

Saigon Troops Selectively Ignore Truce

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CAM LONG, South Vietnam, Jan. 29—South Vietnamese forces were openly ignoring the cease-fire agreement in the area northwest of Saigon today, but on a relatively small scale and selectively.

Government spokesmen in Saigon were charging that there had been hundreds of Vietcong and North Vietnamese violations of the cease-fire since it supposedly began at 8 A.M. Sunday. But to a foreign observer touring Routes 1 and 22 in an area 30 to 45 miles northwest of Saigon for the last two days, there was no clear evidence.

What was happening was that Saigon forces were trying, with considerable success, to drive away Communist forces that had blocked roads and occupied

hamlets in a last-minute offensive shortly before the cease-fire.

The sounds of an American B-52 bombing raid could also be heard faintly from Cambodia, a few miles away.

American sources said that Communist troops in a few cases were moving about in South Vietnamese uniforms.

There was no full-scale resumption of the Vietnam war. Instead, there was an attempt to win semantic arguments with bombs and bullets in isolated areas.

The Saigon Government clearly seemed to have made a decision that it would not tolerate Communists' successful efforts to block key roads and lines of communications just before the cease-fire. On a much smaller scale, Government artillery was also shelling the fringes of hamlets that were

under military pressure from Vietcong and North Vietnamese infantrymen.

For instance, at this little hamlet about 10 miles southeast of the provincial capital of Tay Ninh the road to Saigon was closed because of the presence of an undetermined number of Communist soldiers in the northern part of the hamlet, about 45 miles from Saigon.

Late this morning and into early afternoon Government troops were throwing grenades and firing weapons sporadically but at times furiously. The sound of occasional return fire from AK-47 automatic rifles could also be heard.

Earlier, in the morning, two South Vietnamese propeller-driven Skyraiders and two South Vietnamese jets dropped

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Trang Bang, 31 miles northwest of Saigon, the road had been cut yesterday.

But today a steady stream of civilian and some military traffic was going through after heavy Government fire had forced Communist troops back a short distance.

2 Girls Killed

Government troops advised travelers to drive fast past the bad stretch. There was no trouble going northwest. Coming back in the afternoon the crumpled bodies of two Vietnamese girls were lying in the middle of the road near their overturned motor scooter.

Their clothing seemed as bright against the black asphalt as the marigolds growing in a nearby farmyard. Even to those injured to the war, which had officially ended, it was a depressing sight.

Since it seemed they had been shot or hit by artillery that was falling close to the road, cars and buses and army vehicles did not stop but raced past to a safer area.

A South Vietnamese lieutenant said the girls had been hit and killed by a speeding truck making the same mad dash across the bad spot. Even if so, the Trang Bang roadblock had killed them.

The spot was not far from the spot where last spring napalm dropped by a Government plane had hit a girl who tore her clothing off and fled down the road — making a memorable photograph that has been much reproduced.

It has been a bad road for a long time.

DO NOT FORGET THE NEEDIES!

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bombs on an area hundreds of yards to the right of the road. Then South Vietnamese HU-1 armed helicopters repeatedly fired rockets into the area and strafed it with fast-firing mini-guns. Other helicopters circled the vicinity, on what appeared to be reconnaissance missions.

Americans were not involved in any of the violence. American field advisers were withdrawn from Vietnamese units Saturday well before the cease-fire deadline.

According to conversations with other journalists, similar fighting took place today and yesterday on Route 13 leading north from Saigon to Lai Khe and on Route 15 leading southeast of the coastal city of Vung Tau.

One of the protocols of the Paris agreement is entitled "Concerning the Cease-Fire in South Vietnam and the Joint Military Commissions."

Article 2 of this protocol

says that as soon as the cease-fire comes into effect "all ground, river, sea and air combat forces of the parties in South Vietnam shall remain in place, that is, in order to insure a stable cease-fire, there shall be no major redeployments or movements that would extend each party's area of control or would result in contact between opposing armed forces and clashes which might take place."

Section (b) of Article 3 of the main agreement says "the armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in place."

In practice, these provisions seem as theoretical as others that stipulate that the Vietnamese parties will "end hatred and enmity" and will "hold consultations in a spirit" of "mutual nonelimination."

It is clear that the Vietcong and North Vietnamese tried to exploit the coming cease-fire

late last week by closing such key roads as Routes 1 and 22, which connect Saigon and Tay Ninh. If a true "standstill cease-fire" had taken place, all traffic to Tay Ninh, for instance, would have been either blocked or would have had to pass through an area of Communist control, even if this consisted only of a few men crouched in fox holes off the road.

It is also clear that the Government forces did not stand still.

Refugees from the fighting were squatting in this hamlet today as the shooting went on nearby. They said the Vietcong units had come into the area "three nights ago," Friday, driving away a Government militia platoon.

Villagers said that Government troops that attacked to clear the road yesterday were driven back but began again this morning.

On the same route near