

JUN 29 1972
**Abrams Will
Be Quizzed
On Lavelle**
SFCronicle

Washington Post Service

Washington

The Senate Armed Services Committee will investigate the unauthorized bombing of North Vietnam ordered by Air Force General John D. Lavelle before it acts on the nomination of General Creighton W. Abrams as Army chief of staff, Senator John C. Stennis said yesterday.

Committee Chairman Stennis said "very serious questions of command and control, including the supremacy of civilian authority, are raised by this case."

The Lavelle investigation will pose questions for Abrams when he appears before the Stennis committee, according to congressional sources.

PUNCH

Thus, Stennis' decision to investigate Lavelle and what he did is really a one-two punch for the military command structure in Vietnam. Abrams, as over-all field commander in Vietnam, was superior to Lavelle, although the chain of command runs

See Back Page

all the way up to President Nixon.

Lavelle told the House Armed Services Committee on June 12 that Abrams knew "what I was doing" but added: "He never sat down and debated what the rules of engagement are when we got a missile site or radar."

Abrams himself has not commented publicly on the Lavelle case, so the Stennis' hearings — some of which will be open — may be his first explanation. Stennis said yesterday the Lavelle hearings will begin "shortly after the July recess," which ends July 17.

HOPE

The senator added his hope that the Lavelle hearings "can be completed within a reasonable time so that we can move to act on the pending nomination" of Abrams.

Several lawmakers have demanded further congressional investigation than the one-day hearing held by the House Armed Services Committee. Whether the civilians in the government are in control of the military is one of their expressed concerns.

"Our committee must carefully establish all the facts and determine the extent and significance of the violation or violations of the regulations," Stennis said.

Lavelle admitted before the House Armed Services committee that he stretched the rules of engagement to bomb what he considered vital military targets in North Vietnam and inspired false reports on the raids to cover violations.

RELIEF

Although General John Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff, relieved Lavelle of his command as head of the Seventh Air Force in Vietnam for allegedly violating orders, the Air Force still recommended Lavelle for promotion in retirement status.

As seventh Air Force commander, Lavelle drew the pay and other benefits of a four-star general. His permanent rank, however, was major general — a rank the Air Force wants to raise to lieutenant general in retirement. The Air Force recommendation for Lavelle's promotion is still pending before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Lavelle chose to retire from the Air Force rather than accept a lesser post in the service at lower rank. The Air Force has recommended no further action against him. The House Armed Services Committee has not yet released a report on its investigation of Lavelle.