

U.S. Air Strikes Move Toward Record Levels

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, April 19—North Vietnamese troops reportedly pressed their attack on the besieged town of Anloc with at least two more tanks yesterday. The Saigon command said that the tanks had pushed into the town, a provincial capital 60 miles north of here, but had been beaten back by the South Vietnamese defenders.

Meanwhile, American air strikes in support of South Vietnamese troops battling in the three-week old enemy offensive in various parts of the country moved toward the record levels set at the height of United States involvement in the war in 1968. There were 205 strikes in the Anloc area alone.

The bombing of military targets in North Vietnam was cut back considerably on Monday and again yesterday, according to informed officers. They have suggested that the reason was to allow the Nixon Administration to assess the effects on the North Vietnamese Government and on public and political opinion of the weekend air strikes on Hanoi and Haiphong before deciding what step to take next.

The officers said, however, that United States planes and ships were continuing to hit North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile sites, shore batteries and road traffic in the southern part of the country, between the demilitarized zone and the 20th Parallel, in support of South Vietnamese forces fighting the invaders south of the buffer zone in Quangtri Province.

Troops of the South Vietnamese Fifth Division, who have been besieged in Anloc, the provincial capital, for 12 days, were reported conducting a house-to-house search of the ruined northern part of the town to drive out enemy soldiers who briefly held half of the town last week.

Relief Troops Still Blocked

The Saigon command said that the tanks moved in from the north early yesterday from the same direction that 6,000 North Vietnamese soldiers in the attacking force came when the attacks in Binhlong Province north of Anloc began April 5. About 40 tanks were used by the attackers last week, out of about 75 reported to be available.

One of the tanks used yesterday was destroyed in counterattacks, the command said, and the others escaped, presumably back to the northern part of the town.

Relief troops of the South Vietnamese 21st Infantry Division remained blocked in their attempts to move north on Route 13 to relieve the beleaguered Fifth Division. The Saigon command said the troops had fought off at least one attack on their rear flank, two and one-half miles southwest of Chonthan, which is about 15 miles south of Anloc.

A United States Air Force four-engine C-130 transport plane dropping supplies to the encircled Fifth Division force was struck by North Vietnamese ground fire yesterday and crashed 25 miles north of Saigon, the United States command said. All six crew members were picked up by Army helicopters and only two were wounded.

Developments on the other fronts included the following:

¶In the far north, in Quangtri Province, South Vietnamese forces were reported moving slowly west of Dongha, and in scattered fighting near the town, now South Vietnam's northern line of defense. The Government forces killed 71 North Vietnamese soldiers, according to the Saigon command.

¶In Thuathein Province, just south of Quangtri Province, the fire base called Bastogne, at the outer defense line of Hue 19 miles southwest of the city, remained encircled.

Troops of the First Infantry Division trying to come to its

rescue reportedly fought sharp clashes yesterday with a North Vietnamese unit trying to move east toward Hue. The Saigon command asserted that 400 North Vietnamese were killed in the fighting four miles east of Bastogne, and it put the Government casualties at 21 killed and 41 wounded.

¶Attacks by local Vietcong units on Government outposts in Quangtin Province south of Danang mounted Sunday and yesterday, with at least two big clashes reported. In the fighting more than 200 enemy soldiers were said to have been killed.

¶In the Central Highlands, where the Government and American officials have been predicting a major enemy offensive for months, enemy forces lightly shelled around Kontum city, according to the Saigon command. American B-52's flew seven heavy-bombing missions in the mountains west of the provincial city.

+And in the Mekong Delta, southwest of Saigon, enemy forces continued to attack local militia outposts, one of them only 50 miles from Saigon.

