

BASES NEAR HUE ATTACKED; SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS FLEE QUANGTRI IN DISORDER

NEW ASSAULT DUE

U.S. General Expects Enemy Step-Up in Next Few Days

By HENRY KAMM

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, May 3—With the city of Quangtri lost, two South Vietnamese fire bases on the approaches to the former imperial capital of Hue were reported under enemy attack yesterday.

Hue itself, 32 miles southeast of the fallen capital of Quangtri Province, was bracing for a North Vietnamese onslaught.

Serious attacks could be expected in the next few days, newsmen in Hue were told last night by Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Bowen, senior adviser to the regional commander. United States intelligence sources estimated that it would take the enemy forces six to eight days to prepare for the assault.

Artillery Batters Base

United States military sources said last night that Fire Base Nancy, the northernmost position held by the South Vietnamese and their last one in Quangtri Province, was battered by enemy artillery. [United Press International, quoting officers in the field, said enemy soldiers attacking with the support of tanks had seized part of the outpost.]

The base, which is 20 miles northwest of Hue, lies a little west of Route 1, South Vietnam's main north-south highway, and on the boundary between Quangtri and Thuathien Provinces. Hue is the capital of Thuathien Province.

Heightening the threat to Hue, North Vietnamese troops nearing the city from the southwest reportedly struck at Fire Base Birmingham, 13 miles from the city. The base was subjected to heavy artillery fire.

[Meanwhile, the United States aircraft carrier Midway arrived off Vietnam to help support South Vietnamese forces, The Associated Press reported. With her arrival, the United States had five carriers operating in the area for the first time in the war.]

In the center of South Vietnam, the encircled province capital of Kontum came under light shelling. American military sources said that the strong enemy forces in the area were being kept from mounting an all-out attack by good flying weather which allows United States and South Vietnamese planes to pound targets there.

East Kontum, in the coastal province of Binh Dinh, military sources reported that the main South Vietnamese combat base, Landing Zone English, was under heavy enemy pressure.

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American advisers were evacuated Monday, suggesting that the base had been written off.

Landing Zone English is in the northern part of the province, most of which is in enemy hands. In the southern part, Quinhon, the province capital, was struck by four 122-mm. rockets Monday night. Four civilians were reported killed and six wounded.

United States planes continued heavy raids throughout South Vietnam yesterday, with B-52's flying 26 missions in the 24 hours ended at noon. Twelve of the raids were directed at targets in Quangtri and Thuathien provinces in the north and 10 in the central mountainous province of Kontum.

American fighter-bombers were also said to have flown 649 strikes in tactical support of South Vietnamese troops.

On the front northwest of Hue, American sources said that 10 United States advisers remained with the Vietnamese marine brigade at Fire Base Nancy.

Eight other Americans were said to remain in Quangtri Province, presumably with the South Vietnamese army and elements retreating southward after their rout at the city of Quangtri.

Some of the marines were reported trying to hold three bridges on Route 1 between Quangtri and the Hue during the day so as to slow the enemy advance. The southernmost of the bridges is 20 miles from Hue.

Copter Brought Down

In fighting north of Fire Base Nancy yesterday, General Bowen, the American adviser, said that the North Vietnamese, using a hand-held heat-seeking missile, had brought down an American helicopter, killing its crew of four and an American adviser and two South Vietnamese.

The general said it was the first known use of such a weapon in the war. These missiles find their target by following the heat waves that flow from it.

Indicating the intensity of enemy ground fire yesterday, General Bowen said that his command helicopter, in which he toured the combat zone, had eight holes in it when it landed at Camp Evans in the afternoon. The camp, 18 miles northwest of Hue, is an American helicopter installation that, since the retreat from Quangtri, has become a South Vietnamese artillery base.

The general reported that another American helicopter had been downed in the day's fighting. No casualties were announced.

Discussing the abandonment of Quangtri, General Bowen said that the withdrawal had not been recommended by the American advisers and that he thought the town might have been held.

