

# Key VC Positions Overrun North of Tan Son Nhut AB

SAIGON (UPI) — South Vietnamese paratroops overran the fortified positions of an estimated two companies of Viet Cong Friday, killing 22 of the Communist defenders in a banana grove near Saigon.

The fight erupted shortly after 8 a.m. on the outskirts of Tan Thoi Hiep village, two miles north of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. This deserted, shell-shattered farming community was the scene of a fierce clash between the paratroops and a Communist battalion two days earlier.

U.S. advisors with the paratroops said the fight may have

interrupted a Viet Cong burial ceremony for the men they lost in the previous battle. Three open graves and seven fresh ones were found by the paratroops after the battle.

The immediate area surrounding Tan Thoi Hiep has been hotly contested between the opposing forces here four times since the Communists launched their Tet offensive. American officers believe the Viet Cong want to use the village to fire rockets on the sprawling air base directly to the south.

"They've got to get in here to do any harm. This is the maximum range for their rock-

ets, if they want to hit Tan Son Nhut," Capt. Herb Lloyd of Hope, Ark., said. "We'll probably have more action around here in the next few days."

The Communist effort to gain control of Tan Thoi Hiep has cost them dearly. Since Tet, they have lost more than 200 men killed in and around the village.

Among those killed in Friday's fighting was a Communist company commander and a North Vietnamese soldier. The paratroops also captured three machine guns, 11 automatic rifles and a large assortment of rockets and ammunition.