

Foe Reoccupies 2 Hamlets Near Saigon

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Friday, Oct. 20 — North Vietnamese troops reoccupied yesterday at least two hamlets near Saigon from which they had been driven earlier in the week.

A tour of the battlefield around the capital showed that the North Vietnamese were still clinging tenaciously to half a dozen other hamlets.

But in a departure from their usual practice, the Communists appeared to be carrying out little political or propaganda activity in the areas they occupied. Villagers and Government militiamen said that the enemy soldiers were concentrating on holding their positions.

They've 'Stopped Talking'

This apparent switch in tactics has led many South Vietnamese to believe that the Communists are preparing for a cease-fire.

"The North Vietnamese have stopped talking to the people and are just trying to hold onto as much territory as they can before there is a cease-fire," a militiaman said as he watched a stream of refugees hurry out of Binhhoa, a hamlet eight miles north of Saigon on Route 13. Binhhoa had been officially declared free of Communists Tuesday, after a week-long battle, but yesterday the enemy troops were back there.

The fighting in the Saigon area has been concentrated for two weeks in Binhduong and Haunghia provinces, eight to 30 miles north and west of the capital. The Communists cut Route 1 in Longkhanh Province, north of Saigon, four days ago, have held positions at the road and have shelled towns in neighboring Bienhoa Province.

Periodic cutting of highways has caused shortages of vegetables like cabbage and lettuce and increased the price of eggs and fish. But despite orders reported to have been found in captured Communist documents calling for an attack on Saigon itself, no major military threat to the capital has developed.

Civilians Seem Calm

What happened at Binhhoa, a small settlement of thatched houses in a grove of palm and mangosteen trees, reflected some of the contradictions of the recent fighting.

As villagers who had just returned to their houses fled once again from bursts of automatic rifle fire and occasional mortar thumps, other South Vietnamese drove and bicycled along Route 13 as if nothing was happening. An elementary school continued its classes.

The North Vietnamese also returned yesterday to Gialoc village, on Route 1 in Haunghia Province, from which they were reportedly driven the day before. One farmer, who reported that everything in his house

had been stolen by Government troops, said that he was not surprised to see the Communists again.

A marked increase was reported yesterday in Communist attacks in the northern part of the country around Hue and Quangtri. Government rangers and paratroops reported four encounters on their defense line southwest of Quangtri city in which, they said, they killed 14 enemy soldiers and seized six 37-mm. antiaircraft guns and one 130-mm. and one 122-mm. long-range gun.