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Reds Attack Govt. Forces in Viet Nam [ARTICLE]

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Reds Attack Govt. Forces In Viet Nam

Saigon, South Viet Nam (AP) — Running battles between government forces and Communist guerillas flared over much of the southern third of South Viet Nam Thursday.

Casualties mounted on both sides as Viet Cong guerillas began striking hard, sometimes in units of 1,000 men, and the government struck back even harder in what was shaping up as the biggest military struggle since South Viet Nam became independent in 1954.

Informed sources estimated 1,000 men have been killed, wounded or captured on the two sides in the last 12 days.

No American casualties were reported in that period, though U.S. Army helicopters were active all over the jungle map ferrying government troopers and supplies.

One helicopter was forced down by engine trouble Thursday in a guerilla-infested region while flying supplies to a force of about 1,500 Vietnamese operating on a finger of land in the Mekong River delta.

Troops drew a security zone around the craft. The military command in Saigon hoped to get a spare engine to the helicopter

by Friday.

The 1,500 troops, sent into the delta by landing craft and on foot to hunt down a band of guerillas which wiped out a company of government soldiers in an ambush Tuesday, lost contact with the elusive Red fighters.

The guerillas, moving among the many islands and fingers of land, apparently had slipped into a mangrove swamp along the South China Sea. Observation planes watched for signs of enemy movement in the swamp and along river branches.

Observation planes were keeping close watch over Phouc Thanh Providence, 50 miles northeast of Saigon, where an air strike was reported to have killed 60 Communists Sunday.

U.S. helicopters lifted most of the survivors—including 50 women, 47 children, along with dogs, chickens, ducks and a pig—from the village of Bo Tuc, 100 miles northeast of Saigon near the Cambodian border. A force of about 1,000 Viet Cong razed the village Sunday night by bombardment. The defenders held out and were relieved the next day by a battalion of paratroopers.

Adm. Harry D. Felt, U.S. Pacific commander, flew to the Philippines after a two-day visit.

He told newsmen there the struggle in South Viet Nam may go on for years but "we're going to win this one."

South Viet Nam is on the offensive and he said he thinks there is progress.

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