

# Yanks Spring Pincer Trap; 342 Reds Die

SAIGON, May 21—(UPI)—U.S. Marines and Vietnamese paratroopers caught an estimated battalion of North Vietnamese in a giant pincer in the demilitarized zone Sunday and reported killing 342 Reds.

The fighting came after U.S. jets downed five more Communist MiGs over Hanoi Saturday and bombed a power plant in the port city of Haiphong.

The Marines made a lightning helicopter assault into the so-called neutral zone Saturday, pushing the Communist troops back into South Vietnamese territory, set up as a blocking force.

The assault pumped another battalion of Marines into the Operation Nut Cracker fighting where a large combined U.S.-Vietnamese force aimed to trap an estimated two and perhaps three North Vietnamese regiments.

## Red Casualties Rise

The new fighting sent Communist casualties inside the DMZ to more than 600. U.S. officials said 50 Marines had been killed and 543 wounded since the offensive started Thursday.

The big air battle over North Vietnam Saturday raised to 19 the total of Soviet-made jets downed in a week over North Vietnam.

The MIG kills Saturday raised to 69 the number of Communist jets downed by U.S. fighter planes. The United States lost seven jets Friday during raids over Hanoi and 10 American crewmen were reported killed or missing in one of the blackest days of the air war for the Americans.

North Vietnam claimed eight more American planes were shot down in Saturday's raids and said a number of pilots were captured.

U.S. military spokesman said Navy pilots Saturday bombed the Haiphong west thermal power plant.

## Tons of Bombs

In other air action, U.S. B52s rained tons of bombs in the Central Highlands where elements of the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division tangled with a large-sized North Vietnamese force.

The Communists pounded a multi-company Fourth Division force with heavy mortar and rocket attacks Saturday night and tried to overrun one position. They were repulsed in heavy fighting.

In DMZ ground action, U.S. Marines airlifted a fresh battalion of Marine reinforcements into the middle of the battleground from ships in the South China Sea to join 15,000 Marines and South Vietnamese forces driving against about 5500 North Vietnamese.



—UPI RADIOTELEPHOTO BY KYOICHI SAWADA

## After Mortar Attack

A victim of a mortar attack is helped by his U.S. Marine buddies as they await an evacuation helicopter in the Demilitarized Zone. Marines and South Vietnamese forces battled their way through the lower half of the DMZ and toward the Ben Hai River splitting the 8-mile-wide area.

# Marines in DMZ Under Heavy Fire

INSIDE THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE, May 20—(AP)—The battle is joined inside the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Vietnam.

As Saturday broke, U.S. Marines on the right came under intense fire from the North Vietnamese regulars and two South Vietnamese paratroop battalions were heavily engaged on the left.

This was the first action, aside from North Vietnamese shelling, since the force of about 10,000 Marines and South Vietnamese swept into the southern half of the 8-mile wide zone Thursday determined to root out North Vietnamese from the supposedly neutral area.

The fighting within the DMZ is reminiscent of Korea, with most of the characteristics of conventional warfare. Foot troops slog forward across the scrubby hills or through rice paddies, frequently are pinned down by the almost constant mortar and artillery fire from the north.

A Marine battalion on the beach has been shelled repeatedly for three days. Marines

burrow into the hot, white sand seeking protection from the shells hurled by enemy howitzers from caves north of the Ben Hai River which flows through the center of the Zone.

U.S. ships in the South China Sea shell the enemy gun positions and in turn come under fire from coastal guns. Two Marine tanks were knocked out by anti-tank cannon Friday.

## LBJ Asks Soviet Help in Mideast

WASHINGTON, May 20—(UPI)—President Johnson has appealed to the Soviet Union, an important arms supplier to Egypt and Syria, to use its influence in dampening the current Mideast crisis, informed sources reported Saturday night, and no Soviet reply has been received.

# 60,000 Egyptian Troops Poised on Israel Border

JERUSALEM, May 20 — (UPI) — Egypt now has nearly 60,000 troops poised along the border with Israel — more than twice as many as Israelis faced during the 1956 Sinai campaign, according to an expert assessment Saturday.

