

# General Says Men Disobeyed Orders

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DANANG, South Vietnam, May 3—The newly replaced commander of the northern military region of South Vietnam said tonight that his troops had disobeyed his orders to stand and protect Quangtri and that some "high-ranking officers would be brought before a tribunal.

In Saigon, a communiqué from President Nguyen Van Thieu's office said the President had dismissed the commander, Lieut. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam. But in an emotional interview the general insisted that he had resigned—because his troops gave up the province

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capital without a fight.

Both General Lam and President Thieu had said publicly that Quangtri would be held "at any cost." It fell Monday.

"I told them to stay, stay, stay," the general said tonight, pounding the air with a clenched fist. "They withdrew without orders. Quangtri had not been hit yet. The order to hold Quangtri was not executed."

General Lam, whose roundish, smooth face belies his 44 years, said he personally submitted his resignation in writing yesterday in Saigon. He said the President accepted it without comment. "I didn't fulfill the mission given to me," General Lam said, with tears in his eyes. "That is very bad, and it was very bad to lose Quangtri."

"So," he continued, "I take my responsibility."

After Lieut. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong replaced him as commander of the area known as Military Region I in a brief ceremony at 6 P.M. in Hue, General Lam returned by helicopter to his darkened headquarters here, walked to his office, paused to talk with newsmen, then talked about his resignation with a handful of staff members and old friends over tea.

## He Helped Successor

Although some of the highest-ranking American officers here fear it is only a matter of time before Hue falls, General Lam insisted that it could be defended. "We can counterattack and seize Quangtri, "we are not defeated yet," he said.

His successor General Truong, was an early favorite of General Lam.

After a battle in Quangtin Province in 1964, friends of the

two recall, General Lam, who was then commanding the Second Division, went into the field to congratulate and promote the then Major Truong to lieutenant colonel. Later, General Lam, as region commander, gave his subordinate the coveted job of commander of the First Infantry Division and pressed Saigon to promote him to general. When President Thieu was looking for someone to command the Mekong delta region, General Lam suggested General Truong.

General Lam said, however, that he had not recommended General Truong as his replacement in the northern region.

This evening, General Lam said he did not know what he would do now. But he said he did not intend to leave the army.

"We need people to fight," he said, leaning on the cane he always carries. "I like to fight. I've been fighting for 23 years."