MIG Downs Helo

U.S. JETS DUEL GUNS IN NORTH

PACIFIC STARS AND STRIPES

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WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. Air Force fighter bombers attacked an enemy antiaircraft missile base Wednesday inside North Vietnam after an unarmed reconnaissance plane was fired on by surface-to-air missiles, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

An American F105 fighter-bomber was shot down by antiaircraft fire in the action.

Nearly two hours later, the Pentagon said, an Air Force search and rescue helicopter looking for survivors was attacked and shot down by a Russian-built MIG21 fighter "in the vicinity of the North Vietnam-Laotian border."

The spokesman said he did not know whether the MIG was engaged by any U.S. fighters.

All crewmen of the fighter-bomber and the copter were listed as missing. The F105 carried two men. The Pentagon said it did not know how many were in the helicopter, but Saigon sources said it carried six.

The incident began when an RF4C reconnaissance plane escorted by several F105 and F4 fighter-bombers "was taken under fire by SAM missiles in an area 12 miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass in North Vietnam," the announcement said.

This would place the location just inside North Vietnam.

The Pentagon said that escort planes, defending an unarmed reconnaissance craft, "responded by attacking the SAM launch site."

Prior to the Pentagon announcement, North Vietnam representatives at Paris accused U.S. planes of raiding North Vietnamese territory and called the raid a very grave act of war.

In reply a U.S. State Department spokesman acknowledged that reconnaissance planes and accompanying protective craft fly over North Vietnam but de-

nued on Back Page, Col. 1)

HANOI MiGs DOWN U.S. RESCUE COPTER

First attack since bombing halt

SAIGON—(AP)—North Vietnamese MiG interceptors attacked American aircraft for the first reported time since the halt in the bombing of North Vietnam 15 months ago and shot down a giant rescue helicopter, official sources said yesterday.

The helicopter was searching for an Air Force F105 fighter-bomber shot down by anti-aircraft fire only hours earlier in the same region along the North Vietnamese-Laotian border.

Sources said the two pilots aboard the F105 and the six crewmen aboard the rescue helicopter are missing in action.

The sequence of events occurred within a two-hour span Wednesday afternoon.

A spokesman for the U.S. Command said he has nothing to report on the downed aircraft "at this time."

Sources held out little hope that the six crewmen aboard the HH-53 rescue helicopter, called a "Super Jolly Green Giant," survived since the aircraft was hit by an air-to-air missile fired from the MiG.

North Vietnam claimed its armed forces shot down three U.S. planes and damaged many others American air raids on the North Vietnamese provinces of Quang Binh and Ha Tinh which border Laos along the Mu Gia Pass, the main North Vietnamese supply route into Laos.

Sources here said it was not immediately clear whether both of the American aircraft were shot down in Laos or North Vietnam, or whether one was shot down in Laos and the other in North Vietnam.

Sources said a flight of three American F105 fighter-bombers from a base in Thailand were on an unknown type mission in the Mu Gia Pass region Wednesday when one of them was shot down by anti-aircraft fire.

Meanwhile American battlefield deaths in the Vietnam war dropped slightly last week, but South Vietnamese and Communist loses were up, allied headquarters reported yesterday.

(See Page 8)