

Raids' Impact Overstated, Ex-Air Force Men Say

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number of former Air Force photo interpreters — the men who help pick future bombing targets and assess results from previous raids — believe that the military has consistently exaggerated the effectiveness of bombing results in North Vietnam.

More than a dozen former intelligence specialists were interviewed by The New York Times in the last five days and, without exception, they contended that misleading bombing claims were routinely processed at intelligence centers in Thailand, in South Vietnam and at Pacific Air Force headquarters in Honolulu.

Bradley V. Ocanber of Honolulu, a former sergeant, who left the Air Force in May after serving as a photo interpreter with the Pacific command, told of a mission in which five or six Air Force planes dropped at least 50 bombs in a futile attempt to destroy a truck, which was subsequently reported as destroyed.

"The fact is that the truck had been sitting there for six weeks and was a derelict," Mr. Ocanber said. "I went back through our reconnaissance films and saw it constantly."

Former Sgt Michael A. Lewis, who served in photo intelligence with Seventh Air Force headquarters in Saigon, said: "We used to just inflate our statistics all the time. We knew it wasn't accurate but we really didn't care."

Church Was Listed

Most of the enlisted men in his unit "were against the war and really didn't care," said Mr. Lewis, who is now a student at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

"The supervision was very poor," he added. "The major and the colonel never bothered to check us out and make sure that we were doing a good job."

"Those who were supposed to check were the sergeant and the career enlisted men, but they were more interested in the information we were putting out."

Another former intelligence specialist, in an account ver-

ified by two of his former colleagues, told of seeing a bombed-out church in the middle of a village that had been targeted by his unit at Udorn Air Force Base in Thailand.

"I could see dogs, buffalo and goats around," said the youth, who has one more month of Air Force active duty remaining, and asked not to be identified. "Most of the people had gone and the church was smoking. I was mad, but the captain said I couldn't report any villages as being hit. He doctored the report to make it look like it was a storage area."

Former Sgt Alvin R. Knoblock of Birmingham, Mich., who served with the 432d Intelligence Squadron based at Udorn, also told of occasions when he and other photo specialists would locate what they suspected were enemy tanks on reconnaissance film. "This was a pretty big thing," Mr. Knoblock said, "but it got stymied right there in headquarters."

Since the suspected tank sightings were not confirmed, Mr. Knoblock went on, the re-

ports were not sent to higher headquarters. "The officers would say it'll raise too much trouble and we'd have to make extra prints," he said.

Mr. Knoblock also said that some of the bombing in North Vietnam was extremely inaccurate, often missing its primary target by 10 miles or more. "We kept finding this one armored truck which you don't find too often," he related.

"Oh, the thing's destroyed," said, "A few days later someone got in the truck and drove it away."

Says Kissinger Was Aware

In subsequent interviews, a number of former high-ranking Government officials—some of whom served in key White House jobs during both the Johnson and Nixon Administrations — acknowledged that they had grave doubts about the quality of bombing intelligence.

"It was all so bad," one key former official said. "We are always so skeptical of all the reports. The numbers were so bad."

"Kissinger knew it as well

as anyone did," he added, referring to Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's national-security adviser.

Most of the airmen left the service well before the current bombing campaign and the mining of the harbor at Haiphong, which many senior Government officials believe are having a serious effect on North Vietnam's ability to keep sending supplies to the South.

Some of those raids have utilized the so-called "smart bombs," which are guided to their targets by laser and television technology. Most of the bombing of the North, however, has involved conventional high-explosive ordnance.