

Siagon 25536.

WITH THE 7th DIVISION—More than 8000 ~~Army of Vietnam~~ <sup>ESE</sup> troops launched a massive drive today in one of the largest operations in the ~~Mek~~ explosive Mekong Delta area.

The ~~integrated air-land-and sea operation began yesterday~~ was initiated yesterday when

Almost a full division of troops—~~the 7th Inf. Division~~—supported by sea, air and local militia swooped through a 10 sq. mile area dominated by the ~~Viet~~ Communist Viet Cong about 30 miles south ~~of~~ of the "eagles beak" of the Cambodian border.

Initial contact with the Viet Cong in the continuing operation was slight.

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~~Approximately 40 Viet Cong were killed yesterday~~ yesterday

An airstrike by two AD-6's supported by heavy artillery reportedly killed an estimated 40 Viet Cong spotted in a concentrated area. No official headcount could be taken as darkness set in and the Viet Cong removed their dead. At least two ~~One~~ prisoner were captured along with an unknown amount of ammunition and a rucksack.

~~Only one casualty was suffered~~ suffered

Army of Vietnam forces suffered only one casualty—when a soldier was wounded by a water Buffalo.

The ~~extensive~~ extensive operation began when ~~some~~ <sup>Many</sup> of the nine battalions of the 7th Infantry Division, moved into a marshy area of the Plain of Reeds in Kien Phong Province, about 120 miles ~~from~~ <sup>southwest of</sup> Saigon, in an attempt to encircle elements of the 502nd Viet Cong Battalion. The northern boundary of the area of operation, the 19-mile long Thap Moui Canal, was

patrolled and blocked by 12 light naval vessels. Civil Guard Units ~~to~~ <sup>Added</sup> to Regular Army ~~Strength~~ <sup>Strength</sup>. ~~One~~ <sup>3</sup> airborne battalions were held on alert at Saigon's Ton Son Nhut Airport, but were not called into today's activity. One H-34 helicopter was on standby for medical evacuation.

One light aircraft, an L-19, was used for making reconnaissance missions of the area.

~~The operation is the largest in heavily-infested Kien VC infested Kien Phong province since last June when a successful, large-scale operation was made.~~

The operation was conducted after weeks of intensive planning and final approval by high military officials in Saigon. The commander of the 7th Inf. Div. is Col. Cao. Col. Clay is U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Group.

As troops were moving into position yesterday, an estimated 200 Viet Cong were spotted in a reedy, marshy area. Two A-D-6's--the fighter planes which had ~~planx~~ bombed the Palace--were called in for support. Bombs and heavy artillery support killed an estimated 40 Viet Cong, according to intelligence information gained from ~~the~~ the prisoner.

Vietnamese troops today moved into position to squeeze reported Viet Cong in an encirclement pincher trap. The operation was still continuing today.



~~This is the largest operation~~

Portion in brackets not transmitted  
April 3/62 - <sup>ARVN</sup> Telephone Cao South. Saigon.  
Calls made at 6:30 to Billy Houston -  
Ap. office - Copy clear but voice  
not understandable at times. Call.  
re-made 8:15 P.M. - Contact clear.