

Hanoi, Citing No Choice, Steps Up Fighting in South

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SAIGON, Nov. 2 (AP)—North Vietnamese forces led by tanks overran a South Vietnamese border camp in the Central Highlands Thursday. At the same time, Hanoi announced it had "no other choice than to step up the fight on all fronts" following a U.S. delay in signing a draft peace plan.

Ducco, about 200 miles north of Saigon, is one of a series of frontier base camps aimed at blocking Communist-led infiltrators coming from Laos and Cambodia.

It was surrounded by North Vietnamese tanks and infantry, pounded by artillery and missiles and assaulted from three sides.

Shortly before dawn, South Vietnamese rangers abandoned the camp and were reported to have broken out to the relative safety of a jungle plateau 500 yards away. There they joined other government troops.

There was no immediate report on the fate of at least 60 rangers wounded inside the camp and unable to be

evacuated by air because of intense antiaircraft fire.

North Vietnamese troops also were reported to have penetrated a hamlet less than four miles outside Pleiku. Field reports said government troops retook the hamlet, known as Pleiblang 3, Thursday morning, killing four enemy soldiers.

Officers in Pleiku said the incident was evidence the North Vietnamese main force units were breaking up into small groups and trying to penetrate as many areas as possible in preparation for a cease-fire. Similar reports were received from Danang, headquarters for the country's northern region.

A military spokesman said

Communist-led forces had been driven out of four hamlets in the Saigon area and that all major highways in the capital region were open. North Vietnamese troops had occupied several hamlets and cut roads within a few miles of Saigon in recent weeks.

In a renewed condemnation of the Nixon administration for its hesitancy to sign a draft peace agreement worked out last month, Hanoi radio said: "The Vietnamese people have no other choice than to step up their fight on all fronts—military, political and diplomatic—until complete victory."

In its weekly casualty announcement, the Saigon command listed 504 South Vietnamese soldiers killed; 2,013 wounded and 140 missing. It claimed 2,021 Vietcong and claimed 2,081 Vietcong and North Vietnamese were killed.

The U.S. command reported three Americans killed in action last week. Six others died of nonhostile causes and 17 were wounded, the command said.