

U.S. Soldiers Fend Off Red Attack Near Saigon

8/21/69

SAIGON (UPI) — American forces battled Communist soldiers Wednesday with artillery, armed helicopters and automatic weapons just south of Saigon. In the Mekong Delta, Viet Cong troops overran a government outpost where soldiers had gone to sleep.

The U.S. command said that units of the 9th Infantry Division's 3rd Regiment fought for four hours against an estimated company of Communist troops 15 miles from the capital in an area near Can Duoc.

Officials said the Americans, backed by artillery and helicopter gunships, killed at least 35 of the Communists while taking

losses of one dead and two wounded. They also said that two of the Communist soldiers deserted their ranks and came over to the American side.

About 50 Viet Cong guerrillas Wednesday poured into a government outpost 65 miles southwest of Saigon behind a barrage of mortar fire that ripped into the ranks of about 23 sleeping militiamen.

UPI correspondent Daniel Southerland reported that the militia unit had gone to sleep without posting any security patrols and the Viet Cong raced into the small camp tossing explosive satchel charges at the wooden perimeter wall and bunkers.

Camp In Ruins

He said when the guerrillas withdrew 30 minutes later, the camp was in flaming ruins and that eight South Vietnamese soldiers were killed and eight missing. The others fled into nearby rice paddies during the assault.

Continued fighting was reported Wednesday in an area of scrub brush and thick jungles west of Tam Ky, on the coast 340 miles northeast of Saigon. Spokesmen said units of the army's American division staged a four-hour battle with Communist troops 16 miles west of Tam Ky and killed at least 20 of them. American losses were six killed and 20 wounded.

Close to 300 Communist soldiers have been killed in the area in heavy fighting with army troops this week.

Ten civilians and two South Vietnamese soldiers were wounded Wednesday night when a terrorist hurled a grenade into a building in the Vinh Chau district town, 105 miles southwest of Saigon.

Guerrillas also blew up a small bridge 45 miles southwest of Saigon near Mo Cay, temporarily halting traffic on Route 6 in the Mekong Delta.