

*Bunt*

*Long narrative*

Saigon (AP)—An estimated 2,500 Viet Cong guerrillas attacked an American camp 50 miles from here last night, breaking the allies' cease-fire, and killed 26 Americans and wounded 111, U.S. officers said.

But American commanders said that the Communist attackers suffered heavy losses in the fight that followed. They said the bodies of 344 enemy soldiers were found on the field at daybreak today. Early reports from forward information officers said that the Communists had killed 75 Americans and wounded 125, but spokesman for the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division said later those initial reports were erroneous.

The attack came in rubber plantation country near Tay Ninh, 50 miles northwest of Saigon. The Communist guerrillas attacked the Dautieng U.S. fire support base at 11:40 PM, before the end of the 36-hour allied New Year's cease-fire. By 5 AM today the attackers were reportedly repelled and the 25th Infantry was said to be pursuing them. A spokesman said that as of noon, "there was no more contact."

An American official said the severity of Communist-instigated cease-fire interruptions made the New Year stand-down period "the bloodiest of all" such cease-fire attempts during the Vietnamese war. The guerrilla attack began one hour and 20 minutes before the end of a three-day cease-fire proclaimed by the Viet Cong. Neither side had pledged to observe the other's cease-fire. The U.S. Command said the 36-hour allied cease-fire was marred by 168 incidents, nearly as many as in the 48-hour allied New Year cease-fire a year ago, where there were 178 clashes.

With the cease-fire over, American warplanes resumed bombing raids over North Vietnam and the tempo on the ground was expected to pick up.

South Vietnamese losses during the cease-fire period were reported as 34 soldiers killed, 96 wounded and eight missing. Government troops were said to have killed a total of 121 enemy. Government marines said they lost 19 killed and 47 wounded while killing 60 enemy in a fierce fight in the Mekong Delta before daybreak yesterday.

South Vietnamese military spokesmen said they asked for U.S. air support during the fight but did not get it because of cease-fire orders. A spokesman for the Vietnamese marines said that while the fighting raged, a U.S. flareship circled overhead and lit up the area. But he said that despite calls for fire support the C-47 flareship did not open up with its rapid-fire guns on the attacking enemy.

The Vietnamese spokesman said the military units on the ground were unable to obtain permission from the U.S. Command to bring the air support. He said that by the time it was evident that U.S. planes were not going to open fire, it was too late to get South Vietnamese support planes into the area. The U.S. Seventh Air Force said it was sending officers to the scene to investigate. An Air Force statement confirmed that a C-47 flareship had gone to the aid of the Vietnamese marines, but had not fired its guns.

The incidents across South Vietnam that shattered the truce were numerous enough and bloody enough to make

—Continued on Page 54