

file subj.
date sub-cat.
3/70

5 Rockets Hit Long Binh

1st Cav. Finds Huge Rice Cache

3/10/70

S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON — Enemy gunners hurled rockets into the Long Binh Army base, 16 miles north of Saigon, early Monday, military spokesmen reported.

About five 107mm rockets hit the base, spokesmen said, causing no casualties and only light material damage.

Allied spokesmen said enemy gunners launched twelve indirect fire attacks against Allied positions during the 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. Monday.

The attacks included the shelling of Long Binh and also the 1st Brigade, 25th Inf. Div. headquarters two miles west of Tay Ninh City where 10 rounds of 82mm mortars caused slight U.S. casualties and no material damage.

Meanwhile, spokesmen reported the loss of two helicopters and the uncovering of a huge rice cache.

One of the two UH1 helicopters crashed after being hit by enemy ground fire in Quang Duc

Province northwest of Saigon, about a mile from the Cambodian border, according to U.S. officials, who said all aboard escaped safely.

An American pilot was killed and three Korean soldiers were injured around noon Sunday when a Huey ferrying Korean White Horse Div. combat troops developed engine trouble and crashed about 15 miles northwest of Cam Ranh Bay, according to Korean spokesmen.

First Air Cav. Div. troops

worked Sunday and Monday removing more than 421,000 pounds of rice from a cache hidden beneath double canopy jungle a mile from the Cambodian border, 65 miles northwest of Saigon, according to U.S. officials. The work was only half done as troopers hauled the rice bags, some bearing Chinese labels, back to 1st Cav. headquarters for distribution to local villagers, sources at the Cav. said.

W.O. Richard C. Pierce spotted the cache while flying a bomb damage assessment run in his light observation helicopter 17 miles northwest of Tay Ninh City in western III Corps, according to military officials. "I spotted some hootches that the bombs had uncovered," said Pierce. "As I moved in to get a better look I noticed that the walls seemed a little funny. They were made out of bags of rice."

Elements of the 2nd Bn., 8th Cav., hacked through the jungle underbrush and, under cover from hovering gunships, began combing through the timber-braced, tin-roofed supply bunkers.

Sgt. Ralph Wilson, a 1st Cav. Pathfinder, said, "It's hard to say when the NVA had last been there. The sacks were all in good shape; none rotted, all dry." Others at the scene surmised the rice had been there for two weeks, and said the cache might well contain over 242,000 pounds of rice.

Regional Force and Popular Force elements from the Kien Binh sub-sector reportedly killed 29 enemy soldiers and destroyed 40 enemy sampans during a battle through canal-side marshes in the Delta region, according to Vietnamese military officials. The RF and PF team sustained only five wounded during the skirmish.

The biggest American battle action came early Monday when 1st Air Cav. Div. gunships spotted enemy positions seven miles from the Cambodian border, 21 miles northeast of Phuoc Binh, U.S. officials reported. The choppers dueled enemy machine gunners in the pre-dawn dark until the enemy withdrew, and illumination rounds fired over the strike zone revealed the bodies of 10 enemy soldiers, according to U.S. officials.

one top American regional commander last week.

The tactic of allied commanders has been to send in reconnaissance teams of five or six men to watch enemy movement, locate base camps and then call in artillery fire and jet fighter-bombers. This tactic, combined with what the commanders contend has been an improving intelligence network of informants, radar, sensors and other electronic devices, has both kept enemy units off balance and saved American lives.

Meanwhile, enemy troops have launched fewer attacks.

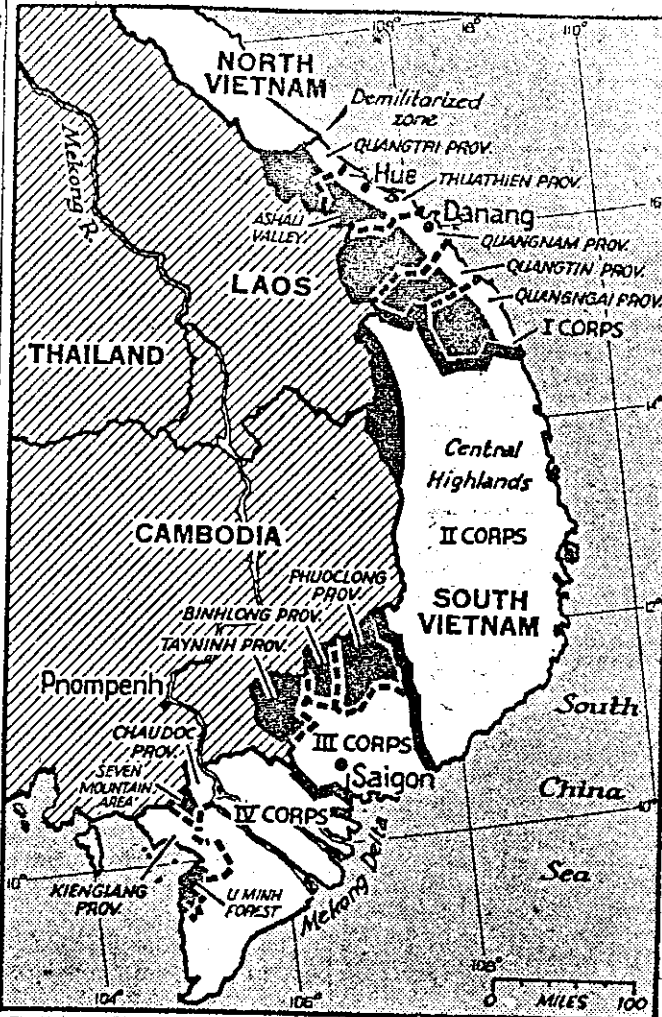
In February, for example, enemy forces launched fewer attacks in some regions of the country than they have in more than a year, and since September, they have not even launched what allied officials refer to as a high point—a one or two-day coordinated upsurge in shellings and ground attacks throughout the country.

