

WXPost

NOV 8 1973

# Saigon Admits First Air Raid Since Truce

From News Dispatches

SIAGON, Nov. 7.—More than 50 South Vietnamese fighter-bombers attacked military targets around the Vietcong-held town of Locninh today in the heaviest air raid since the cease-fire, the Saigon military command announced.

The command said the raid was a retaliation for recent Communist attacks, including yesterday's shelling of Bienhoa airfield and the five-day-old drive against South Vietnamese positions along the Cambodian border.

The Vietcong said the Locninh raid was aimed at the town's civilian population. Vietcong spokesman Capt. Phuong Nam said 120 bombs hit Locninh airstrip, a market and residential areas in the

city 75 miles north of Saigon. He said the bombing killed or wounded more than 30 civilians and destroyed 40 houses and a hospital.

A Saigon military spokesman denied the market area was hit and claimed the targets closest to Locninh were more than half a mile from the town.

The spokesman, Lt. Col. Le Trung Hien, said that the Communist-held town of Boduc, 15 miles northeast of Locninh, was also bombed. He said all government planes returned safely to their bases from both missions.

"For every Communist violation of the cease-fire we shall punish them tenfold," Hien told a news conference. Orders for the attack on

Locninh "came from the highest echelons," he said, presumably meaning President Thieu. "We do not regard the bombing as a violation of the cease-fire since it was carried out only to punish the enemy for his violations."

Locninh, a commercial center for the rubber trade in its 1972 spring offensive, Vietnamese an Vietcong during the 1972 spring offensive. Intelligence sources in Saigon believe it will be eventually designated the capital of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

It is also expected to be the southern terminus of an all-weather road the Communists are building south from the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Vietnams. There is

speculation that the Communist offensive launched Saturday against government positions 40 miles north of Locninh is designed to increase the security of the road, which has now reached that area.

Two posts, Buprang and Bupong, fell in the first attacks, and tonight Saigon radio said that a temporary position at an important road junction at Daksoong had also been overrun.

Col. Hien said that Locninh and Boduc were chosen for today's raids because of the weather, the location and the capacity of the aircraft involved. "Suitable targets had to be found for a sortie of this size," he said, adding that since the North Vietnamese are increasing their strength

throughout South Vietnam "there must be others all over the country."

It was the first time that the South Vietnamese command had announced an air strike, which is forbidden by the January cease-fire. However, military sources said Saigon ordered a raid against Communist border supply bases in Tay Ninh Province last month. That raid was never officially disclosed.

In neighboring Cambodia, Communist-led insurgents overran the town of Srang, 30 miles southwest of the capital of Phnom Penh, late last night after a five-week siege and a final week of heavy shelling.

It was the second major government position to be overrun in the past four days.

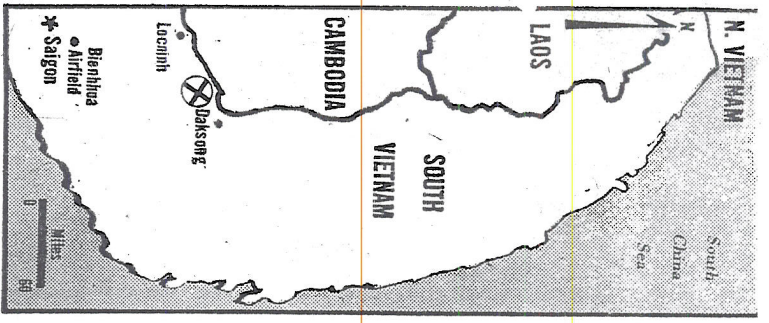
Tram Khnar, Srang's twin city 24 miles from the capital, fell to the rebels early Sunday.

Refugees from Srang said that scores of women and children were killed in the shelling and several hundred civilians were killed as they fled the town.

**Carrier Coral Sea Returning to U.S.**

ALAMEDA, Calif., Nov. 7 (UPI)—The Navy carrier Coral Sea returns home tomorrow after an eight-month tour of duty in the western Pacific.

Well-wishers will drop 100,000 flowers from the Golden Gate Bridge as the 63,000-ton vessel heads for its homeport here.



X marks two posts overrun last weekend. Yesterday a government position at Daksoong fell.