

NYTimes APR 24 1972

Anloc Said to Withstand Fresh Assault; Key Highlands Base Reported Overrun

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Monday, April 24—The besieged provincial capital of Anloc, 60 miles north of Saigon, was shelled for three hours and attacked by enemy soldiers from four sides yesterday, but the town was reported to be holding out at nightfall.

However, the situation in South Vietnam's Central Highlands, adjoining the Laotian and Cambodian borders, appeared to be deteriorating. It was reported that almost an entire South Vietnamese battalion had been eliminated there in the last two days, partly by large-scale desertions.

[A column of up to 20 North Vietnamese tanks attacked along Route 14 in the Central Highlands and overran a South Vietnamese division headquarters base camp at Tancanh, The Associated Press reported. The position was considered critical to the defenses of Kontum and Pleiku, the region's two largest cities.]

At Anloc, the intense shelling began at sunrise yesterday and North Vietnamese units attacked in what military observers described as company strength. Each North Vietnamese company has about 120 men. The enemy attacks, which were described as probes, were not supported by

tanks, military sources said.

Four South Vietnamese Air Force helicopters succeeded in landing at the town, bringing in supplies and evacuating 40 wounded soldiers. Poor weather hampered air strikes in the area, however.

Among other developments were the following:

¶Saigon was shifting its forces rapidly to keep pace with various facets of the North Vietnamese offensive. On Saturday, the 11th Airborne Battalion—more than 600 hundred men—was moved from the Central Highlands to the Saigon area, which was believed to be directly threat-

Continued on Page 16, Column 6

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

ened. The Highlands area was strengthened by the Sixth Ranger Group, consisting of three battalions of 600 hundred men each, from the northernmost part of South Vietnam to Pleiku. The move reflects confidence that the far north, where the offensive began March 30, is out of danger for the moment.

¶In an area related to the Anloc battle, enemy forces shelled the town of Dautieng 35 miles northwest of Saigon, and they were reportedly building up rapidly in Tay Ninh and other provinces adjoining Binh Long, the province of which Anloc is capital. The Saigon command said its forces killed 19 of the enemy and captured three in a clash 500 hundred yards south of Dautieng.

¶United States bombers

have reportedly begun attacking bridges along Route 1 in southeast Cambodia to obstruct the heavy flow of enemy troops and materials into the Anloc battle. Intelligence sources have reported that within the last few days the entire Cambodian province of Svayrieng—the "Parrot's Beak" salient projecting into South Vietnam toward Saigon—has fallen to the North Vietnamese Army.

¶Air strikes over South Vietnam were reported to have included 403 tactical strikes and 24 B-52 bomber missions in 24 hours. Ten of the B-52 missions were over Kontum Province and six were close to Anloc.

Bases in Danger

Military authorities were closely watching the Central Highlands, where a system of Government bases guarding the approaches to Kontum and other key cities seemed in grave danger.

Among these bases are five along a ridge northwest of Kontum that has become known as Rocket Ridge because of its use by enemy forces as a rocket-launching area.

The bases along the ridge, each consisting of 300 or 400 men and several artillery pieces, are known as Fire Base 5, Fire Base 6, Fire Base Yankee, Fire Base Charlie and Fire Base Delta. The Vietnamese continue to use the American names.

A week ago, Fire Base Charlie was overrun, and later the defenders of Fire Base Delta were forced to evacuate to a position 500 yards to the south.



The New York Times/April 24, 1972

North Vietnamese struck Anloc (1) from four sides and shelled Dautieng (2). American bombers are reportedly hitting bridges in Cambodia (3) to block the flow of Communist supplies and men into Anloc battle. In the highlands, Tancanh (4) came under attack by the enemy.

Keeping the fire bases supplied in the face of growing enemy pressure is hampered by the declining availability of helicopters and the weather as the monsoon season sets in.

The South Vietnamese 22d Division undertook the job of loosening the enemy hold on Rocket Ridge last week, and established a forward divisional command post at a hamlet called Tancanh 18 miles northwest of Kontum.

A battalion of the division was assigned the task of clearing enemy rockets and mortars from the ridge, and the first contact with the nemy was reported on Friday.

Today it became apparent the expedition had been a disaster.

Thirty survivors of the battalion drifted into the divisional headquarters at Tancanh and said their group had killed 88 enemy soldiers. But they said that 15 of their soldiers had

been killed and 150 were missing. The presumption was that most in the battalion had surrendered or deserted.

A wire-guided antitank missile, a weapon new to enemy forces, was said to have been used in an attack on Tancanh yesterday. The missile trails a cable after launching, along which its operator transmits signals controlling its course. He can adjust its flight to hit a rapidly maneuvering tank. One of the missiles reportedly destroyed an M-41 tank and killed one of its crew.

Marketplace Reoccupied

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, April 23 (UPI)—Enemy troops reoccupied the Kompong Trach marketplace today and reliable military sources reported fierce combat in progress at that border town, 75 miles southwest of Pnompenh and only nine miles from South Vietnam.

The joint South Vietnamese-Cambodian forces garrisoned at Kompong Trach have been under heavy pressure for 17 days. Military observers believe the enemy wants the town to use as a staging area for a drive into the Vietnamese delta.

Thieu Says Foe Fails

SAIGON, April 23 (AP) — President Nguyen Van Thieu said in a speech today on Ancestors' Day, a holiday comparable to the American Memorial Day, that the enemy command had committed 250,000 troops in its offensive but had failed to achieve any significant military or political objectives.