

Air Base Hit**Viet Red Shells,
Bombs Rock
Saigon Region****Saigon**

Communist gunners and saboteurs stepped up their attacks on the Saigon region today, rocketing the Bien Hoa air base, shelling a riverside fuel dump and bombing an army truck park.

The attacks came as military authorities began an investigation into explosions that ripped through South Vietnam's biggest ammunition dump on the southeast fringe of the capital.

Sixteen 122-mm. rockets hit the Bien Hoa air base 15 miles north of the capital and two adjacent hamlets

before dawn, killing six civilians and wounding two, the Saigon command said. There were no U.S. casualties.

The 100-pound rockets damaged the base power plant and destroyed four houses outside the cantonment area.

SHELLING

Other gunners dropped 13 mortar shells on a fuel depot beside the Saigon river four miles southeast of the city. The shells sparked a blaze which destroyed 30 barrels of oil, the Saigon command said.

A South Vietnamese soldier was killed and three trucks were damaged when

a bomb exploded in the parking lot of an army installation close to the center of Saigon shortly before midnight.

Bien Hoa has been one of the key bases in a massive buildup of South Vietnam's air force.

Today's rocket attack was the third attack on Bien Hoa since December 1. Saigon's Tan Son Nhut air base was shelled December 6.

BLAST

Military sources said yesterday's attack on the ammunition dump destroyed 2000-3000 tons of shells and bombs in a series of massive blasts that shook Saigon for hours.

The Saigon command spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Le Trung Hien, said two enemy demolition men who infiltrated the dump seven miles from Saigon were responsible for the chain-reaction blasts.

The explosions began at 4:04 a.m. and continued until 3 p.m., as quantities of 500-pound and 250-pound bombs, mortar and artillery shells, small-arms ammunition and napalm went up in smoke and billowing balls of fire.

Four South Vietnamese soldiers were injured by flying glass in downtown Saigon, where hundreds of windows were smashed and some ceilings collapsed.

Hien declared the ammunition destroyed "is a very small part of the ammo stored at the depot."

BOMBING

Meanwhile, U.S. B-52s bombed more than 100 targets throughout Indochina Wednesday and yesterday.

The bombers dropped at least 2500 tons of bombs on enemy troop positions and supply lines in the southern half of North Vietnam, along the Ho Chi Minh network in eastern Laos, supply bases in eastern Cambodia and in all four military regions of South Vietnam.

Although ground action was generally light, the Saigon command reported a day-long battle near the Parrot's Beak region of Cambodia, where government engaged North Vietnam's 271st Infantry Regiment.

In Laos, North Vietnamese forces have begun shelling army headquarters at Long Cheng, 90 miles northeast of Vientiane, a U.S. spokesman said.

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