

American Dies in Shelling Of Air Base Near Saigon

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By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Friday, Jan. 26—In a surge of Communist ground attacks throughout South Vietnam, a barrage of rockets was fired early today into the Bien Hoa Base near Saigon, killing one American and wounding nine.

Meanwhile, both United States and South Vietnamese planes continued their air attacks throughout the country, and the United States command reported that an American warship operating off the northernmost province of Quang Tri was slightly damaged Wednesday by Communist shore gunners.

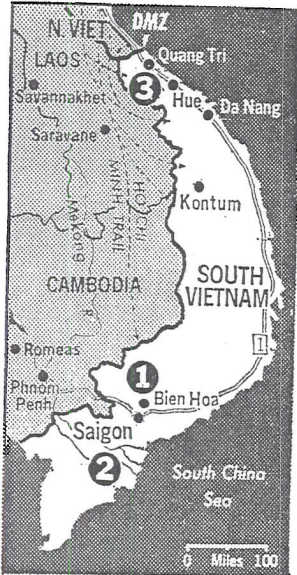
Lieut. Col. Le Trung Hien, spokesman for the South Vietnamese command, said the Communist forces were trying to establish control over as much land and as many people as possible before the cease-fire goes into effect at 8 A.M. Sunday (7 P.M. Saturday, New York time).

Asked about ground action by South Vietnamese troops, he replied:

"Until 8 A.M. Sunday, we'll do anything we want to do."

Colonel Hien reported 112 Communist attacks against Government positions and civilian centers in the 24 hours ended at 6 A.M. yesterday, with most of them in the populated Mekong Delta area southwest of Saigon.

He reported that 58 South



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Communists shelled Bien Hoa (1), also struck in delta (2) and hit a U.S. ship off Quang Tri (3).

Vietnamese soldiers had been killed and 282 wounded in that period, and he put the Communist death toll at 242.

The bulk of the Communist attacks, he said, consisted of rocket or mortar fire.

The American killed at Bien Hoa early today was said to have been the first American casualty since the cease-fire agreement was initialed in Paris on Tuesday. He was not identified pending notification of his family.

The United States command

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Enemy Rockets Kill American And Wound Nine at Air Base

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reported that 22 rockets fell on the base, where about 1,200 Marine fliers and other Air Force and Army personnel are stationed.

A United States Army helicopter unit at Bien Hoa, it was reported, has started re-equipping its aircraft for use by cease-fire supervisors.

Bien Hoa is used as a forward operating base for Air Force planes based in Thailand and Navy jets from Seventh Fleet carriers off the Vietnam. In the air war, American B-52 bombers heavily attacked Communist-held regions in Quang Tri Province and also struck at targets in the Mekong Delta. Thirty three-plane missions over South Vietnam were reported in the 24 hours ended at 8 A.M. yesterday.

In the same period, American fighter-bombers were said to have flown 298 strikes throughout the country, while South Vietnamese pilots logged 195 raids in jet and propeller-driven planes.

American fighter-bombers flew 50 fewer strikes than in the previous 24 hours, but the command spokesman, Maj. Jere K. Forbus, said no special sig-

nificance should be attached to the decrease.

Reporting on the damage to the American warship, identified as the frigate Preble, the command said none of her crew were injured when she was struck by a shell and some shrapnel.

The damage, the command said, was to three antennas and to torpedo tubes.

Foe Reported Repulsed

SAIGON, Friday, Jan. 26 (UPI)

—The South Vietnamese command reported yesterday that Government troops repulsed Communist attacks during the day on a village 31 miles northeast of Saigon and on a military position 70 miles west of the capital. Fifty Communists were killed in the fighting, spokesmen said. They put Government losses at three killed and 14 wounded.

In Quang Tri Province, a heavy Communist artillery barrage was directed against Government forces near Quang Tri City but casualties were light. Four Government soldiers were reported killed and 16 wounded, however, when a convoy hit two mines in another province, Quang Ngai, about 300 miles north of Saigon.

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