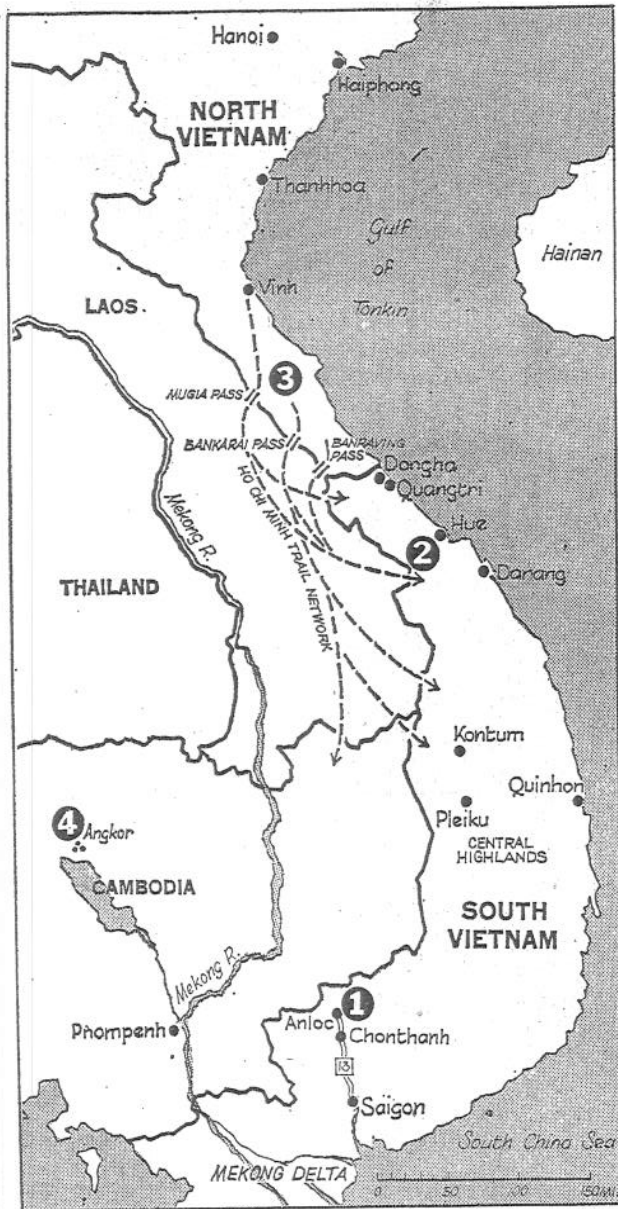
Air strikes by American fighter-bombers in support of South Vietnamese troops throughout the country numbered 524 in the 24 hours ended at 8 A.M. yesterday, the United States command said.

B-52's also dropped hundreds of tons of bombs on targets in the northern and Central Highlands fronts and flew six missions of up to three planes each in a semicircle around the northern part of Anloc two of them a mile north of the city.

The increase in air strikes from 347 in the previous period was said to be partly a result of a reduction in the number of strikes flown against North Vietnam on Monday, a day after the raids on Hanoi and Haiphong.

South Vietnamese Air Force pilots also flew bombing missions for their own troops around Anloc, which remained the focal point of attention yesterday.

Since the beginning of April, it is estimated three North Vietnamese divisions plus independent regiments, totaling more than 20,000 men, have moved across the border from base areas in eastern Cambodia into northeastern Tayninh province and Binhlong, backing up the force attacking Anloc.



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Sharp battles were reported at besieged town of Anloc (1) and encircled fire base near Hue (2). U.S. planes continued bombing of North Vietnam's southern panhandle (3). Cambodians near Angkor (4) were attacked.

60 Killed Hanoi Says

HANOI, North Vietnam, April 18 (Agence France-Presse)—A North Vietnamese commission said today that American air raids over the weekend killed 13 civilians and wounded 27 in Hanoi and left 47 dead and 101 wounded in Haiphong.

The organization, called the Commission of Inquiry Into American War Crimes, said also that the British cargo ship King's Cross had been struck by bomb fragments in Haiphong harbor and part of the cargo burned. Other vessels reported damaged were the Soviet ship Simferopol and the East German cargo ship Halbestadt. [In London, a spokesman for the Foreign Office declined comment beyond saying that it had no confirmation yet of the report that bomb fragments had hit the freighter.]

The commission said that American planes had flown more than 1,000 sorties over North Vietnam since April 6 and that they had killed or wounded several hundred civilians.

Cambodia Reports Assaults

PNOMPENH Cambodia, April 18 (AP)—North Vietnamese troops reportedly began heavy assaults on a Cambodian relief column 145 miles of here today as it sought to reach a 1,000-man Government force trapped near the temples of Angkor in northwestern Cambodia. A military spokesman termed the attacks "very fierce" and said there were indications that the column might be surrounded.