

Bomber Support In Heavy Fighting

Saigon

Scores of heavy B-52 bombers and smaller fighter - bombers pummeled Communist targets throughout South Vietnam yesterday to back Saigon's soldiers engaged in increasing ground fighting.

The ground clashes appeared to result from a desire on both sides to stake claim to as much territory as possible before agreement on the in-place cease-fire reported drawing near.

Heavy fighting was reported below the former demilitarized zone north and south of Quang Tri City. Another battle was reported northwest of Kontum City in the central highlands.

Hundreds of South Vietnamese infantrymen supported by M-48 tanks moved through the Iron Triangle and Ho Bo and Boi Loi regions northwest of Saigon to flush out North Vietnamese troops.

The heaviest fighting was in the region below the former demilitarized zone. The Saigon command said 77 North Vietnamese soldiers were killed and 49 weapons captured. South Vietnamese losses were put at ten killed and 51 wounded.

The South Vietnamese

2 American Airmen Die in Laos

Saigon

Two American airmen were killed in Laos last week, the U.S. Command said yesterday in its weekly casualty report.

There were no Americans reported killed in either North or South Vietnam, the command said. Six Americans were listed as captured or missing in action during the week.

South Vietnamese and Communist casualties last week showed a marked increase from the previous week.

United Press

were supported by artillery and tactical air raids.

Most of the 90 B-52 strikes in South Vietnam during the 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. yesterday were in Quang Tri Province. The concentration of air raids and the heavy ground fighting there appear designed to give the South Vietnamese the strongest possible military position before the cease-fire.

The U.S. command reported tactical fighter - bombers flew 335 raids throughout South Vietnam from the northernmost province of Quang Tri to the southern Mekong Delta.

As with the B-52s, their targets were supply dumps, troop staging areas and infiltration routes. There also were missions in more direct support of South Vietnamese ground units.

In one such mission, three U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom jets accidentally dropped three 500 - pound bombs near a South Vietnamese unit operating in the Hiep Duc valley below Da Nang on Wednesday. One soldier was killed and four others were wounded, the command said.

The command said the bombing, the third accidental one in which South Vietnamese suffered casualties in the Da Nang region in the past ten days, is under investigation.

Government sources in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, reported 17 cargo boats steamed into the city's river port with vital fuel and foodstuffs from Saigon for the first time since heavy fighting broke out along the Mekong river's eastern bank.

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