The assessment came from Israeli sources, who admitted they may have underestimated earlier the entire problem of the Sinai buildup. Israel defense and political experts previously focused their attention primarily on the northern frontier with Syria.

Syria is reported to have massed 40,000 troops along the Israeli border.

Now the southern frontier with Egypt heads Israel's military preparedness list with several tens of thousands of United Arab Republic soldiers concentrated in the Sinai Peninsula.

The UAR troops comprise five divisions, according to Israeli estimates. Four are infantry divisions and one armored division, equipped with Soviet-built tanks.

At full strength, 58,400 men are in these divisions which have moved into the Sinai Desert in the wake of departing United Nations peacekeeping forces. It is the most powerful force of soldiers ever concentrated in Sinai by the Egyptians and is more than double the force they had there in the Sinai campaign 11 years ago.

Israel noted the significant re-emergence of the "fedayeen suicide squads" kept in the background by the Egyptian propaganda machine for years and now spotlighted by Cairo.

Cairo has also stressed that units of the Palestine Liberation Army have been maneuvered into frontline positions in the Gaza Strip.

# Thant Sets Mideast Trip: Crisis Worst Since 1956

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., May 20—Sec. Gen. Thant viewed the Middle East crisis Saturday as more menacing than at anytime since 1956, when Israeli, French and British forces attacked Egypt in an attempt to seize control of the Suez Canal.

He scheduled a trip to Cairo Monday to confer with Egyptian leaders.

Thant expressed his concern in a report to the UN Security Council, saying the present confrontation of Egypt and Syria against Israel could flare up at any time. He reported a brief shooting incident on the Egyptian-Israeli line Friday but added he did not know which side was to blame.

Thant pointed to two possible flashpoints in the crisis: Sharm el Sheik, which overlooks a sea route to the Israeli's southern port of Eilat; and Gaza, home of thousands of Palestinians displaced by Israel's formation in May 1948.

The government of President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt has threatened to blockade the Gulf of Aqaba to keep shipping from reaching Eilat. Israel has countered that it will fight if such a blockade is imposed.

Israeli troops quickly defeated Egyptian forces on the Sinai Peninsula in 1956 and were close to the Suez Canal when UN intervention halted the fighting. Nasser a few months before had nationalized the canal.

Egypt has amassed troops along Israel's southwest border to support Syria against what the two Arab governments called an Israeli threat to attack Syria. Syria has moved 40,000 troops to Israel's northeast border.

A few hours before Thant reported to the 15-nation Security Council, Syria's defense minister, Maj. Gen. Hafez Assad, declared "the time is ripe" for war with Israel.

He said in the government newspaper Al Thawra in Damascus: "Our forces are not only completely ready to repeal aggression, they are also fully prepared to start the liberation operation."

Dispatches from Cairo said the nation seemed to be going about its normal weekend activities. Analysts there expressed belief the Arabs had placed Israel on the defensive by moving troops to its borders, that one incident could set off a major conflict.

In Syria, truckloads of troops and equipment rolled through the outskirts of Damascus heading for the 72-mile Israeli border. Military leaders of Syria's Socialist government met with officers from Iraq on joint-Arab war operations.

## Egyptian Blockade Feared At Israel's Key Port

CAIRO, May 20—(UPI)—Egypt has moved troops into position on the Tiran Straits through which Israeli shipping must pass to reach the port of Eilat, informed sources said Saturday.

The move heightened the possibility of an Egyptian blockade of Israel's key "back door" port on the Gulf of Aqaba.

Israeli officials have warned in the past they would not tolerate interference with their shipping in the narrow gulf, Israel's sole access route to the Red Sea. It would take only two Egyptian destroyers to block the Strait.

Government sources said the Egyptian troops and artillery moved into the area soon after UN Scandinavian troops moved out.

In Jerusalem, Israeli officials said a blockade of the strait would be contrary to international law. Observers said Israel presumably would have no recourse but to interfere with UAR shipping.

Israel charged that Syria had broken the shaky peace in the Middle East by sending a sabotage unit into Israel.