Enemy forces have usually slowed the pace of the war in the closing months of the year to refit and resupply for large-scale general offensives, which, in the last two years, began in February. This year there was no February offensive.

Official sources reported today that in the III Corps tactical zone, encompassing 11 provinces around Saigon, a total of 194 "enemy-initiated incidents" were recorded in February—a monthly figure lower than military statisticians can remember for the hotly contested region.

That figure compares with 434 incidents in January, an average of more than 400 a month during the fall, and 855 last May. Enemy-initiated incidents include shellings, ground attacks and road minings.

Official explanations for the pattern of fighting, which has been similar in the other three military zones, are varied. Some American military commanders contend that enemy troops are



The New York Times March 10, 1970
 Enemy forces are believed to be concentrated in the areas marked by shading. Heavy lines show the corps areas.

now too weak to launch a major drive, and that when smaller, localized attempts have been made, they have been discovered and crushed.

For example, last month south of Danang about a battalion of North Vietnamese and Vietcong saboteurs were discovered preparing for an attack on Danang. South Vietnamese Army troops attacked and killed most of them, spokesmen reported.

In January, about 20 miles

north of Saigon, allied troops discovered an enormous complex of 32 caches of artillery shells and other munitions weighing nearly 200 tons, enough to supply a 12,000-man division for a year.

Other military officials believe the enemy is waiting until mid-April—when all of the American troops scheduled to depart in the third phase of the American withdrawal are out—to launch a drive.

A third explanation, which

seems to be shared by most people here, is that the other side has chosen to revert to a strategy of protracted guerrilla warfare, quietly rebuilding his forces in the countryside as American troops continue to leave. Those who favor this explanation say they expect a continued harassing type of war with occasional flurries of fighting and attacks on rural areas combined with increased terrorism in the cities.

Military sources report no major change in the locations of the large North Vietnamese Army units, with most of them still clinging to border areas in the southern half of the country. The estimated division of North Vietnamese troops in the Mekong Delta has remained in two base camp areas—the U Minh Forest in Kiengiang Province and the Seven Mountain area in Chaudoc Province.

In the III Corps areas, three enemy divisions continue to operate, mostly in the border provinces of Tayninh, Binhlong and Phuoclong. In the II Corps Central Highlands, most major enemy units are believed to be operating close to the Cambodian-Laotian border, their traditional base area.

In the five northern provinces, which form the I Corps area, enemy units are believed to be in the traditional mountain base areas just west of the coastal plain in Quangnai, Quangtin and Quangnam Provinces, west and south of Danang, and in central Thuathien and Quangtri Provinces, west and north of Hue.

Reconnaissance troops report a build-up of enemy troops and supplies in the Ashau Valley, in western Thuathien, which American troops abandoned last fall.

U.S. Base Is Shelled

SAIGON, March 9 (AP)—Enemy mortar crews hidden in jungles fired a predawn barrage of up to 175 shells today at a tiny United States fire support base just four miles from Cambodia.

st of the 82-mm shells to hit the outpost—code-named Flasher—and the United States command said there were no American fatalities and "very light casualties" in the attack.

Ten North Vietnamese soldiers were reported killed by helicopter gunships and artillery called in during the 20-minute barrage against the fire base, about 76 miles north-northwest of Saigon.

The heaviest fighting reported today broke out in a border region where troops of the United States First Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) have reported killing 79 enemy soldiers and capturing several tons of rice.

In other areas, the allies reported generally scattered ground fighting in which a total of 90 North Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers were killed with no allied casualties.