

The Buildup

U.S. Civilians for Viet Air Force

Saigon

The United States intensified its supply buildups yesterday in advance of a cease-fire. The first team of American civilian technicians arrived at nearby Bien Hoa to help the South Vietnamese air force.

While the technicians began reassembling scores of planes being turned over to South Vietnam, American B-52 bombers made their heaviest raids of the war on both sides of the demilitarized zone against what senior U.S. military officials called a major North Vietnamese supply drive.

Sources said the civilians will stay at least a month and start out by assembling F-5 fighter-bombers flown into Bien Hoa air base from Iran, Taiwan and South Korea on C-5A transports. Bien Hoa is 15 miles northeast of Saigon.

EQUIPMENT

U.S. military and commercial planes delivered 500 tons of military equipment to Saigon's Tan Son Nhut air base and informants said more planes would be arriving for at least the next week.

Sources said the civilian technicians are employed by the Air Force Logistics Command and were pooled from several Logistics Command bases including Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City and Kelly Air Force Base in Texas.

SQUADRONS

U.S. military officials said that American civilian contract workers required for the 400 additional aircraft being given to the South

Vietnamese "will be provided."

The South Vietnamese air force now has one squadron of 24 F-5s, but sources said it will eventually receive about 125.

In the air war, B-52s flying above thunderstorms caused by Typhoon Pamela made their deepest raids into North Vietnam since last April, hitting 51 miles northwest of the port of Vinh.

The typhoon reduced attacks by fighter-bombers over the North to 20 on Tuesday, the U.S. command said. This was the lowest number since the resumption of full-scale bombing last April.

American military officials said the targets above Vinh — about 51 miles below the 20th Parallel — were "major storage areas and resupply depots for North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam." A bombing halt remained in effect above the 20th Parallel.

BOMBS

Sources said more than 75 B-52s took part in the raids, dropping around 2000 tons of bombs.

U.S. officials had no comment on a Hanoi radio report that an F4 Phantom jet and two other unspecified aircraft were shot down in Quang Tri on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

In the Cambodian war, four government airborne battalions swept up Highway 5 to reopen the vital "rice road" — at least to military traffic — for the first time since it was cut in September, according to field reports.

The Viet Cong holding the highway apparently fled eastward.

Associated Press