

Anloc Relief Force Abandons Effort To Lift the Siege

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Saturday, April 22 — A 10,000-man South Vietnamese relief force has given up efforts to break through to the beleaguered garrison of Anloc and now has the mission of defending its own flanks, military officers disclosed yesterday.

The relief force has been stalled about 10 miles from Anloc, a provincial capital 60 miles north of Saigon. The town has been under heavy pressure for the last two weeks from a North Vietnamese force estimated at three divisions, totaling perhaps 20,000 to 30,000 men.

In the 24 hours ended at noon yesterday, United States B-52's reportedly dropped hundreds of tons of bombs in five missions only one mile west southwest and one mile east of Anloc, an indication that the North Vietnamese ring around the town had not loosened.

The Enemy's Objective

The relief force, which was brought from the Mekong Delta April 9 to drive up Route 13 to relieve the 5,000-man Anloc garrison, must defend its flanks along a 25-mile stretch of the road beginning at a point 25 miles north of here.

In the view of senior commanders here, the Communists' main military objective in their offensive, now in its fourth week, is to tie down and chew

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up Saigon's strategic reserve forces in battles and later to take advantage of the void left in rural areas to destroy the Government's pacification program and administrative apparatus.

In a move perhaps related to this aim, enemy forces in nearby southeastern Cambodia have swept Cambodian defenders almost completely out of the so-called Parrot's Beak area, cutting Route 1, the main road between Pnompenh and Saigon.

"It's possible they may be opening another front," one officer said, "but they may be just trying to draw the South Vietnamese 25th Division over there."

The 25th Division is based in South Vietnam's Tay Ninh Province, which borders the Parrot's Beak. So far it has not been committed to the fighting in the Anloc area to the northeast.

Regiment Is Shifted

Increasing enemy pressure on Laikhe, 25 miles north of Saigon, and on nearby Dautieng has prompted the South Vietnamese to move a 2,000-man regiment of the 18th Division from the relatively quiet Longkhanh Province east of Saigon to the front north of the capital, according to officers here.

The North Vietnamese drive toward Anloc began April 7 with attacks from across the border in Cambodia south along Route 13 through the district capital of Locninh. Since then, Anloc, a small rubber plantation town, has become a grim and devastated battleground with two regiments of Saigon's Fifth Infantry Division battling North Vietnamese attackers equipped with tanks and artillery.

On the other battle fronts, there were these developments:

In the Central Highlands, Military Region II, Vietcong and North Vietnamese units that seized Hoain, a district capital in the coastal province of Binh Dinh Wednesday increased their pressure on Hoainhon district a few miles to the northwest.

Government artillery bases in the mountains of Kontum Province to the west came under continuous shelling. Communist forces have cut the two

strategic roads leading into the highlands in numerous places and major attacks on Government positions there are considered imminent.

North Vietnamese troops attacking Quangtri Province in the northernmost part of South Vietnam pressed their attacks in the mountains west of Quangtri city but were reportedly repulsed by South Vietnamese marines and rangers. Fresh North Vietnamese troops were believed to be moving south through the demilitarized zone to join the 20,000 to 30,000 attackers who drove Government forces back to their present positions at Quangtri and Dongha cities early this month at the beginning of the offensive.

Fifty or more miles to the southeast, enemy pressure on Firebase Bastogne, which guards the western approaches to Hue, eased for the second day in a row, with only one small battle reported yesterday three miles to the north.

American air strikes in support of the South Vietnamese troops continued at very high levels, with 17 B-52 missions on the three fronts and 392 fighter-bomber strikes reported by the United States command, compared with 202 reported flown by South Vietnamese Air Force pilots.

Road Safety Declines

The situation on the northern approaches to Saigon, where the fighting has spread from Binhlong Province south to Binhduong Province, and the deteriorating military security in the Central Highlands continued to cause most concern.

The Government's position in Binh Dinh Province on the central coast, never very favorable, has continued to deteriorate over the last few days. Binh Dinh, although one of the most populous provinces, is one of the least pacified.

Hoainhon District, where North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops were now reported, is next to Bongson, where the U.S. 173d Airborne Brigade had its headquarters until last year.

Such things as road safety graphically illustrate the deterioration in military security over the last month. For exam-

ple, it was possible until the beginning of this month, to drive safely from Quinhon, the principal city of Binh Dinh Province, north to Hoainhon and west all the way to Pleiku. The road has now been cut for 10 days, Pleiku is running short of military supplies and food, and Route 1 north from Quinhon to Hoainhon is reported to be dangerous.

Until the beginning of this month, it was also possible to drive in safety the entire 75 miles from Saigon north on Route 13 to Loch Ninh on the Cambodian border. Now one can journey safely only about 40 miles north of Saigon, to just past Laikhe. The rest of the road is controlled by the enemy.

With the roads cut, South Vietnamese troops have been using helicopters and parachute drops to get supplies and reinforcements to the beleaguered garrison at Anloc. They have lost three C-123 four-engine transports in the last week to enemy ground fire in the area, according to South Vietnamese forces close to the air force, which does not announce its losses.

Foe Attacks in Cambodia

PNOMPENH, Cambodia April 21 (UPI)—Communist forces launched a ground attack today on government positions north of the besieged provincial capital of Svayrieng.

The Cambodian High Command said all available T-28 fighter planes had been sent in to provide air cover for the city.

"If it hadn't been for the air cover," said Chhang Song, the command spokesman, "Svayrieng would have fallen last night."

The Communist lines were said to be less than one mile from Svayrieng, which is within a 50-mile stretch of route 1, under enemy control. All traffic has been cut on Route 1 from a point 51 miles southeast of Pnompenh to the South Vietnamese frontier.

Government reinforcements have reportedly been massing at the joint South Vietnamese-Cambodian base of Neak Luong, 32 miles Southeast of Pnompenh, for a major push to recapture the occupied section of the road.