

NONE/UNKNOWN S. Vietnam Copter Flights Suspended

Code

SAIGON, April 10 (Tuesday)—The four-party International Commission for Control and Supervision of the Vietnam cease-fire has suspended all helicopter flights in South Vietnam, an ICCS spokesman announced Tuesday.

The suspension, which took effect Monday night, follows shooting attacks against three helicopters on peace-keeping flights since last weekend. In one of the attacks an ICCS

helicopter was downed, nine persons killed. A Canadian peace-keeping investigator charged Monday that the helicopter had been shot down by a heat-seeking missile while flying over Vietcong territory in South Vietnam.

Maj. Gen. Duncan McAlpine sharply disputed a Vietcong claim that the helicopter of the International Commission of Control and Supervision met with an accident in which the nine aboard were killed Saturday.

"An accident?" McAlpine snapped. "Surely, with everyone in the area knowing this was an approved flight, and with verbal reports of the survivors, I think otherwise."

"The fact is that the helicopter . . . did in fact sustain a heat-seeker."

In Ottawa, Canadian Foreign Secretary Mitchell Sharp said Canada will withdraw from the ICCS unless conditions "improve very substantially." One of the dead was a Canadian truce observer.

Sharp accused the Vietcong of firing on two peace commission helicopters and then hindering searches for them.

Sharp said that a day after the crash, when the victims were finally handed over to ICCS officials, the Vietcong tried unsuccessfully to make them sign a statement agreeing that there was an error in navigation.

The bodies of seven of the crash victims—two American pilots flying for Air America and a Filipino crewman, a Canadian, an Indonesian and two Hungarian officers—were brought back to Saigon from the jungle crash site Monday. The other two victims were Vietcong Balcon officers.

In Washington, a White House spokesman said President Nixon views the attacks on clearly marked ICCS helicopters as "extremely serious." The State Department said the incident was a "totally callous flouting" of the cease-fire agreement.

The second commission helicopter was hit by "sustained ground fire" and made a forced landing near the first in what McAlpine called "desperate circumstances." Its 11 passengers and crew were not hurt.

McAlpine said the pilot of the second helicopter reported seeing a missile. He quoted the airman as saying: "I saw it go by—Pow. Then it burst in a ball of flames."

McAlpine, head of Canada's military delegation with the international commission, was speaking at Saigon's airport on his return from an investigation of the incident in Quang Tri Province.

Reports that the aircraft was hit by a missile were a "distortion of the truth," a Vietcong statement said.

The Communists also denied that their forces fired Monday on a third helicopter which South Vietnam reported was hit by six rounds of enemy small-arms fire while on a peacekeeping mission over the Mekong Delta.

A Saigon military command spokesman announced that the chopper—flying for the Joint Military Commission now made up of South Vietnam and the Vietcong—sustained slight damage.

Canadian sources reported that still another ICCS helicopter flying at 3,500 feet in the same area also was shot at Monday, but escaped without damage.

"This is another fabrication," a Vietcong spokesman said.

Ambassador Michel Gauvin, chairman of the Canadian delegation, said that the Vietcong had given the ICCS "prior assurances" of the downed helicopter's safety.

Gauvin said that Canada had agreed to extend its 60-day

participation in the truce observer body "with grave doubts about the usefulness of our presence."

He said this was the result of the "rather dismal record of the ICCS so far."

Canadian officials have stated repeatedly that the Polish and Hungarian delegations have refused to participate seriously in an investigation of truce violations, except those demanded by the Communist side.

Meanwhile, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., President Nixon's special emissary, conferred with Thai and Laotian leaders today, the first day of his mission to make an assessment of Southeast Asia's current situation.

Haig arrived in Bangkok from the Western White House in California and spent an hour with Premier Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachon.

Later he flew to Vientiane, talked first with U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley and then went with Godley for a 90-minute conference with

Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma. From Vientiane, Haig flew to the U.S. air base at Nakhon Phanom in northern Thailand.

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