

Bombing Mistake Kills Viet Civilians

Examiner News Services

SAIGON — Half a dozen American planes supporting South Vietnamese troops accidentally dropped several 500-pound bombs on a populated area south of Da Nang yesterday, killing 19 civilians and wounding 29, the U.S. Command announced today.

Field reports said about 10 bombs fell in the area 2½ miles west of the provincial capital of Hoi An and about 15 miles south of Da Nang.

"The cause of the accident is not known at this time," the U.S. Command said. "An investigation is being conducted."

The command said two U.S. Air Force F4 Phantoms and four Corsairs from Seventh Fleet carriers were involved.

Farther to the north, a South Vietnamese drive to recapture lost ground in Quang Tri Province before declaration of a cease-fire bogged down in the face of heavy North Vietnamese counterattacks.

The stalled government drive toward the Demilitarized Zone in Quang Tri,

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Misdirected Bombs Kill Civilians

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South Vietnam's northernmost province, came despite massive air support.

The U.S. Command said 48 B52 bombers in the past 24 hours dumped an estimated 2400 tons of explosives on Communist positions — all but three of the big planes hitting within 10 miles of Quang Tri City — and 148 tactical air strikes were flown in the five-province northern region, most of them in Quang Tri.

UPI correspondent Donald A. Davis reported that government marines fighting seven miles north of Quang Tri City, 435 miles north of Saigon, appear to have been stopped in their tracks since they repelled a North Vietnamese assault during the weekend.

Saigon paratroops fighting west of Highway 1 from Quang Tri City to the provincial boundary 10 miles south have yet to get moving in the twin drives, which began two weeks ago. The marines have advanced about two miles along a front seven miles wide.

Both outfits have been up against barrages of up to 3400 artillery and mortar shells in the province each day. This is the heaviest shelling since the Communist offensive opened in Quang Tri province eight months ago, when the maximum shelling totaled 3500 rounds a day.