

'Critical' Threat to Saigon

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SAIGON — Communist troops today launched attacks on government units within seven miles of Saigon, blocking traffic on a major highway and infiltrating at least five hamlets in what military sources said was a "critical threat" to the capital.

Trying to smash the enemy buildup, Gen. Frederick Weyand, the U.S. commander in Vietnam, ordered the heaviest B-52 raids in the Saigon area since the 1968 Communist Tet offensive.

Vapor trails of the eight-jet aircraft stood out in the early morning sun as the planes went over Saigon to attack Viet Cong and North

Vietnamese camps north, northwest and east of the city.

Major fighting was reported swirling around Phu Cuong, capital of Binh Duong Province 13 miles north of Saigon, and snipers firing on military vehicles cut Highway 13 just north of the capital, the sources said. They said residents were being told to store rice for one to two months and that wounded soldiers would be treated "at their posts," not evacuated to hospitals.

Allied commanders have predicted the Communists will try to isolate Saigon in advance of the Nov. 7 U.S. presidential election. "The Saigon region is

faced with a critical threat," one officer said.

Fighting was reported today from seven to 30 miles from the city along Highway 13, including the Iron Triangle and War Zone D regions. The areas were once defended by such departed American units as the 82nd Airborne Division, 199th Infantry Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division and 11th Armored Cavalry regiment.

Military sources said an estimated three regiments of mixed North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops were involved in the clashes. The government has at least that many regiments in the area, the sources said. At normal strength, a Communist regi-

ment numbers about 2500 men and a South Vietnamese regiment has about 2770 men.

The fighting was the closest major action to Saigon since the start of the Communist offensive March 30.

More than 40 of the B52s dropped 1000 tons of explosives on enemy base camps, munitions stockpiles and infiltration routes. The blasts produced the effect of a minor earthquake in Saigon, rattling windows and knocking objects off walls.

Military sources said seven hamlets were infiltrated by units of the "Dong Nai" regiment, a veteran Communist unit that has long operated in the Saigon region

Two of the hamlets were cleared out by government units late today.