

VIETCONG ADMIT DOWNING COPTER

APR 9 1973

4 Members of International
Peace Unit Among Dead in
'Regrettable Accident'

NYTimes

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Monday, April 9—Four members of the international peace-keeping commission and two Vietcong officers were killed when their helicopter was shot down by a Communist missile Saturday, a Vietcong spokesman said last night. The three American crewmen of the copter also died.

The Vietcong spokesman, terming the incident a "regrettable accident," said the dead were one Canadian member of the International Commission of Control and Supervision, one Indonesian member and two Hungarian members, the two Vietcong officers and the crewmen of the charter airline Air America.

The Canadian, the Indonesian and the Hungarians were the first members of the international commission to be killed while trying to monitor the cease-fire.

The Vietcong spokesman said that a second helicopter, which had previously been listed as missing, had made a "safe landing" near the crash site in the far northwestern corner of South Vietnam. There were two Canadians, two Indonesi-

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

ans, three Poles and one Vietcong officer aboard the second helicopter with its crew of three Americans.

The two helicopters, bearing the large white letters "ICCS" and the green reflective stripes of the commission's aircraft, were on their way to inspect new facilities for the commission at Lao Bao, a small village under Communist control on the Laotian border just south of the demilitarized zone in Quang Tri Province.

The Vietcong spokesman, reading a statement that he said had been issued by the Quang Tri Province People's Liberation Committee, charged that the downed helicopter itself was responsible for the incident since it had not followed a narrow air corridor prescribed by the Communists.

'Sidetracked Very Far'

The spokesman said in a telephone interview that instead of proceeding directly west over Route 9 from Gio Linh in eastern Quang Tri, the copters turned southeast "and sidetracked very far from the Route 9 corridor."

This, he said, brought them over a mountainous area that has been "the target of constant reconnaissance flights and commando activities by the Saigon administration."

Without giving the exact location or saying precisely how the helicopter was brought down, the spokesman said that it was in this area, about 15 miles south of the Route 9 corridor, that "one of the helicopters met with an accident."

Sites Believed Within Line

Canadian officers of the international commission, privately furious over the incident and the failure of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government to allow an inspection of the crash site, said that they believed that the two helicopters had come down at Huong Hoa, a village on Route 9 about 10 miles east of Lao Bao and within the fixed corridor.

A Canadian source said that the last radio message from the downed pilot was "I've been hit by a missile and I'm going down."

Huong Hoa lies on the edge of the Khe Sanh plateau, where United States aerial reconnaissance planes have reportedly spotted Soviet-built SA-2 surface-to-air missiles being installed since the cease-fire pact.

A Canadian spokesman said that his delegation had received no official word from the Provisional Revolutionary Government about how the accident occurred and that the Canadians would accept nothing short of an on-site inspection to determine what had happened.

Earlier yesterday, the Canadians issued a statement that "most distressingly, the P.R.G. have not yet granted permission to the I.C.C.S. to conduct a search-and-rescue mission."

Commission Team Halted

The Canadian spokesman said that a team of the four senior military representatives to the commission, including Maj. Gen. Duncan A. McAlpine of Canada, had gone to Gio Linh in the Communist-controlled part of Quang Tri, but had not been allowed to proceed further.

Lao Bao, the helicopters' destination, is the site of one of the Communists' points of entry for war material designated by the Paris peace agreement.

Communist troops kept up their siege today at the isolated South Vietnamese ranger base at Tong Le Chan, 50 miles north of Saigon, a South Vietnamese military spokesman reported, firing 159 mortar and rocket shells into the base. It has been surrounded since Feb. 26.

Cautious Reaction at Home

OTTAWA, April 8 (Canadian Press)—Mitchell W. Sharp, the External Affairs Secretary, said today that the apparent attack on the peace-keeping commission's helicopter might justify terminating the commission.

But, during an airport interview, he indicated that the reported death of a Canadian would not bring a Canadian withdrawal from the commission. "I don't know whether I'd say that this would justify pulling the Canadians out," he said.

Continued on Page 6, Column 1