

U.S. Reports Drop in B-52 Raids on North and South

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Thursday, Nov. 2—The United States command reported yesterday that it had cut back sharply the number of B-52 missions over North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

Most of the heavy bombers were sent instead to attack Communist troop positions and infiltration routes in Laos and Cambodia.

Command spokesmen reported that at least nine Americans were killed yesterday when an army CH-47 helicopter crashed in the Mekong Delta near Mytho.

[Reports from the field, according to The Associated Press, said that, while nine bodies were recovered by nightfall, all 22 Americans aboard apparently were killed. Officers in the area said that they believed the helicopter had been shot down, possibly by a Soviet-built Strela, a hand-fired guided missile. The aircraft was on a courier mission between Saigon and the delta city of Cantho, 80 miles to the southwest.]

Reporting on the shift of bombing attacks to Laos and Cambodia, command spokesmen said that only two B-52 missions struck at North Vietnam in the 24 hours ended at noon yesterday, compared with 13 in the previous 24-hour period, or the highest on record for the North. Each mission is usually flown by three planes.

Thirteen B-52 missions were flown over South Vietnam, but this was a low number for the South, in fact the lowest since April 13. [For the first time in several weeks, there were no missions in the Saigon area, The Associated Press reported.]

30 More Strikes

As for fighter-bomber strikes over North Vietnam, the command reported that 130 were flown Tuesday.

The South Vietnamese military command reported scattered, mostly small-scale fighting in a number of areas and 93 shelling attacks, including one at the Thuduc infantry training center near Saigon's Tansonnhut Airport.

A bunker containing 155-mm. artillery shells was blown up at 1:55 A.M. and three soldiers were killed, the command said.

Hamlet Reported Relieved

The South Vietnamese military also reported that five hamlets within a 50-mile radius of Saigon were still controlled by Communist troops. A sixth, Suoicat in Longkhanh Province east of Saigon, was relieved, the command spokesman said.

But the command continued to report relatively heavy fighting in Haunchia Province just west of Saigon, where it said 50 Communist soldiers were killed five miles southeast of Cuchi Tuesday night. Clashes were also reported in Tayninh Province near the Cambodian border, and in Binh-

duong Province north of the capital.

The South Vietnamese command said that Government Navy commandos conducted a raid behind North Vietnamese lines just north of the Cunviet River in Quangtri Province Tuesday morning and killed 35 enemy soldiers. It said the raid was supported by gunfire from American ships. Two commandos were reported wounded.

Laotians Report Victories

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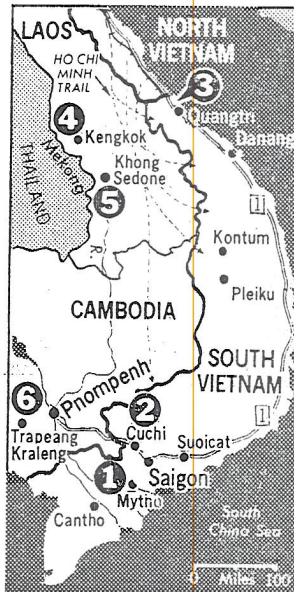
VIENTIANE, Laos, Nov. 1—Military sources reported today that Laotian Government troops had retaken two important towns but that one of them was more than half destroyed when withdrawing North Vietnamese set fire to it.

Units of the Laotian Army reportedly fought their way back into the towns of Khongsedone, on the Mekong River in Southern Laos, and Kengkok, 30 miles southeast of Savannakhet, yesterday.

Khongsedone was taken in a surprise attack by Communist troops two weeks ago when the Government force stationed there was off on an operation. Since then Government troops have been fighting to get back into the town, and yesterday morning they reportedly routed the North Vietnamese troops there.

Minor clashes and shelling were reported in many parts of the Government-held part of western Laos and there were unconfirmed reports that North Vietnamese tanks were in action.

There were fears the Communists were preparing a major push against a number of Gov-



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U.S. copter carrying 22 crashed near Mytho (1). Battle flared at Cuchi (2). U.S. ships aided a Saigon commando raid in Quangtri area (3). Laos units retook Kengkok (4) and Khong Sedone (5). In Cambodia, Trapeang Kraleng (6) fell to foe.

ernment strong points, including those used as supply bases for operations in the Plaine des Jarres area. Northeast of the Communist-occupied plain, 10 Pathet Lao soldiers surrendered, Government sources said.

According to the Government, there has been widespread desertion by Pathet Lao soldiers and entire units in re-

cent weeks, supposedly because of friction with North Vietnamese forces.

One such unit, the 24th Pathet Lao Battalion, is now reported to be fighting as a Government unit and have clashed with North Vietnamese troops some 50 miles northeast of Paksane.

Meanwhile, Bangkok newspapers reported that Thai border authorities were looking after some 1,300 Laotians who crossed the Mekong River into Thailand's Seka District. The Thai police were quoted as having said that the refugees had fled from Paksane Province, 90 miles east of Vientiane, after North Vietnamese forces supported by tanks and artillery overran the garrison town of Namthorn Buk Kwan. Thai authorities said the camp commander, Lieut. Col. Phan Inthawongse, and 200 of his troops were killed in hand-to-hand fighting there. But 300 Laotian Government troops were said to have been among the refugees who escaped to Thailand.

Cambodians Lose Town

Pnompenh, Cambodia, Nov. 1 (AP)—Enemy forces captured Trapeang Kraleng, 35 miles west of Pnompenh, and Government columns were unable to dislodge them, Brig. Gen. Norodom Chantarangsei reported today. It was the first district town to fall since April.

Thirty-five miles north of the capital, Cambodian soldiers battled to drive the enemy from Route 5. Brig. Gen. Sith Suong, commander of the forces, was seriously wounded by a mortar shell.