

MISSION BOMBING CONCEDED BY U.S.

**'Mechanical Failure' Cited
in Raid Over Hanoi—
French Envoy Dies**

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 20—The Defense Department said today that it had concluded from an extensive investigation that it was an American bomb that "inadvertently struck" the French diplomatic mission in Hanoi Oct. 11.

Five persons died at the mission, which was badly damaged. Its chief diplomat, Pierre Susini, who suffered severe burns and other injuries, died last night in Paris, where he had been taken for treatment.

At the Pentagon, Jerry W. Friedheim, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, termed the bombing of the mission an accident. He said it probably resulted from a mechanical failure in a bomb release system in which a 500-pound bomb did not fall until after the plane carrying it had pulled out of its bombing dive.

At the time, he said, about two dozen Navy F-4 and A-7 jets from the carrier Midway were attacking a railroad yard and transshipment point about three miles northeast of the French mission.

Mr. Friedheim said that the

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jets flew over part of Hanoi in both approaching and leaving the target area.

The first American comment on the incident, released in Saigon, suggested the damage might have been caused by a North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile falling to earth. That notion was at first reinforced by the Pentagon, although Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird conceded that pilot error might have been involved.

Mr. Friedheim said today that none of the pilots involved in the strike admitted that his plane might have dropped a bomb off-target.

"All information now available to us from a variety of sources indicates that the French mission in Hanoi was inadvertently struck by a U.S. bomb."

Bomb Fragments Shown

Mr. Friedheim said the conclusion was reached after an extensive investigation of reconnaissance photos and reconstruction of the incident from pilot accounts and what he described as a few other sources. It was understood that the French showed various diplomats bomb fragments bearing yellow markings characteristic of American ordinance.

Mr. Friedheim said it appeared that none of the planes had been off-course and that none of the pilots mistook the

French mission for a military target. "Obviously, this was an accident and not a planned strike," he said.

A ranking Pentagon official said there had been no change in the rules of engagement as a result of the accident, but that pilots were mindful of the fact that an accident had happened and would try to avoid flying directly over diplomatic missions if future strikes were called in the same area.

A Career Diplomat

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Oct. 20—France's senior representative in North Vietnam, Pierre Susini, who died here last night from injuries suffered in the bombing of his mission nine days ago, was a 52-year-old career diplomat.

Mr. Susini had established personally cordial relations with Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam since he took over as French delegate general in Hanoi in January of last year, and was believed to have been an important intermediary in French efforts to help end the Vietnam war.

Shortly after he was rescued from the rubble of his Hanoi mission and transferred to St. Paul's Hospital, he was visited by the Premier.

Mr. Susini, who suffered third-degree burns on 55 per cent of his body, injuries on his right temple, right knee and left leg as well as internal lesions in the thorax and abdomen, was for five days in the care of four North Vietnamese physicians. He was flown back to Paris last Tuesday in a special French Government plane, attended by three French doctors, including his son Jacques.

Mr. Susini died in a military hospital in suburban Clamart.

The bombing had elicited an immediate protest on Oct. 11 to the United States by the French Government and apologies from the American Ambassador here, Arthur K. Watson, from Secretary of State William P. Rogers and from



Associated Press

Pierre Susini, died on Thursday of injuries received in the bombing.

President Nixon in a message to President Pompidou.

President Pompidou, informed today at the European summit conference here that Mr. Susini had died, expressed shock.