

# NEW TRUCE BODY PERILED AS SAIGON ORDERS BOYCOTT

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Military Commission Talks  
Ruled Out Until the Issue of  
Besieged Base Is Settled  
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, April 3—The Two-Party Joint Military Commission, which began operating as a peace-keeping body only five days ago, was threatened with collapse today in a dispute over a besieged South Vietnamese ranger outpost.

Saigon said that until the dispute was settled to its satisfaction it would boycott commission meetings and it hinted that it was prepared to undertake major military action to relieve the besieged outpost.

The Vietcong warned that if Saigon boycotted the commission meetings, it would "bear the responsibility for the consequences."

## Old Unit Disbanded

The two-party commission took over the primary peace-keeping function in South Vietnam when the four-party group, which included North Vietnam and the United States, disbanded on March 28 in conformity with the provisions of the Jan. 27 Paris peace agreement.

The dispute centers on the Government's ranger outpost at Tong Le Chan, about 50 miles north of Saigon. The base, manned by about 600 men, has been under siege by the Communists since Feb. 26, according to Saigon military authorities.

The Government says that the base has been assaulted by Communist units of North Vietnam's Ninth Division 21 times and has been under almost constant shelling. The Government says 15 of its men have been killed and 109 wounded since the siege began.

## Request to Halt Fight

According to the Communists, the fighting at the base started when Saigon troops began "nibbling operations" against surrounding Communist-held areas.

Saigon has called upon the International Commission of Control and Supervision to investigate the fighting at Tong Le Chan, but at a meeting yesterday that commission reportedly remained unable to take any concrete action. Canada and Indonesia were said to be pressing for an immediate investigation while Hungary and Poland were reluctant to go along without assurances that the investigators could operate safely.

A control commission source said the body had agreed to at-

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tempt to arrange a meeting between opposing commanders at Tong Le Chan—a move favored by the Vietcong but reportedly opposed by Saigon.

In telephone interviews yesterday, Vietcong officials said they had proposed that the opposing commanders meet on the scene to work out details of a cessation of hostilities at the base, as provided by the Paris agreement, but the Vietcong officials said Saigon had rejected that proposal.

Given this rejection and the continuation of the fighting, said Col. Duong Dinh Thao, a Vietcong spokesman, "how can the I.C.C.S. come to Tong Le Chan?"

A Saigon spokesman announced the boycott of the Joint Military Commission at



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Saigon says post at Tong Le Chan has been under siege for five weeks.

a news conference yesterday afternoon.

## Position Explained

The spokesman, Lieut. Col. Le Trung Hien, said Saigon would "boycott any further meetings" of the two-party unit "unless the Communist troops stop their attacks or at least let us evacuate wounded soldiers who still remain at the base."

Colonel Hien said that up to yesterday afternoon no relief operation had been mounted by Saigon's forces. But he added: "We will do whatever is necessary to relieve enemy pressure."

Commenting on the threatened boycott, Colonel Thao declared: "If the R.V.N. side unilaterally refuses to attend the two-party meetings to settle all the matters of contention concerning the two parties, they must be held responsible for the obstruction."

"Public opinion in Vietnam and the world will recognize their lack of goodwill," the Vietcong spokesman added.

## First Meeting Held

The two-party commission met Thursday for the first time and held an emergency meeting Sunday to discuss the Tong Le Chan dispute. Its next meeting is scheduled for today.

On March 25, a two-hour truce was arranged at the base to permit the evacuation of wounded men. According to the Communists, Saigon used the truce to resupply the base.

Colonel Thao asserted that during the March 25 truce, Saigon sent three aircraft loaded with artillery shells to the base. The Communist spokesman also charged that since the truce, Saigon has repeatedly bombed areas controlled by the Vietcong around the base.

"The reason we raise all the above instances," said Colonel Thao, "is that the Republic of Vietnam also wants to misuse the cease-fire. The only cease-fire they want is one they can violate."

## Exaggeration Charged

The Communist colonel charged that Saigon was exaggerating the importance of the dispute over Tong Le Chan "for the purpose of concealing" its widespread violations of the cease-fire.

He charged that Saigon has committed more than 77,000 cease-fire violations, including more than 19,000 in which infantry, tanks and armored vehicles were used and more than 4,000 in which Saigon used "aircraft to bomb the liberated areas with napalm and chemical bombs."

Saigon alleges that the Communists have committed almost 10,000 violations since the cease-fire began on Jan. 28.

According to the Saigon Government, radio contact is being maintained with Tong Le Chan but the Government is unable to supply it with food or ammunition. A Government spokesman declined to say whether the base was running short of supplies.

A siege of another outpost at Rach Bap, about 22 miles north of Saigon, was lifted a few weeks ago by a Government force after peace-keeping machinery failed to halt the fighting there.