

helicopter to evacuate the prisoner during heavy fighting in foothills south of

helicopter. (AP Wirephoto by radio from Saigon)

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U.S. Infantry, Support Battle Red Force More Than 7 Hours

SAIGON (AP) — U.S. infantrymen, backed by planes and artillery, battled an enemy force for more than seven hours Sunday about 28 miles northwest of Saigon, an American military spokesman said.

Forty-eight enemy soldiers were reported killed in the battle, which erupted when a U.S. patrol spotted a force of about 60 men dug in near Cu Chi, headquarters of the U.S. 25th Infantry Division. U.S. losses were placed at two killed and five wounded.

Most of the enemy dead resulted from air and artillery bombardment, the spokesman said. The battle ended at dusk when the enemy withdrew under cover of darkness.

Elsewhere, over the weekend, enemy forces shelled a U.S. Army hospital, stormed two major American bases, ambushed two U.S. convoys and turned their guns on 25 allied bases and towns, military spokesmen reported.

Seven Americans were killed and 98 wounded in the 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. Sunday, the spokesmen said.

American Infantrymen who reached the site where a U.S. Command helicopter was shot down Tuesday 31 miles south of Da Nang reported finding the bodies of all eight men aboard. They said there were no survivors.

The eight included Lt. Col. Eli P. Howard Jr., 41, of Woodbridge, Va., and Associated Press photographer Oliver Noonan, 29, of Norwell, Mass. Military men identified the body of Howard. AP photographer Horst Faas, who accompanied troops to the wreckage, tentatively identified Noonan's body. Faas reported that a camera and two lenses Noonan had been carrying were found with the body.

The helicopter went down in flames Tuesday after being hit by enemy ground fire.

Troops of the U.S. Americal Division's 196th Infantry Brigade had been fighting their way through fierce enemy resistance since Wednesday to reach the wreckage.

Opposition ceased early Sunday, indicating that the enemy may have withdrawn after the five-day battle climaxed by U.S. capture of Hill 102, 1,000 yards from the crash site.

The three most significant enemy attacks reported overnight:

—A U.S. Army convalescent

hospital on the supposedly secure base at Cam Ranh Bay was hit by about five rounds of mortar shells, wounding 19 patients. The hospital 195 miles northeast of Saigon was the same one attacked Aug. 7 by enemy commandos hurling dynamite bombs. Two Americans were killed and 98 wounded in the earlier attack.

—One hundred North Vietnamese commandos especially trained in rocketry and demolitions attacked an artillery base of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division east of A Shau Valley and about nine miles from the Laotian border. A handful of the sappers broke into the base. Three Americans were killed and nine wounded, headquarters said, while 21 enemy soldiers were killed.

—Sappers also blasted their way into the headquarters of the U.S. 1st Marine Division three miles southwest of Da Nang. One Marine was killed and three wounded. Five of the ene-

my were slain and two others captured.

The battle action was being watched by President Nixon who disclosed that he is holding up a decision on more American troop withdrawals because of the upsurge of enemy attacks that began nearly two weeks ago.

Nixon's press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, reported from the Western White House in San Clemente, Calif., that no freeze has been ordered on the first 25,000 men Nixon had ordered withdrawn.

That withdrawal was continuing on schedule, with another 2,000 slated to leave Monday. That would bring to 22,500 the number pulled out. The others are to leave later this week.