

NONE/UNKNOWN

Peace Copter

SAIGON, April 8 (AP)—All nine persons aboard a peacekeeping helicopter were killed Saturday when it was shot down after it wandered off course over Vietcong-held territory, it was officially reported Sunday.

The Vietcong expressed "deep regret" Sunday at the loss of the American-piloted International Commission of Control and Supervision aircraft.

A South Vietnamese military spokesman claimed it was shot down by Communist ground fire, and an ICCS official said the helicopter was hit by a missile, probably a Soviet-made Strela.

A second helicopter carrying peacekeeping delegates landed safely in Communist territory and its 10 passengers and crew were taken to Giolinh, 40 miles away, the Vietcong said here.

The Vietcong statement claimed the downed helicopter was 15 miles off its approved flight path, entered an area often overflown by South Vietnamese reconnaissance aircraft and "met an accident."

The four ICCS delegation chiefs went into an emergency session in Saigon Sunday night. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau of Canada announced in Quebec that the Canadian contingent will not pull out as a result of the incident.

[However, Canadian External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp said in Ottawa that the downing of the helicopter did raise the question of whether the entire ICCS force should be withdrawn, UPI reported.]

The other ICCS members are Hungary, Indonesia and Poland.

An ICCS official reported the military chiefs of the four delegations were in Giolinh but had not yet received Vietcong permission to visit the crash site.

Killed in the downed aircraft were two American civilian pilots and a Filipino crewman, a Canadian, an Indonesian, two Hungarians and two Vietcong liaison officers.

The two Air America helicopters, flying for ICCS and carrying ICCS markings, disappeared over rugged mountains near the Laos border while on a flight from Hue to Laobao.

They were on an authorized reconnaissance mission in connection with setting up a peacekeeping team site at Laobao to check on the flow of Communist troops and war material into South Vietnam in accordance with the Paris peace agreement.

According to the Vietcong statement, the helicopters touched down at Giolinh to take on three Communist liaison officers, then set off on the final leg of their flight. Vietcong authorities had prescribed a flight path 24 miles

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wide, along east-west Highway 9, the statement reported.

At Huonghoa, just south of the old U.S. Marine firebase at Khe Sanh and two miles from their destination, the helicopters turned off their flight path over a mountainous area northwest of Quangri city, said the Vietcong, adding: "This area is frequently subjected to air reconnaissance and special force activities by the Saigon government and is near an area where Saigon armed forces frequently conduct grabbing operations."

At 11 a.m., said the statement, one of the helicopters "had an accident," and crashed 31 miles east of Laobao and 15.5 miles south of Highway 9. The Vietcong said all those aboard were killed.

The other helicopter landed safely in the same area, said the statement, and those aboard were given "thorough care" by local authorities.

[Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., vice chief of staff of the U.S. Army, flew to Thailand Sunday to begin a tour of Indochina and assess the situation in Cambodia where Communist forces are staging a massive offensive, United Press International reported.]

[In Thailand, he will confer with Premier Thanom Kittikachorn and visit the U.S. Air Force base at Udorn, from where the American air strikes in Cambodia are directed.]

[From Thailand, Haig will go to Vientiane to confer with Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma and then will fly to Phnom Penh for talks with Cambodian President Lon Nol. Haig also will visit Saigon before returning to Washington Thursday.]

In Honolulu, sources at the U.S. Pacific Military Command said that American heavy bombers and tactical aircraft continued to bomb suspected Communist positions and supply lines around Phnom Penh.

There were no American aircraft losses from Sunday's operations, the Pacific command sources said.

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