

Reds Capture U. S. Pilot; Cong Ambush

By Beverly Deepe
From Cable Dispatches
SAIGON.

North Viet Nam shot down an American plane yesterday and captured the pilot, the Communist New China news agency claimed.

The dispatch, monitored in Tokyo, did not give the pilot's name, nor did it identify the type of aircraft, but said he was captured in Quang Ninh province.

North Viet Nam has threatened to try captured American fliers as "war criminals," and implicitly threatened executions.

But so far, only the Communist Viet Cong guerrillas in South Viet Nam are known to have executed American prisoners of war, ostensibly in retaliation for the execution by the South Vietnamese authorities of Viet Cong prisoners. They have executed three.

In South Viet Nam, men of the U. S. 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division described how they saved a helicopter downed with its four-man crew in Communist territory on Friday.

When the helicopter was downed by Viet Cong fire, two helicopters sped to the scene. One, a heavily armed craft, fought off the guerrillas while the other, a big salvage craft, lifted the downed helicopter to safety.

AMBUSH

Seven guerrillas were believed killed and four wounded in the exchange, a spokesman said. No American casualties were reported.

From neighboring Cambodia yesterday came a charge that five "American-South Vietnamese" skyraider fighter-bombers attacked a Cambodian border village on Friday, killing four villagers and wounding 10.

Cambodia's official radio charged the planes inflicted heavy damage on the Ba Thou village in Svay Rieng province.

Earlier yesterday Cambodia had protested against an alleged flight 18 miles into its territory on Thursday by two South Vietnamese helicopters.

In the ground war yesterday, the Viet Cong guerrillas ambushed and almost wiped out a 100-man South Vietnamese patrol with mortar, machine gun and small arms fire. The daylight attack occurred near the Cambodian border 120 miles southwest of Saigon.

A U. S. spokesman admitted the government losses were "heavy." It was not reported whether the dead also included U. S. advisers. Viet Cong losses were not known.

U. S. B-52 bombers took off from Guam to raid a suspected Viet Cong storage area in the coastal province of Quang Ngai, 330 miles northeast of Saigon.

In the Mekong Delta, a Government unit was said to have ambushed about 100 guerrillas, killed 28, and captured three. The ambush, in a Communist stronghold 155 miles southwest of Saigon, was the sixth major clash in the Mekong Delta in 48 hours.

A U. S. spokesman said the Government troops had waited patiently in hiding until dawn when the Viet Cong appeared at the edge of U Minh forest, a vast guerrilla sanctuary never before penetrated by Saigon forces. The action was so swift that not one South Vietnamese soldier was wounded.

In another clash yesterday in Vinh Binh Province, about 80 miles south of the capital, a provincial company ran into a large Communist force. The Communists abandoned bodies and arms. Twenty dead guerrillas were counted.

In Saigon, the Communists began what they proclaimed would be a "month of struggle"—meaning terrorism—by tossing a grenade over the wall of a villa occupied by Americans. No one was hurt.