

SFChronicle
Red Tank
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Force Hit
By Bombers

Associated Press

Saigon

U.S. bombers attacked several thousand North Vietnamese troops and nearly 100 tanks yesterday, as they headed south along the Ho Chi Minh trail, U.S. sources said.

Intelligence reports were uncertain whether the North Vietnamese troops and tanks were destined for Laos or South Vietnamese battlefields.

Military sources said several tanks were knocked out before they even got to the Ho Chi Minh trail, 700 miles of interconnecting trails through Laos and Cambodia to Vietnam.

REINFORCE

North Vietnam also has been sending new tanks and troops through the demilitarized zone to reinforce depleted divisions in South Vietnam's northernmost Quang Tri Province, one source said.

He said U.S. and South Vietnamese officers were not

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worried about the Quang Tri reinforcements. He said

they were confident the new troops posed no threat.

Other sources reported up to 10,000 additional troops

might be heading for battlefronts closer to Saigon. These troops were reported to have reached their base areas in southern Laos.

RAIDS

The U.S. Command said B-52 bombers launched ten raids on North Vietnam and 23 on South Vietnam in the 24-hour period ending at noon yesterday.

Two raids of up to three planes each hit the Mu Gia Pass area between North Vietnam and Laos. Six others attacked supply dumps and troop concentrations near the coast above the DMZ and 13 more pounded suspected enemy troop positions in Quang Tri Province.

Tactical air attacks against the North dropped to 20 — the lowest since last November 8 — because of heavy rains. In the south, 323 tactical air raids were flown, 193 in the northernmost military region I.

Early today a huge South Vietnamese ammunition storage dump seven miles from Saigon blew up. Field reports said the blast was set off by two enemy demolition men on a suicide mission.

The two saboteurs, with explosives strapped around their bodies, slipped past guards around the Thanh Tuy Ha dump under cover of darkness, the reports said.

Heavy fighting was reported in Quang Tri Province and the central highlands southwest of Pleiku, though the general level of combat elsewhere was light.

In the western foothills of Quang Tri Province, South Vietnamese paratroopers reported killing 84 Communist-led troops in a six-hour battle to extend their control around Fire Bases Anne and Barbara. The paratroopers listed 14 wounded.

In the highlands, the Saigon command said, government infantrymen supported by artillery and planes destroyed a tank and killed 45 North Vietnamese soldiers. Infantry casualties were reported as two killed and nine wounded.

The U.S. command said Jolly Green Giant helicopters tried for more than two days to rescue one or two airmen from an Air Force reconnaissance F-4 downed by a surface to air missile over North Vietnam on Saturday. Each time, the spokesman said, the choppers were driven off by enemy fire.

During the rescue attempts, the command said, at least one helicopter was hit and two crewmen were slightly wounded.

Rescue attempts were abandoned Tuesday when contact was lost with the downed airman, the spokesman said. Both crewmen are listed as missing.