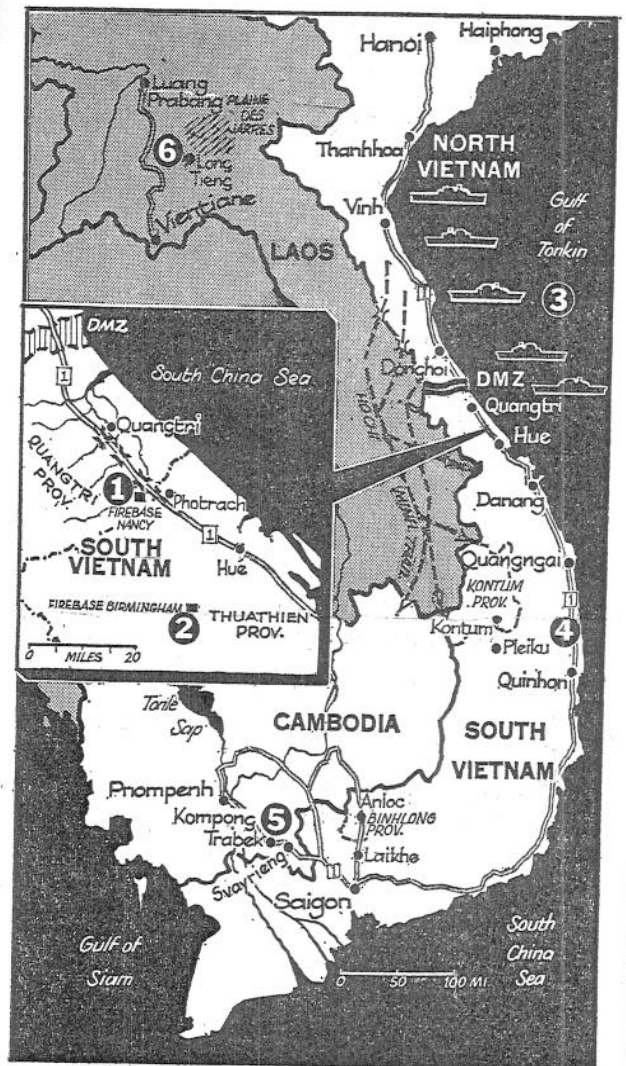
Supply a Problem

But the general added that "a lot of other factors" were involved. He cited the difficulties in supplying the defenders and the heavy North Vietnamese shelling.

Brig. Gen. Vu Van Giai, the commander of the South Vietnamese Third Division, which was routed at Quangtri, wrote what he called "a letter from the heart" to his troops, most of whom straggled southward in disarray and beyond the command's control.

"I ordered you to retreat in order to consolidate our units and form a new defense line," he said.

General Bowen said that the Third Division had suffered considerable losses, more in



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Communists struck at Fire Base Nancy (1) near road to Hue, while Government marines at three bridges along road sought to slow advance of other enemy units. Fire Base Birmingham (2) was also hit. U.S. added a fifth carrier to fleet off Vietnam (3). In center of South Vietnam, foe increased pressure on Landing Zone English near Quinhon (4). In Cambodia, Government drive against Communist troops on Route 1 (5) was stalled. Far to north, Laotians took advantage of lull in their nation to occupy area abandoned by foe at Long Tieng (6).

matériel than in men. The losses were particularly heavy, the general said, in tanks and other vehicles.

As Hue prepared for possible attack, informed sources reported that about 600 enemy infiltrators had been arrested in the last two days. Among them were reported to be students believed to be in contact with the Vietcong.

The defense of Hue rests

principally with the South Vietnamese First Division, some marine elements formerly based in Quangtri and as many fighting units of the routed Third Division as can be reassembled in the next few days.

The nearest American installation is at Phubai, 10 miles to the southeast. About 1,800 soldiers are stationed there, including several hundred infantrymen.