

83 Killed In Bombing Of Village

Post 3/4/67
**Unidentified Jets
Hit S. Vietnamese;
U.S. Is Investigating**

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, March 3—U.S. ordnance specialists searched the burned village of Langvei today for bomb fragments that might identify the planes that killed at least 83 villagers and wounded 200 more last night.

Two delta-wing jets cut a 400-yard path of fiery death through the village in three bombing and strafing runs in what is believed to be the worst air mistake of the Vietnam war.

Langvei, in the northwestern corner of Quangtri Province, is about a mile from the Communist-controlled region of the Laotian border. A U.S. "Green Berets" Special Forces camp is near the village.

'Air Defense Bird'

An Air Force spokesman at Danang said the only delta wing American aircraft in Vietnam is the F-102 Delta Dagger used by the Air Force.

"It is strictly an air defense bird and there were no F-120s in the area," the officer said.

The North Vietnamese have Mig-21 jets with swept wings, but they are believed based in the Hanoi area, which would place Langvei outside their operating range.

U.S. military spokesmen in Saigon believe the raid was made by American or South Vietnamese aircraft and said the likelihood the planes were Communist "is so far out it can be discounted, but it is possible."

Previous Losses

The war's worst air disaster previously occurred last Christmas Eve when an American

cargo plane crashed in the village of Dinhthai, near Danang, killing 121 civilians. Last September, U.S. Marine planes mistakenly bombed a South Vietnamese village, killing 35 persons.

More than 150 wounded were evacuated from Langvei by truck and helicopter. Most of the village's 2000 inhabitants are montagnard tribesmen.

First reports were that nearly 100 villagers had been wounded in the attack. With

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U.S. Probes Jet Bombing Of Friendly Viet Village

dawn, the dead were discovered.

Special Forces Capt. John J. Duffy, of San Diego, said the mystery jets made one non-firing pass.

"We thought they were friendlies," Duffy said. Then the planes began firing their 20-mm. cannon and Duffy ordered his men into sand-bagged bunkers. He said the planes dropped 500-lb. bombs and anti-personnel fragmentation bombs.

One of Duffy's montagnard scouts was killed trying to signal the planes by flare to break off the attack. Duffy said attempts to reach the attackers by radio also failed.

Duffy and his Special Forces men worked in the burning village through the night, treating wounded.

U.S. Marines witnessed the air attack from their camp at Khesanh, five miles away. Later, a Marine officer said \$50 would be paid in compensation for each villager killed, but added this is not an admission of responsibility for the bombing.

[At The Texas White House in San Antonio, presidential Press Secretary George Christian today termed the bombing regrettable. He said accidents are inevitable in war,

but always are occasions for regret.]

Elsewhere, 400 Marines of the U.S. 3d Marine Regiment charged through heavy fire yesterday to drive an estimated company of 120 North Vietnamese regular troops from their trenches at bayonet-point.

The fighting took place about two miles from Hill 124, only 30 miles east of Langvei. Three Marine companies, totalling about 600 men, had sustained heavy casualties in three days of bitter fighting to take the rock-strewn hill-top earlier in the week.

At least 56 North Vietnamese were killed in yesterday's two-hour battle, while the Marines suffered light casualties.

In Tonkin Gulf, the cruiser Canberra and two destroyers of the U.S. 7th Fleet yesterday shelled radar sites, anti-aircraft batteries and SAM (surface-to-air missile) sites about 13 miles north of Vinh, starting fires at the missile site. It was the first time the warships have attacked the missile installations.

In Saigon today, about 250 taxis, buses and pedicabs paraded slowly past the French Embassy, bearing placards denouncing President de Gaulle, and U.S. Sens. Robert K. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) and William Fulbright (D-Ark.) for "false peace moves." It was the fifth such demonstration in a week.