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HEAVY FIGHTING REPORTED NEAR SOUTH VIETNAM-CAMBODIA BORDER

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[Text] Saigon, Feb 24 (AFP)--Heavy fighting flared throughout the weekend in two South Vietnamese provinces bordering Cambodia, a military spokesman reported here today.

He said 140 communist soldiers died in two pitched battles near Rach Gia in Kien Giang Province Tinh Bien in Chau Doc Province as the North Vietnamese 1st Division tried to break through from its Cambodian sanctuaries toward the fertile fields of the Mekong River Delta in South Vietnam.

At Tinh Bien, fighting occurred 4 kms (2.5 miles) from the Cambodian frontier, the spokesman said. Government troops, backed massively by artillery, tanks and air support, had only 11 wounded, he said.

The spokesman said the North Vietnamese had formed a new division in the border zone drawn from former prisoners of war freed by South Vietnam shortly after the Paris peace agreement.

In the Kontum highlands 420 kms (260 miles) northeast of Saigon Government forces yesterday destroyed 18 lorries in a 60 truck North Vietnamese convoy.