raging for the last four days, however, between South Vietnamese troops of the First Division and a North Vietnamese force of about 1,200 men.

A ground attack on fire base Phuxuan, one of the main western defense points 19 miles southwest of Hue, was reported yesterday. In two days of fighting 150 Communist soldiers have been killed, according to a senior American officer in Danang. South Vietnamese casualties were put at 40.

"They're either making a thrust at Hue or else a kind of diversionary movement to keep troops tied down there so they can't help farther north," the officer said.

### Quangtri Base Shelled

As for the fighting in northern Quangtri Province, the Saigon command reported that more than 100 North Vietnamese soldiers were killed in tank battles and air strikes northeast and southwest of Dongha Thursday. The combat base two miles northwest of Quangtri city was hit by 30 122-mm. rockets early yesterday, the command said.

Air Force B-52's flew four missions in Quangtri Province between noon Thursday and noon yesterday, the United States command reported. The raids were all west of Quangtri, where North Vietnamese troops are said to be trying to work their way around the city's defenses.

A total of 185 tactical-bomber strikes were reported in the two northern provinces in the same period. No details were available on how many planes flew north of the demilitarized zone, but the number was thought to be considerable.

Surface-to-air missiles, which have been fired at planes in

large numbers, have been fired from south of the demilitarized zone since the North Vietnamese took over the northern half of Quangtri Province last weekend. At least three American and two South Vietnamese planes have been shot down, according to official announcements.

In the fighting in Binhlong Province, north of Saigon, United States Air Force Phantom jets from bases in Thailand flew 81 strikes on North Vietnamese positions Thursday and yesterday. The enemy drive down Route 13 reached as far as Chonthan, 37 miles north of Saigon.

### Saigon Attacks Feared

Before the fall of Locninh there were about 85 Americans in the province. They are believed to have been evacuated.

There was growing apprehension here that local Communist forces in Saigon might be planning terrorist or other attacks in and around the capital. According to American advisers, there has been an upsurge in such activities in the last few days.

An American intelligence report indicated that a regiment from a North Vietnamese division in Cambodia might also be moving back into the upper Mekong Delta west of Saigon in what could pose a second threat to the capital area.

Saigon's Mayor announced that a curfew would be enforced from 11 P.M., two hours earlier than before, to 6 A.M., an hour later. American forces were ordered to stay off the streets during those hours.

### Gains Reported by Hanoi

Special to The New York Times

HONG KONG, April 7—The Hanoi radio reported today that three more American planes had been shot down in North Vietnam and said that Communist forces had inflicted heavy casualties on South Vietnamese troops in capturing Locninh.

Broadcasts monitored here said the planes had been shot down in Quangdinh Province and the Vinhlinh area but gave no further details. Hanoi yesterday reported that 10 American planes had been shot down in the same region.

The radio, quoting the Communist Giaiphong news agency of South Vietnam, said the capture of Locninh came after two days of heavy fighting.

No mention was made of North Vietnamese troops engaged in the area but the radio said Communist South Vietnamese forces had "killed, wounded or captured" 400 Government troops yesterday at Honquan near Locninh.

The radio said that an armored regiment had been wiped out northwest of Locninh today and 20 tanks and armored cars destroyed or damaged. Thirty-five others were captured, it said.

"The whole enemy force" in the Locninh military subsector surrendered, the radio said, leaving the city "under the complete control of the liberation forces and people."

### U.S. Adviser Wounded

SAIGON, April 7 (AP) — An American adviser was wounded during the evacuation by helicopter of the 15-man advisory team from Anloc, the provincial capital just to the south of Locninh. His identification was withheld pending notification of his family.