



U.S. advisers waiting yesterday in landing zone at Quangtri before copter flew them out

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PROVINCE IS LOST

Victory Foe's Biggest Since Month-Old Invasion Began

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Special to The New York Times

HUE, South Vietnam, Tuesday, May 2—The South Vietnamese abandoned Quangtri, their northernmost province capital, yesterday, giving the advancing North Vietnamese their biggest prize so far in their month-old invasion.

The city, the first province capital to be lost since the offensive began March 30, was abandoned by Government forces yesterday afternoon after three days of shelling during which the enemy moved troops and tanks to the edge of the city.

The loss of Quangtri city gave the North Vietnamese control of the entire northern province of the same name.

B-52's Covered Retreat

About 80 American advisers, the commander of the South Vietnamese Third Division and his staff were evacuated in the afternoon in four big rescue helicopters that flew through heavy enemy ground fire to get the men out.

United States B-52's reportedly bombed areas as close as one mile to the northeast of Quangtri city between noon yesterday and 6 A.M. today in efforts first to beat off the enemy attack and then to cover the retreat of the Government forces. One of the 14 missions was nine miles south of Quangtri.

Meanwhile, South Vietnamese units retreated southward toward the even more important city of Hue, Vietnam's ancient imperial capital, in Thuathien Province. They were accompanied by 10 American advisers who had decided to stay with them.

Steady Push by Foe

Hue, with a population that has swollen to more than 300,000 by fleeing refugees, is now directly threatened. The North Vietnamese have reportedly moved to within less than 15 miles of the city on the west and about 25 miles on the north.

[On other fronts, North Vietnamese troops reportedly continued their advance in northern Binh Dinh Province on the central coast and tightened their siege of the province capital of Kontum to the west. On the front closer to Saigon, Anloc, the besieged province capital that has been nearly flattened by enemy fire, was subjected anew to intense artillery bombardment.]

Reports reaching Hue indicated that Quangtri had been abandoned without much of a fight by Government troops.

Describing the situation,

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South Vietnamese Abandon Quangtri; 80 American

PROVINCE CAPITAL FIRST TO BE LOST

Enemy Now Controls All of
Area Near DMZ and Is
Within 15 Miles of Hue

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Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Bowen, the deputy senior American adviser in the northern region, said here last night that the South Vietnamese forces "were being steadily pushed back."

"The situation is not desperate," he went on, "but there is certainly cause for serious concern. It's not a thing to be taken lightly."

Earlier in the day he said, "We have given up plans to defend Quangtri." He added that the troops left in the area would be "working their way out as best they can."

Military advisers who flew over the scene said that no civilians were left in the town when the Government troops pulled out.

The civilians began fleeing the city when intense shelling began three days ago. Yesterday the streets were filled with trucks and motorcycles and other vehicles abandoned by the residents. The vehicles had become useless because the enemy had cut the road to the south. Enemy soldiers had also knocked out some columns of trucks carrying refugees, killing and wounding many of them.

The North Vietnamese failed to take Quangtri in their first push from the north a month ago, but in a renewed offensive that began last Wednesday night they threw additional units and armor and artillery into the fight.

General Bowen said that the South Vietnamese division that was defending Quangtri had been badly mauled but added that the retreat had been fairly orderly. However, large numbers of Government troops on the northern front have reportedly been deserting in the last few days and many have made their way to Hue along with the civilian refugees.

Alarmed over the situation, the Government began a search for deserters in Hue, and at least 500 were picked up by the military police and forced back into service.

Infiltrator Reported Seized

The military police set up checkpoints on the roads leading into Hue and also at the gates leading into the old walled section of the city to try to catch deserters. Infiltrators from the north are reportedly trying to organize students and others against the Saigon Government.

A reliable report said that at least one key leader has been picked up in the sweep. He was tentatively identified as Le Van Hao, a former instructor at Hue University who defected to the North Vietnamese during the Tet offensive of 1968 and reportedly slipped back into the Hue area during the current offensive. He is said to be a member of the cabinet of the Vietcong's provisional revolutionary government.

According to allied intelligence experts, the enemy wants to take Hue to establish a provisional government here.

Tensions continue to rise in Hue and the residents are beginning to evacuate to the south in increasingly large numbers. Tickets on Air Vietnam are virtually impossible to acquire and sea and river transport are also packed.