

Queson Reported Retaken By Saigon Ranger Force

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By The Associated Press

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Saturday, Aug. 26—The district capital of Queson, overrun by North Vietnamese forces last weekend, was reportedly retaken yesterday by South Vietnamese troops.

[Meanwhile, the commander of the South Vietnamese division that had been routed from the Queson area was replaced. Page 3.]

Military sources said that advance elements of a Government task force pushing westward into the Queson Valley 25 miles south of Danang moved into the town in late afternoon and raised the saffron-and-red flag of South Vietnam at district headquarters.

Tank Column Held Up

The troops, members of a border ranger unit, were said to have found six or eight dead enemy soldiers in the headquarters, but there was no immediate word whether the rangers had encountered resistance.

However, stiff enemy resistance at a well-defended hill position two miles away was said to be holding up the advance of a tank-supported South Vietnamese infantry column, part of the 10,000 man task force assigned to the counter-offensive in the valley.

Other elements of the force were said to be moving slowly behind heavy air and artillery strikes. They were said to be

taking many casualties from enemy gun positions on high ground along the valley.

The loss of Queson and nearby Fire Base Ross last weekend put most of a South Vietnamese regiment out of commission and cost dozens of guns and vehicles. It also gave the enemy an opportunity to train its long-range 130-mm. guns on coastal population centers and increased the threat to Danang, South Vietnam's second largest city.

Reverse Reported on Delta

While a military gain was being reported in the north, South Vietnamese forces in the south were said to have suffered a reverse as enemy troops in fierce fighting reportedly cut Route 4, Saigon's link to the rice-producing areas of the Mekong Delta.

Reports from the field said enemy troops attacked a military outpost on Route 4 and began firing rifles and rocket grenades at civilian and military traffic near Binhphu, a village west of Cailay, about

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50 miles southwest of Saigon.

Civilians, some wounded and some carrying small children, fled by bus, cart, motorbike and on foot as Government infantrymen and armored vehicles moved up to support militiamen. The exodus hampered South Vietnamese operations, and as of midafternoon traffic was still stalled and the village was still under fire.

Ranger Battalion Ambushed

South Vietnamese officials disclosed in a delayed report that an ambush on Tuesday 36 miles north of Saigon left a battalion of about 300 Government rangers with 30 dead, 40 missing and more than 60 wounded Tuesday.

Yesterday Government rangers reportedly battled entrenched North Vietnamese in the area.

Ranger reinforcements reported killing 35 enemy troops

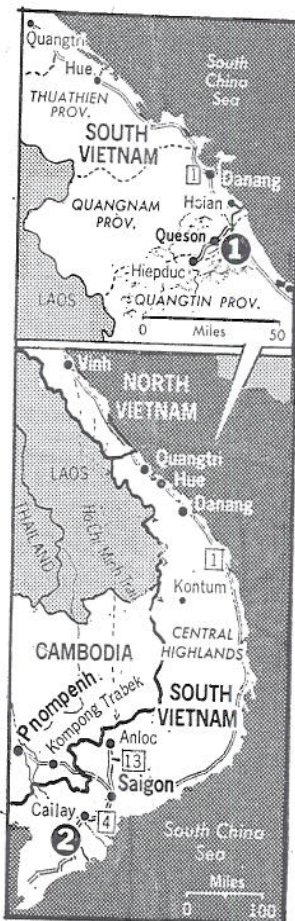
with the help of air strikes.

A few miles to the south, meanwhile, Communist-led troops reportedly shelled a fire base with mortar rounds and a captured American howitzer. Government casualties in the two actions were put at 13 wounded.

In the northernmost part of South Vietnam, enemy shells still bombarded South Vietnamese marines attempting to recapture Quangtri, despite days of unusually heavy air strikes north, west and south of the city.

United States B-52 bombers flew 18 more missions over the province and the demilitarized zone, reportedly dropping more than 1,300 tons of explosives at suspected supply caches, troop concentrations and staging areas.

In the air war over North Vietnam, the United States command reported, American jets flew more than 310 strikes



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Saigon troops were back in Queson (1). Foe cut key road in Delta (2).

on Thursday, the most in a week. Pilots said they had damaged or destroyed 10 ammunition storage buildings, 15 bridges and 31 water supply craft.