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U.S. Is Rushing Tanks and Artillery to Replace Losses

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Thursday, May 4 — President Nguyen Van Thieu ordered a shake-up in the army command last night in the wake of the loss of South Vietnam's northernmost province, Quangtri, to the North Vietnamese.

Lieut. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of the northern military region, was replaced by Maj. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, who had been serving as commander in the Mekong Delta, south of Saigon. General Truong, the hero of Hue's defense during the Communists' Tet offensive of 1968, is widely regarded as one of South Vietnam's ablest generals.

At the same time, Brig. Gen. Vu Van Giai was relieved as commander of the South Vietnamese Third Division, which was routed at Quangtri. It was announced that he was under investigation.

General 'Overwhelmed'

The view of one United States official in Saigon was that General Giai, who had been promoted from a colonel commanding a regiment last year to head the division then newly formed, was "just overwhelmed by the problems he faced in the invasion."

On the northern front, Government marines yesterday abandoned Fire Base Nancy, about 25 miles northwest of Hue, and pulled back several miles.

The marines, who have been the only sizable and effective force between Hue and the

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Communists advancing from Quangtri, moved out of the outpost after a daylong bombardment by North Vietnamese long-range 130-mm artillery.

On Tuesday they had fought a battle in which the marines reported they had killed 72 enemy soldiers and knocked out 11 tanks.

As they retreated, the marines blew up two bridges across the Thacma River at the town of Mychanh and reformed their defense lines south of the 75-yard-wide stream, American officers in Hue reported last night.

Several regiments of the South Vietnamese Second Infantry Division, which has its headquarters at Chulai in Quangtin Province, more than 100 miles to the south, were being moved yesterday to reinforce the new front-line position, the American officers said.

Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Bowen, the deputy senior American adviser to the regional commander, said in Hue that he believed the new position is "defensible, given our heavy air support."

General Bowen reported that the USS command was rushing in American tanks from repair depots in Japan and artillery from the United States to replace the huge losses of the South Vietnamese Third Division. Originally charged with the defense of the demilitarized zone, the division was routed first from its bases south of the zone in the early days of the North Vietnamese offensive which began March 30. It fled in disaster from Quangtri city earlier this week.

Retreat Surprise to Bowen

General Bowen reiterated yesterday what he had said the day before—that he thought Quangtri could have been defended.

The retreat, he said, came "as a surprise to me."

General Giai said on Tuesday in a letter to his troops that he was responsible for having ordered the withdrawal from Quangtri, which General Lam, the regional commander, had sworn earlier would be defended at all costs.

Many of the routed Third Division troops were terrorizing Hue yesterday, looting stores and firing bursts from their M-16 automatic rifles. Tens of thousands of refugees were streaming out of the city, blocking Route 1 southward to Danang.

Several dozen South Vietnamese, among them women and children, were said to have drowned as they tried to escape on a landing ship from the Thuanan navy base, six miles east of Hue. A South Vietnamese newsman there reported that the refugees, who had been cooking and sleeping on the sandy shore for several days, tried to cling to the stern of the ship as it pulled out into the Huong River estuary.

Other Developments Listed

The craft, whose name was not available, reportedly continued sailing for Danang as many of the refugees fell into the water and drowned. Several other navy vessels had left Hue earlier in the day with up to 500 refugees aboard.

As the northern front continued to crumble, there were these other developments:

In the central coastal region, Government troops who on Tuesday night abandoned Landing Zone English, the last Government-held position in the northern part of Binh Dinh Province, were rescued yesterday four miles to the east. The by South Vietnamese Navy landing craft on the beach troops, regional forces, militia and some members of the 40th Regiment of the 22d Division, had been under heavy enemy ground and artillery attack. Their retreat left the northern third of Binh Dinh, where about 220,000 people live, entirely in the hands of the enemy just as the spring rice crop is being harvested.

In the neighboring province in the Central Highlands, John Paul Vann, the senior American adviser, said the situation around Kontum, the besieged provincial capital, was critical, but he expressed the view that there were enough Government defenders to hold the city.

In the air war, the United States command announced that at least 618 air strikes were flown by American planes in South Vietnam in the 24 hours ended at noon yesterday—about two-thirds of them in Quangtri and Thuathien, provinces in the north. Hue is the capital of Thuathien.

Hippies Said to Aid Fashion

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Pierre Balmain, a French dress maker, says the hippie movement has had a great influence on men's fashions. "Before the hippies," he said, "men were ashamed of wearing clothes full of colors, although they always like it."