

# SOUTH VIETNAMESE QUIT QUANGTRI; SEVERAL THOUSAND ARE REPORTED BATTLING TO ESCAPE TOWARD HUE



Associated Press

Soldiers of the South Vietnamese Third Division fleeing south from Quangtri on Route 1

## 10 U.S. AIDES STAY

MAY 2 1972

Province Capital First  
to Fall Since Foe  
Began Offensive

NYTimes

By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, May 2—The South Vietnamese abandoned Quangtri, their northernmost provincial capital, yesterday, giving the enemy control of a broad strip of strategic territory just south of the demilitarized zone.

It was the first provincial capital lost in the North Vietnamese offensive, which began March 30 with heavy shelling attacks and some ground assaults on South Vietnamese outposts near the buffer zone.

Reports from the field said several thousand South Vietnamese troops were trying to

battle their way south from Quangtri, accompanied by at least 10 American field advisers who had volunteered to stay with them. Eighty other Americans and 49 South Vietnamese officers were airlifted out of the area by helicopter.

[United States military sources said the Americans were evacuated because the command structure in Quangtri had disintegrated, United Press International reported. The sources said also that the South Vietnamese officers who were airlifted out included Brig. Gen. Vu Van Giai, commander of the South Vietnamese Third Division, who had lost contact with one after another of the six units he was commanding.]

During the rescue of the Americans and South Vietnamese, an American A-1E Skyraider bomber, flying with helicopters to suppress ground fire, and a forward observer plane were shot down.

#### **New Attacks Held Likely**

The loss of Quangtri, capital of the province of the same name, apparently opens the way for further enemy attacks southward, possible against Hue, 32 miles to the southeast. Parts of Hue, Vietnam's former imperial capital, were seized and held for 28 days during the enemy's Tet offensive in 1968.

With the fall of Quangtri, all of South Vietnam's northernmost province appears to be in enemy hands.

In other parts of South Vietnam there were these developments:

¶A large area along the central coast, in Binh Dinh Province, with a population of 200,000 and an important rice crop, fell to enemy control.

¶The North Vietnamese reportedly increased their pressure on the besieged provincial capital of Anloc, 60 miles north of Saigon.

¶Some officials in Saigon predicted that the capital itself

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might come under rocket attacks.

After the abandonment of Quangtri, the northernmost point of Government control in the country was said to be a marine position on Route 1, eight miles south of the city and 24 miles north of Hue.

#### **Defenders Reach Marine Post**

Reports from Hue said the first of the defenders to leave Quangtri had reached this position after fighting past North Vietnamese forces controlling the coastal dunes area south the abandoned provincial capital.

"We have given up plans to defend Quangtri," said Brig. Gen. Thomans Bowen, senior United States adviser in the northernmost military region, in Hue. He added that the troops left in the area would be "working their way out as best they can."

Quangtri had been virtually deserted by its 25,000 residents during the five days of enemy shelling and ground probes that preceded the decision to give up its defense.

The city apparently had been the target of the North Vietnamese from the start of their offensive. But after a tank-led assault had been repulsed with heavy losses for the attackers on April 9, action fell off in the area until last week.

#### **Tamquan Falls to Foe**

On the central coast yesterday, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong reportedly extended their control over 200,000 people in the northern part of Binh Dinh Province and its rich rice crop by seizing Tamquan.

The only remaining Government stronghold in the area is Landing Zone English, a regimental headquarters. Enemy troops had seized the key district towns of Bongson and Haoian earlier in their campaign.

Meanwhile, the Central Highlands due west of Binh Dinh Province was reported quiet, although a major battle for another provincial capital, Kontum, is expected at any time. Kontum was encircled by enemy forces last week.

#### **Fighting on Route**

On the front north of Saigon, where South Vietnamese troops are trying to break the three-and-a-half week siege of Anloc, capital of Binhlong Province, heavy fighting broke out on Route 13, which connects with Saigon.

Reports from the field said that about 140 enemy soldiers were killed in the fighting. South Vietnamese losses were put at 14 killed and 58 wounded.

Enemy demolition men were said to have cut Route 1, South Vietnam's main north-south highway, in two places early yesterday. They reportedly blew up a big river bridge at Godauha, 35 miles west of Saigon and six miles from the Cambodian border. They were also said to have wrecked two culverts in the north in the Haivan Pass between Hue and Danang.

Military officials were puzzled by the destruction of the bridge because it severed the highway that the enemy might have wanted to use to stage attacks from Cambodia against Saigon.

The culverts in the Haivan Pass were repaired late in the day and traffic was again moving on the road, a vital northern supply route. The strategic pass is also considered a probable target for capture by enemy forces, which controlled it for years until mid-1969.

Up to now, Saigon has been spared in the enemy's offensive but officials said the enemy might yet hit it with a rocket attack. Some officials had predicted a May Day assault of some kind. Others said an attack could come next weekend—the 18th anniversary of the fall of Dienbienphu in the final battle of the French-Indochina war.