

# Election Affected Bomb Halt Timing

By Drew Pearson  
And Jack Anderson

It's clear to those who read the secret dispatches that the American election played a part in the timing of the bombing halt.

The South Vietnamese wanted to elect Nixon and tried to delay. The Russians figured Nixon would win, so they persuaded the North Vietnamese to make their move before the election on the assumption it would be easier to deal with President Johnson than Nixon.

The Russians became convinced in September that Nixon would win the election. Therefore they persuaded Hanoi that they would get the most favorable terms by seeking an agreement during the campaign. They argued that Mr. Johnson should be willing to end the bombing in order to help elect Hubert Humphrey.

Once the United States started down the road to peace, Soviet diplomats felt, Nixon would be unable to turn back.

The first break came on Oct. 9 when the North Vietnamese made cautious overtures to the United States at Paris. Eventually this led to the bombing halt which Mr. Johnson announced on Oct. 31.

The South Vietnamese also

had the American election in mind, however, when they refused to participate in the new peace negotiations. They remembered that Nixon, when Vice President in 1954, had favored sending U.S. ground troops to what was then French Indo-China and they figured he would take a harder line as President and save them from making the concessions which Mr. Johnson was demanding. So their leaks about the bombing pause and their refusal to attend the Paris talks were intended to prevent Humphrey from getting any political mileage from the bombing pause.

Now that the bombing has been stopped, the President next will push ahead and seek a cease-fire. He is ready to scale down the fighting in South Vietnam as fast as the enemy will do the same. He is keeping Nixon informed of these moves in considerable detail.

## The Enemy Subsides

Reconnaissance planes and spy satellites are now keeping an hour-by-hour check on military movements in North Vietnam. Electronic devices, infrared cameras and other secret gadgets are also monitoring the movement down the infiltration routes into South Vietnam. Mr. Johnson has assured his military commanders that he will resume the bombing if North Vietnam

takes advantage of the moratorium by building up its strength in the South but it looks as if this would not be necessary.

Here is the military picture today:

Enemy infiltration south has dwindled from 25,000 men in July to 2000 men moving south in October. Five of the seven North Vietnamese divisions in the South have also pulled back across the border. The demilitarized zone has been cleared of North Vietnamese units. There are no enemy concentrations within 50 miles of Saigon.

Gen. Creighton Abrams, the American commander, has acknowledged that a serious enemy offensive is now impossible and that the enemy can no longer build up for a surprise attack without our knowledge. Hit-and-run guerrilla attacks can be expected to continue, but it would seem that North Vietnam is moving in good faith towards a truce.

## Traveling in Comfort

Three Air Force generals who like to travel in comfort have fixed up a C-135 transport plane with a plush, new interior for their personal use. They are: Generals James Ferguson, Jack Merrell and Harry Goldsworthy.

They sent the plane, serial number 6122663, to Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, for remodeling. There they ordered

installed sound-proofing, interior walls, overhead lighting, bunks, reupholstered seats and an easy chair and table. The plane is also being fitted with new navigational and electronic gear.

The Air Force, when queried, stated that the generals had scrounged interior fixtures from scrapped Air Force planes and that they would be permitted to use the plane only on authorized, official trips.

## Diplomatic Pouch

Another crisis may be brewing in Berlin. Intelligence reports warn that the East Germans will begin by increasing red tape and obstructing the flow of traffic into Berlin. Several Pentagon generals have urged the Joint Chiefs of Staff that we rush another American battalion or two into Berlin as a show of strength . . . The Russians, are having almost as much trouble with Czech students as New York had with University of Columbia students or as President Diaz Ordaz had with Mexican students. There isn't much Russian troops can do with student demonstrators, unless they want to engage in wholesale shooting. It was kept a secret, but 130 Mexican students were killed by the Mexican army before student riots in Mexico were finally suppressed.