

AUG 11 1972

Loincloth Attack by Viet Reds

SF Examiner

SAIGON — (UPI) — South Vietnamese infantry, alerted by a captured Communist today smashed a half-naked North Vietnamese commando battalion attacking the Lai Khe base 30 miles from Saigon, military sources said.

The attack, by blackpainted guerrillas wearing loin cloths was the main point of a sudden offensive in which Communists bombarded towns all over South Vietnam today and began commando raids as close as 22 miles to Saigon.

Fighting also quickened in the Quang Tri area near the DMZ where South Vietnamese said they killed 234 Communists in the 24 hours ending at noon today.

The Communists mounted nine artillery and commando assaults throughout South Vietnam within hours of the deactivation of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry — the

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last American ground combat unit in the country.

U.S. warplanes continued to pound enemy targets, however, as B52s flew eight missions south and west of Quang Tri.

Targets of North Vietnamese ground attacks stretched from Rach Kien, 114 miles south of Saigon, to Cam Ranh City and Tam Quan in the central coastal area. The command said all ground attacks were beaten back.

The shellings and attacks cost 20 South Vietnamese

and soldiers dead and 80 wounded, while at least 60 Communists were killed in the ground battles, the command said.

South Vietnamese marines in the Quang Tri struggle endured 900 rounds of artillery fire. Military spokesmen said the bombardment was responsible for most of the government's casualties during the day of 10 dead and 89 wounded.

During the same period, Saigon troops reportedly killed 233 North Vietnamese in fights around Quang Tri and south of Hue, the com-

mand reported. They said seven Soviet-built tanks, a pair of 130mm field guns and two 105mm howitzers were knocked out.

A village near the major South Vietnamese army training center, midway between Hue and Phu Bai in the north, was hit by six mortar rounds, military spokesmen said. One civilian was killed and six were

pong Trabek, 47 miles southeast of Phnom Penh. Communist resistance has dwindled steadily since the initial tank-led assault showed government forces from the Highway One market town six days ago.

In the air war over North Vietnam bad weather held U.S. jet strikes to about 200 sorties yesterday, most of them well below the Hanoi area. Navy pilots reported destroying a locomotive and 12 boxcars 60 miles south of Hanoi.

wounded.

Communist gunners also bombarded the town of Ben Cat, three miles south of Lai Khe, and Cu Chi, 22 miles northwest of Saigon.

In Cambodia, military spokesmen said cautiously that government reinforcements may have linked up with 1500 Cambodian troops who had been surrounded at the western edge of Kom-