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Historic Red Div. In Battle

SAIGON (UPI) — ^{6/30/73} Viet-
nam's so-called cease-fire
entered its sixth month
Thursday with the Saigon
command reporting 13 civili-
ans killed in five separate
incidents and more heavy
fighting near Kontum in
the Central Highlands.

Two government soldiers were
killed, four were wounded and 10
are missing following all-day
fighting Wednesday within seven
miles of Kontum, the command
said in its daily communique.

Communist forces consist of
two regiments (about 5,800 men)
of the battle-hardened North
Vietnamese 302nd or "Steel"
Div., military sources said.

The Steel Div. helped defeat
the French at Dien Bien Phu
nearly 20 years ago. One year
ago its forward elements pene-
trated Kontum City but were
driven back in one of the bitter-
rest battles of 1972.

Now the 302nd is having another
crack at Kontum. The city is
260 miles north of Saigon and
strategically located near the Ho
Chi Minh Trail to the west and
to Pleiku, key city for the high-
lands, to the south.

The 302nd appeared to be ig-
noring an ultimatum by Brig.
Gen. Tran Van Cam, command-
er of the South Vietnamese 23rd
Inf. Div. headquartered at Kon-
tum, to pull back by Friday or
face a counter-offensive to be
launched with air and artillery
bombardment.

Of the five incidents Wednes-
day involving civilians, four
were in the Mekong Delta. The
fifth was in Quang Tin Province
340 miles north of the capital.

Thirteen civilians and one sol-
dier were reported killed, and
eight civilians and 16 soldiers
hurt.