

# A Sharp Drop in Level Of Vietnam Fighting

N.Y. Times Service

## Saigon

The level of fighting in Vietnam dropped substantially yesterday, the third day of the cease-fire.

American analysts said it appeared that combat is slowly dying out.

"The fighting is definitely stopping," said one high-ranking American official.

However, U.S. aircraft, including B-52 bombers, continued operations over Laos, the U.S. Pacific command

announced in Honolulu. The operations were conducted at the request of the Laotian government, the command said.

The U.S. command said an American serviceman was wounded in South Vietnam's First Military Region (the five northern provinces) but gave no other immediate details. He was the fifth U.S. casualty since the truce. One American died of wounds suffered shortly after the cease-fire went into

*See Back Page*

## From Page 1

effect at 8 a.m. Sunday and four others have been wounded.

As the fighting diminished, the pace of American military withdrawal quickened.

The U.S. military command announced that Marine Aircraft Group 12, made up of about 900 men, has "initiated its withdrawal from the Republic of South Vietnam." The Marine group is the only American air unit remaining in Vietnam.

## RATE

The U.S. command also said other American military personnel are leaving the country at the rate of about 300 to 400 a day.

The analysts' evaluation was supported by other U.S. officials and by figures issued yesterday afternoon by South Vietnamese military authorities on alleged cease-fire violations by the Communists.

The South Vietnamese military authorities said another 181 cease-fire violations were committed by the Communists between noon yesterday and 6 a.m. today.

That brought to 946 the total number of Communist violations claimed by the Saigon government since the cease-fire began.

There were immediate counterclaims by the Communists. On Monday the Viet Cong command was reported to have said that its men were adhering "scrupulously" to the terms of the Paris peace agreement but that Saigon troops were repeatedly violating the cease-fire.

In addition to the lower

number of violations alleged by Saigon, there were several other signs that the cease-fire is approaching a point where it could be considered effective.

## HIGHWAYS

The South Vietnamese reported that all but one of the highways they said were cut by the Communists after the cease-fire began have now been reopened.

The Saigon government reported a steady drop in the number of hamlets around the country that are still being contested.

The Saigon authorities said yesterday that after the cease-fire began more than 120 South Vietnamese-held hamlets were "penetrated" by Communist units. They said that by yesterday the number still contested was down to 49.

## OBJECT

In essence that is what the fighting has been all about during the last three days: The Saigon government claims that the Communists cut roads and penetrated hamlets after the cease-fire began, and South Vietnamese units were ordered to fight to recover their lost positions.

It was impossible to determine whether these positions actually were lost to the Communists after the cease-fire began or during the heavy fighting of the 24 hours that preceded it.

Field reports, however, made it clear that in some instances, at least, the Saigon government was attempting to recover ground lost before the cease-fire went into the effect.