

Intense Fighting in Vietnam

United Press

Saigon

One American was killed and three were wounded today by a Communist rocket attack against the Da Nang air base.

The level of fighting was the most intense since last spring's offensive by the North Vietnamese.

Some South Vietnamese officers said this was an 11th-hour push by the Communists to capture more territory before a cease-fire goes into effect at 4 p.m. PST today.

There were 160 Communist-initiated incidents in the 24-hour period ended at 6 a.m. today, according to South Vietnamese military spokesmen. The South Vietnamese, backed by American air cover, also launched an undisclosed number of sweeps to block Communist troops from populated areas.

The rocket attack against Da Nang, an enormous installation 370 miles north of Saigon on the coast of the South China sea, came before dawn today. The Com-

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munist fired seven Communist-built 122-mm. rockets at the base.

"This is a pre-cess-fire attempt by the Communists to grab more land, to demonstrate their strength, to cut lines of communication and to terrorize the population," a South Vietnamese officer said.

The Soviet-built rockets hit the air base at 4:50 a.m. today. Another small barrage — the number was not known — hit "Dogpatch," as GIs have nicknamed the South Vietnamese slum just outside the base, later in the

morning.

CASUALTIES

That made three rocket attacks on Da Nang in 24 hours. One American was killed and three were wounded in the earlier barrage wounded two civilians.

The rockets destroyed three South Vietnamese A-37 and damaged a South Vietnamese AC-47 "Spooky" gunship.

Yesterday, two Americans — and possibly a third — were killed and 25 others was killed and 21 Americans wounded in a Communist shelling attack against the Bien Hoa base outside Saigon.

Another American died when his OH-6 observation helicopter crashed 100 miles east of Saigon, apparently after it was hit by ground-fire.

Four Americans were wounded in a shelling of the airbase in Pleiku in the central highlands. A westerner in civilian clothes without identification was killed — possibly an American — according to field reports from Pleiku, but this could not be confirmed.

Communist troops blew up at least three highway culverts early today within 30 miles of Saigon, military sources said, and at least briefly blocked highways 1, 13 and 15, leading into Saigon.

In northernmost Quang Tri province, North Vietnamese gunners bombarded South Vietnamese marine and paratroop positions with a total of 3627 shells in the 24 hours ended at 6 a.m. today — the highest since the marines fought their way back into Quant Tri City last September 16.

Correspondent Alan Dawson said 17 South Vietnamese troops were killed in the shelling and 113 wounded.

The number of raids by

U.S. planes and ground battles between government and Vietnamese Communist troops reached an eight-month high yesterday, less than 48 hours before a cease-fire was to go into effect.

In the 24-hour period ended at 8 a.m. yesterday, U.S. jet fighter-bombers flew 407 sorties (one mission by one plane) over South Vietnam, only two fewer than the 409 flown last May 28 at the height of the North Vietnamese offensive.

The U.S. Command said 194 strikes were concentrated on a ten-mile strip of land controlled by the Communists between the demilitarized zone at the 17th Parallel, dividing the two Vietnams, and the Cua Viet river in northernmost Quang Tri province.