

Air, Ground War Intensified in South

Saigon

American and South Vietnamese warplanes hammered known and suspected Communist strongholds throughout the country yesterday as part of a campaign to bolster Saigon's position for a cease-fire.

In addition to the air raids, government ground soldiers battled North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units in scattered engagements that reflected jockeying by both sides in anticipation of a cease-fire.

And President Nguyen Van Thieu ordered intensified efforts to win over enemy soldiers and maintain the loyalty of villages under government control.

The U.S. command reported B-52 bombers logged 28 missions in South Vietnam during the 24-hour period ended at 8 a.m. yesterday.

U.S. fighter-bombers, the command said, flew 302

raids over the South during the same period.

During the 24-hour period ended at 6 a.m. yesterday, the Saigon command said Vietnamese air force jet and propeller-driven fighter-bombers flew 157 sorties, the majority in support of ground troops.

Most of the eight-jet U.S. B-52 bombers struck just below the former demilitarized zone and along the Saigon river corridor northwest of the capital to the Cambodian border, spokesmen said.

The heaviest fighting was reported along a strip of battle-scarred land between Quang Tri City and the demilitarized zone 19 miles to the north. North Vietnamese soldiers have near-total control of the region and would like to retain it in the event of a cease-fire.

The Saigon command said North Vietnamese artillery and infantrymen slammed nearly 800 of artillery and

mortar shells into South Vietnamese marine positions, then launched a ground attack.

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