

# G.I. DIES IN CRASH AS TRUCE NEARS

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Aerial Observer Is Second  
American Killed in a Day

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Saturday, Jan. 27—A second American serviceman was killed yesterday as Communist and allied forces continued a surge of attacks before the cease-fire set for tomorrow morning.

The serviceman, an aerial observer, died when the helicopter he was riding in crashed on the central coast 15 miles northwest of Phan Thiet. About seven hours earlier, a marine was killed when Communist forces shelled the Bien Hoa airfield near Saigon with 23 122-mm. rockets.

Meanwhile, the Americans flew the highest number of air strikes since last May and the South Vietnamese counterattacked on the ground north of Quang Tri city near the demilitarized zone, where they came under heavy shelling yesterday.

Besides the two Americans killed yesterday, 14 United States servicemen were wounded. The cause of the crash was not known.

Twelve American servicemen were wounded at the Bien Hoa base, which was shelled shortly after 2 A.M. One was wounded at the Da Nang air base, which

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came under rocket fire shortly after 11 A.M.

A United States Air Force AC-119 gunship was damaged at Bien Hoa and two Marine F-4 Phantoms were hit by shrapnel fragments at Da Nang, according to the United States command.

Nine Vietnamese civilians were killed when some of the 20 rockets fired at Da Nang landed outside the base, according to the Saigon command.

Two of the rockets at Bien Hoa landed on the headquarters compound of Military Region III, the command said.

## Saigon Force Shelled

The heaviest fighting reported yesterday was north of the ruins of Quang Tri city, the capital of South Vietnam's northernmost province, which was overrun by the North Vietnamese last May 1. Since then the South Vietnamese have staged a long slow drive north that recaptured the city in September and has now advanced from five to six miles northeast along the coastal dunes.

The South Vietnamese Marines there have been trying in recent days to advance to the Cuaviet River north of the town but early yesterday morning they were hit by 448 rounds



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U.S. copter crashed near Phan Thiet (1). Bien Hoa (2) and Da Nang (3) were shelled. Fighting near Quang Tri (4) continued.

of rockets, mortars and heavy 130-mm. artillery shells.

The marines suffered only "light" casualties, the Saigon command said.

There was also a battle yesterday between airborne troops and North Vietnamese units to the southwest of Quang Tri city. According to the Saigon command, 131 Communist soldiers were killed. Government losses were put at three killed and 21 wounded.

Although the Saigon command reported a relatively high figure of 112 Communist attacks throughout the country yesterday, most of them were small-scale shellings. The fighting at Quang Tri involved company-size North Vietnamese units of about 100 men, according to American military sources.

In the closest attacks to Saigon, 15 mortar shells struck the small river town of Nha Be six miles to the southeast and a B-40 rocket was fired into a police station six miles south-

west of the center of the capital.

South Vietnamese fighter-bombers flew 226 sorties inside South Vietnam yesterday and American fighter-bombers 407, it was reported. The figure of 407 is the highest since last May 28, at the height of the North Vietnamese spring offensive, when the Americans flew 409.

B-52's of the Strategic Air Command flew 26 missions in South Vietnam, each presumably consisting of three planes. Their targets were described as "enemy troop concentrations and staging areas" in provinces stretching from the demilitarized zone to the Mekong Delta. B-52's also flew an undetermined number of missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and in eastern Cambodia, according to the United States command.