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BOMBING IN NORTH CONTINUES HEAVY

Pilots Report Knocking Out 68 Ammunition Trucks

NYTimes

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Friday, Nov. 17 (AP)—United States planes kept up intensive bombing of North Vietnamese supply lines yesterday, and pilots reported having knocked out 68 trucks loaded with ammunition.

American military sources said almost half the trucks were caught Wednesday off main highways in a makeshift depot camouflaged by jungle canopy near Quangkhe, 65 miles northwest of the demilitarized zone. They said the drivers had apparently been waiting for nightfall to move southward to South Vietnam.

Numerous secondary explosions and fires were said to have been set off in the truck park by the bombs dropped by United States planes.

The truck depot had been photographed by unmanned reconnaissance planes, the informants said, and Air Force specialists were able to spot it despite the jungle cover.

270 Strikes in North Vietnam

The United States command said Air Force, Navy and Marine fighter-bombers flew more than 270 air strikes below the 20th parallel in North Vietnam Wednesday.

This raised to 1,560 the number of tactical air strikes re-



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U.S. pilots bombed truck depot near Quangkhe (1). Five-hour battle was reported near Quangtri (2). In Laos, Luang Prabang (3) was under siege.

ported by the command since Nov. 9, when the United States intensified the number of raids to meet what United States officials said was a substantial supply push southward by the North Vietnamese aimed at stockpiling as much war material as possible before any cease-fire.

The United States Command said that in addition to the 68 trucks destroyed or damaged, fighter-bombers had also knocked out one tank, two artillery guns, 18 railroad cars, five warehouses and nine bridges.

B-52's were reported to have dumped tons of bombs south of the Barthelemy Pass, hitting supply convoys on their way into northern Laos, where enemy troops have been attacking.

The United States Command also reported American fighter-bombers and B-52's flew dozens of missions in support of South Vietnamese troops in battle around the provincial capital of Quangtri on the northern front.

New Clash Near Quangtri

The South Vietnamese command reported that Government troops had fought a five-hour battle near Quangtri on Wednesday, describing it as the heaviest fighting on the northern front since Sept. 15, when Quangtri was recaptured. The command said 59 enemy soldiers were killed at a cost of 5 South Vietnamese dead and 41 wounded.

It said also that the bodies of 25 North Vietnamese soldiers had been found, apparently killed by air strikes.

Enemy gunners poured hundreds of shells into Government positions to cover what the Saigon command reported was considerable movement in the area.

A military spokesman, Col. Le Trung Hein, said the enemy's purpose was unclear but he added that he knew of no North Vietnamese move to pull troops back into North Vietnam.

"If there was any movement back across the demilitarized zone it would be my assumption that it was a normal rotation of units," he said to newsmen in commenting on reports that some withdrawals might have occurred.

Colonel Hein also denied reports that North Vietnamese forces around Bencat, 27 miles north of Saigon, are being pulled back into Cambodia, although he confirmed that fighting in the area has sharply fallen off.

"They tried a push around Bencat a month ago and failed," he said. "I would say the enemy was moving his troops to start something elsewhere."