

57

# Pleiku Fighting 2/12/74 Enters 3rd Day

SAIGON (UPI) — A fierce battle which already has cost the lives of nearly 100 Saigon government troops and North Vietnamese regulars in South Vietnam's Central Highlands went into its third day Sunday. But fighting tapered off elsewhere.

The Saigon command said Communist violations of the Paris Cease-Fire Agreement dropped off by 20 per cent. Command spokesman Lt. Col. Le Trung Hien said there was no apparent reason why Communist attacks between noon Saturday and noon Sunday fell to 60 from the previous day's 74.

The 60 truce violations were the lowest total since the unofficial Tet Lunar New Year truce.

In the South Vietnamese Central Highlands battle at Peiku, 220 miles north of Saigon, the South Vietnamese government reported killing 81 Communist soldiers while losing 15 government soldiers killed and 17 others wounded. The government ground commander and his deputy both were missing. North Vietnamese fire also knocked out one U.S.-built M48 tank. The battle began at dusk Friday and entered its third day Sunday evening. South Vietnamese troop and tank reinforcements moved into the fray late Saturday, but the North Vietnamese soldiers involved showed no sign of retreating, field reports said.

The Saigon command spokesman said there was no sign-

ificant fighting in the northern quarter of the nation bordering on North Vietnam. Most other clashes were small and widely scattered Communist attacks, the spokesman said.