

# Peace Violators-- A Different View

L.A. Times Service

## Saigon

While the Nixon administration has publicly portrayed the Communists as the principal violator of the Vietnam cease-fire, classified documents prepared by U.S. embassy officials here present a far less clear-cut view of the fighting, with both sides committing many major violations.

The daily cease-fire "situation reports" also show that except for the Mekong Delta area, fighting in South Vietnam has decreased sharply since the cease-fire began four months ago. More than 60 pages of the documents, which are labeled "confidential," have been made available to the Los Angeles Times. The re-

ports cover part of May.

According to partial statistics in the reports, Saigon troops fired several times as many artillery and mortar rounds as Communist soldiers did in the period covered.

### CONTRADICT

In addition, some descriptions of Saigon's cease-fire violations either contradict official accounts or were not reported by the Saigon military command. One report mentions the flights of two American B-52s over South Vietnamese territory, also a violation.

The reports cover all aspects of the cease-fire. Basing much of their information on private briefings by South Vietnamese military spokesmen, U.S. officials in the field gather information, then send it to the embassy in Saigon, where it is collated and expanded. Final daily reports, which are from ten to 20 pages, are then cabled to Washington, military commands in Hawaii and Thailand, and a dozen U.S. embassies.

Before the cease-fire, South Vietnam President

Nguyen Van Thieu said about anticipated cease-fire violations: "If the Communists use a small gun, we will use a big gun."

The reports suggest that the Saigon government has indeed followed this policy.

See Back-Page

### From Page 1

During one four-day period in the northernmost of South Vietnam's four military regions, the Communists fired 896 mortar and only ten artillery rounds. In turn, Saigon troops fired 6074 artillery rounds.

While the reports did not give comprehensive statistics for shellings in other military regions, other sources have said that since the cease-fire Saigon troops have taken advantage of their superior firepower and have been shelling at a much higher rate than the Communists. For both sides, shelling is a means of harassing an opponent without exposing troops to much danger.

The tone of the reports suggest that in some instances U.S. officials condoned the coverup of cease-fire violations by Saigon military spokesmen.

### INCIDENT

In an incident May 16 in Phu My district, northern Binh Dinh province, U.S. officials reported a company of the 40th regiment, 23rd South Vietnamese army division "was on patrol . . . when contact was made with an unidentified Viet Cong force."

In the ensuing battle, 53 Communist soldiers were killed while only two South Vietnamese soldiers were wounded.

Later in the day other companies in the 40th regiment killed 29 Communist soldiers, while only one Saigon soldier was killed and one wounded.

Suspicious about the affair because the casualty ratio

was so remarkable, one report said, "The U.S. consul-general in Nha Trang suggests the 40th regiment may have launched a pre-emptive operation."

That suspicion turned out to be correct, as the next day's situation report explained: "Regional Tactical Operations Center (TOC) in Nha Trang disclosed today that patrolling company of 40th ARVN regiment which killed 53 VC on May 16 . . . was actually not on patrol. According to most recent TOC version of incident, 23rd ARVN division . . . received firm intelligence on location of VC battalion-sized training center in northwestern Phu My district, picked best company in 40th regiment for action, and made detailed plan for raid."

Planning and carrying out a raid is an obvious cease-fire violation, but the version of the incident which South Vietnamese military spokesmen released to the press did not indicate that, and also reported a different division involved.