

'Defensive Operation'

South Viet Forces Go Into Cambodia

**First Time
Since
Cease-Fire**

Associated Press

Saigon

South Vietnamese troops have pushed across the Cambodian border for the first time since a Vietnam cease-fire went into effect 2½ months ago.

Fighting was reported at two points along the border and hundreds of refugees were said to have fled from Cambodia into South Vietnam.

Lieutenant Colonel Le Trung Hien, chief spokesman for the Saigon command, today denied the border crossing but the Saigon command has denied such incursions in the past until weeks after they took place.

WITNESSES

The troop movements were confirmed by South Vietnamese border guards and by Cambodian officers on the scene.

Hien said Communist troops attacked South Vietnamese infantry positions northwest of the border town of Hong Ngu on the Mekong river. He gave enemy losses as 22 killed and government casualties as three dead and 38 wounded.

Field reports indicated the South Vietnamese plunge a half-mile into Cambodia was a defensive operation aimed at driving North Vietnamese and Cambodian Communist troops back from the frontier.

RANGERS

At least 25 armored vehicles manned by rangers reportedly moved across the Cambodian side of the border on a line about half a mile deep in an operation that began Friday.

The crossing was made from the Vietnamese town of Tinh Bien, 125 miles southwest of Saigon.

Twenty miles to the northeast, Communists reportedly were attacking the Vietnam-

See Back Page

From Page 1

ese district town of Tan Chau on the Mekong river, six miles from the Cambodian border.

Tinh Bien is in the center of the Seven Mountains region, a staging area of the North Vietnamese First Division.

Field reports said heavy fire was being exchanged there.

The South Vietnamese were pounding suspected Communist positions with artillery and .50-caliber machine guns mounted on armored personnel carriers. Cambodian government troops also were reported to be engaged in the battle, allied with the South Vietnamese against the Communist insurgents.

The fighting broke out Friday when the Communist troops wiped out a village on the Cambodian side of the border, burning most of the thatched roof homes to the ground, field reports said.

About 500 refugees streamed into South Vietnam on both sides of Highway 2, which leads northward from Tinh Bien 65 miles to the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh.

Highway 2 to Phnom Penh and all other major arteries leading to the Cambodian capital have been cut, with the exception of Route 4 from the southwest.

Cambodian troops also are engaged in the fighting near Tinh Bien and occupy the eastern side of one of the Seven Mountains about 1½ miles from the Vietnam border. Cambodian officers said North Vietnamese and Cambodian Khmer Rouge forces occupy the western side. The Communist forces were reported using mortar and small arms fire.

CORRIDOR

American sources said North Vietnamese forces apparently were trying to occupy Hong Ngu district, across the river from Tan Chau, in efforts to open up another infiltration corridor into South Vietnam by land and sea.

Reports from Phnom Penh said, meanwhile, that Cambodian government forces battled Communist troops on Highway 1, about 26 miles east of the capital.

The Cambodian command announced earlier that government forces had reopened the entire 32-mile stretch of the highway between Phnom Penh and the ferry crossing of Neak Luong. But field reports said the road was cut yesterday.

The field reports said American jets were supporting the Cambodian troops. Government troops and refugees said Communist forces still occupied villages that had been destroyed or damaged by U.S. bombers a half mile away from the highway.

COMMAND

The American air operations yesterday marked the 40th consecutive day that B-52s have been used over Cambodia at the request of the Lon Nol government in Phnom Penh.