

# 3000 Seek to Halt Red Da Nang Push

SAIGON — (AP) — Three thousand South Vietnamese troops launched a drive today aimed at blocking a North Vietnamese division from pushing out of the captured Que Son Valley into South Vietnam's populous coastal lowlands south of Da Nang.

U.S. Air Force crews reported spotting big North Vietnamese 130mm artillery guns and tanks in the area of the Que Son fighting, some 35 miles south of Da Nang.

The air force communique said F4 Phantoms knocked

out three of the guns and two tanks. It was the closest such heavy weapons have been reported to Da Nang.

The North Vietnamese pushed through the valley during the weekend, inflicting heavy troop and equipment losses on the South Vietnamese.

It was the biggest Communist gain since Quang Tri fell last May 1 and posed an immediate threat to Da Nang, the country's second largest city, and a heavily populated 50-mile strip of Highway 1 to the South.

Field reports said the South Vietnamese counter-advance westward from Fire Base Baldy was slowed by moderate North Vietnamese resistance and the 130mm artillery guns.

Field reports said hundreds of refugees were fleeing to the coast, including many wounded in cross-fire.

The Que Son Valley leads

—Turn to Page 2, Col. 1

# 3000 Seek To Halt Big Red Drive

—From Page 1

from the mountains near the Laotian border across Highway 1 almost to the South China Sea. It is a natural infiltration route to the coast.

It was the first time the Communists had taken the valley despite a major push in the region every year since 1964. This year's North Vietnamese drive of about 2500 men was the biggest.

The Saigon command also announced that 85 persons were killed or injured during the weekend in the Central Highlands when a civilian bus hit an enemy mine and a helicopter carrying refugees turned over and crashed.

Forty civilians were killed and 30 others were wounded when the mine ripped through the packed bus about 25 miles south of Pleiku, Saigon headquarters said.

## Report in Error

The Saigon command first announced that a helicopter collision in the air over Kontum killed 38 Vietnamese and injured 42, but later said this was in error, there was no collision and 12 persons were killed and three were injured.

A spokesman said the big Chinook had landed at Kontum and let most of the refugees off when it suddenly rose out of control and flipped over.