

W FILE / 11/15/74
DATE / SUB-CAT.

57 Viet Base
In Kontum
Attacked

2/12/74
SAIGON (UPI) — One day after government intelligence officers predicted a Communist offensive in the area, North Vietnamese troops Wednesday attacked a government base near the province capital of Kontum in the central highlands.

Military sources said a South Vietnamese infantry company of about 150 men manning the base fought for 2½ hours, then lost all radio contact.

The sources said the Communists assaulted the base, nine miles northeast of Kontum and 260 miles north of Saigon, under a barrage of mortar and rocket fire.

There was still no contact with the troops 16 hours after the attack and it was not known if the company was overrun. A 500-man relief force left for the camp late Wednesday, but it was not known if the reinforcements reached the beleaguered position.

Intelligence officers in Saigon said Tuesday the North Vietnamese had built up their forces in the Kontum area and were poised for a dry season offensive that would begin soon. The officers said the Communists have set up a new field headquarters and brought North Vietnam's heaviest artillery pieces to the region.

They said 1,000 Communist troops in two battalions had moved to just northeast of Kontum City, the area where Wednesday's attack occurred.

Within the last month, they said, North Vietnamese officers have consolidated independent Communist units in the area into a new infantry division at the new field headquarters.