

Cease-Fire Generally Working; U.S. Bombs Supply Lines in Laos; Hanoi Lists 555 War Prisoners (P. 15)

2 Helicopters Struck

The American command said that two helicopters had been struck by small-arms fire but that neither had been shot down. The command denied that either had been sent to pick up Vietcong officers.

In one incident at 9:45 A.M. yesterday, a United States Army helicopter was struck by small-arms fire 10 miles southwest of Can Tho, two Americans aboard were wounded and the aircraft suffered minor damage, the command said.

In the other incident, which

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FIGHTING DECLINES

JAN 29 1973

Communist Aides Are Stalled in a Dispute at Saigon Airport

NYTimes

By SYLVAN FOX

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Monday, Jan. 29—After a violent beginning, the Vietnam cease-fire appeared to be gradually taking hold last night.

South Vietnamese military reports indicated that the intense fighting that had marked the early hours of the cease-fire was waning, that some opposing units were disengaging from contact and that only "minor ground action" was still going on.

At the same time, some members of an advance party of North Vietnamese and Vietcong military representatives landed at Tan Son Nhut airport here but refused to fill in South Vietnamese Government landing cards. The Communists remained overnight aboard the airplane that had brought them from Bangkok.

U.S. Ends Operations

The South Vietnamese reports of waning combat came at the same time that the American command announced that the United States had ended all military operations in Vietnam at 8 A.M. yesterday (7 P.M. Saturday, Eastern standard time), the hour that the cease-fire started.

A United States spokesman refused, however, to state whether American air operations were continuing in Laos or Cambodia.

But he reported that in the final day of the war two American planes were shot down. Their four crewmen are missing, he said.

American officials denied a report circulated earlier that an American helicopter had been shot down over Tay Ninh while attempting to pick up Vietcong officers and bring them to Saigon to participate in the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, one of two bodies that will oversee the cease-fire.

Fighting Wanes as Truce Takes Hold

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reportedly occurred half an hour later, a helicopter was struck by small-arms fire near the An Khe Pass. The command said that two American crew members and a South Korean passenger had been slightly wounded and the helicopter had been slightly damaged.

The American planes that were lost yesterday were a Navy F-4 Phantom that was shot down in northeastern Quang Tri Province and an Air Force observation plane that was brought down by ground fire in the same area, the command said. Both two-man crews were listed as missing.

Despite the cautiously optimistic picture given by South Vietnamese military spokesmen, reports from the field told of heavy fighting well into the day yesterday and of violations of the cease-fire by both Communist and South Vietnamese troops.

So far, no supervisory mechanism has gone into operation to oversee the cease-fire.

Members of the International Commission for Control and Supervision arrived in Saigon yesterday but have not yet begun their supervisory work. The commission includes officers and men from Canada, Indonesia, Hungary and Poland.

In their report on yesterday's fighting, the South Vietnamese military spokesmen said that there had been 53 Communist violations since the cease-fire officially went into effect.

They said that ten of these were shelling attacks, and they described the rest as "minor ground attacks" against Saigon Government positions. They said that none of the clashes had involved Communist units larger than company size. A Communist company normally comprises 100 men or fewer.

Vows to Strike Back

A South Vietnamese spokesman said that as the cease-fire progressed, the South Vietnamese Army would make no attempt to retake any territory controlled by the Communists before the cease-fire began but would strike back vigorously in cases where the Communists attacked.

The spokesman cited an example involving two hamlets near Tay Ninh, about 55 miles northwest of Saigon. Both Communist and Government troops are reported inside the hamlets.

"We will not try to retake the hamlets," the spokesman

said. "But if our troops are attacked first, we will fight them off from the hamlets as far as possible." The spokesman said that as of late yesterday afternoon there were no reports of further fighting in the two hamlets.

One of the largest engagements described by the South Vietnamese as a Communist cease-fire violation took place in a hamlet inside the city limits of Da Lat in the Central Highlands.

The South Vietnamese said that a Communist force attacked the hamlet 15 minutes after the cease-fire began. In the battle, they said, 25 enemy soldiers were killed and two Government soldiers were wounded.

The 26 hours preceding the start of the cease-fire were among the most violent hours of the entire Vietnam war.

The South Vietnamese military spokesmen reported a total of 451 Communist-initiated incidents during that 26-hour period.

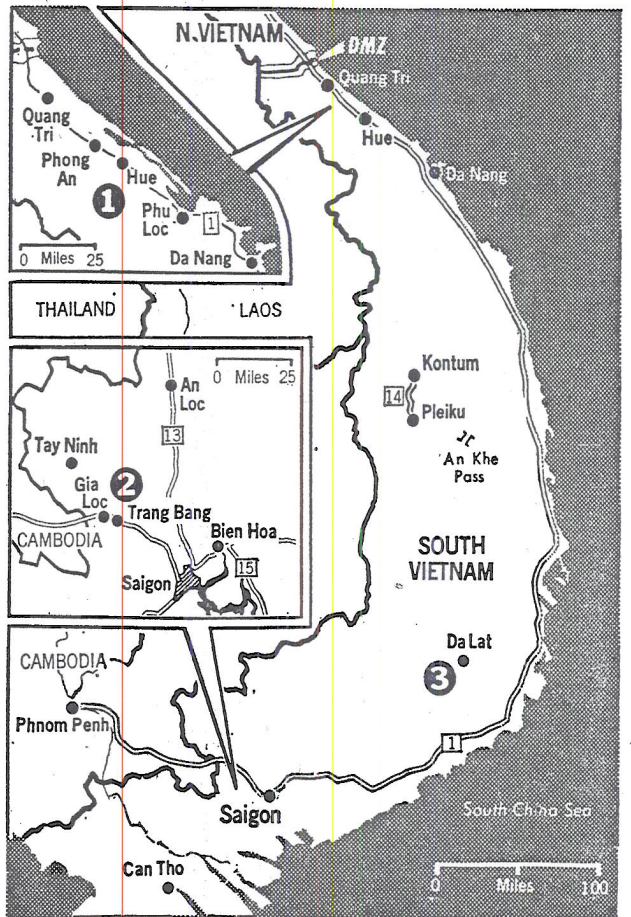
That was the highest number of Communist-initiated incidents ever reported in 24 hours, so far as available records reveal. Records for the period of the Communist Tet offensive of 1968 are unavailable.

The South Vietnamese, however, made it clear that while the number of incidents was large, the intensity of the fighting did not match the battles of the Tet offensive.

American planes also were extremely active during the hours preceding the cease-fire.

United States airmen reportedly flew 494 tactical air strikes in South Vietnam during that period and staged 29 B-52 bombing missions.

Major Jere Forbus, an American military spokesman, said that the number of tactical air strikes by the United States was the largest since May, 2, 1972, when 618 tactical air strikes were flown. Those were in support of Saigon Government troops struggling to withstand a major North Vietnamese offensive.



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Hostilities continued at hamlets near Hue (1) for many hours after cease-fire. Day-long battle was fought near Trang Bang (2) and a clash was reported at Da Lat (3).