

RAIDS APPROVED, LAVELLE INSISTS

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General Tells Senators He
Was Criticized Because
Targets Were Missed

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 15—
Lieut. Gen. John D. Lavelle
told the Senate Armed Services
Committee during testimony
this week that one month after
staging his first unauthorized
bombing raids on North Viet-
nam, he was criticized by high-
er-ranking officers—not for a
violation of rules, but because
his planes missed their targets.

A censored transcript of the
testimony before the commit-
tee, made public tonight, also
showed that General Lavelle
claimed that he had received
authority from Gen. Creighton
W. Abrams and Adm. Thomas
H. Moorer for at least a few of
the raids. In all, more than 20
raids were carried out before
President Nixon ordered sys-
tematic bombing of North Viet-
nam.

General Abrams' confirma-
tion as Army Chief of Staff has
been delayed by the committee
pending the outcome of the
Lavelle hearings. The testimony
released today shows that he
repeatedly and firmly denied
any knowledge of unauthorized
raids.

General Lavelle was retired
and demoted from full general
in April after an investigation
determined that the Seventh
Air Force, which he com-
manded, had carried out the un-
authorized raids on military

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targets in North Vietnam and
had reported them as "pro-
tective reaction" — that is,
strikes in response to enemy
fire.

The first of the contested
raids was flown on Nov. 7 and
8 and involved strikes against
three North Vietnamese air-
fields. The last unauthorized
mission was on March 8, less
than a month before President
Nixon's authorization.

In his testimony, General
Lavelle described a meeting of
the Joint Chiefs of Staff that
took place in Honolulu in early
December. At that time, he
testified, the Seventh Air Force
was urged to be more aggres-
sive and to increase the num-
ber of aircraft accompanying
reconnaissance planes, in order
to increase the punishment to
an enemy attacker.

Under the rules of protective
reaction, United States planes
could attack if the enemy fired
missiles or indicated an intent
to do so by "licking on" the
planes with missile-guiding
radar systems.

General Lavelle was asked
by Sen. John C. Stennis, the
committee chairman, whether
he had ever had any indica-
tion during the period of the
illegal strikes that "it was
known in Washington
among the high officials."

"I knew that in Washington
they wanted us to be more
aggressing, to make the the
best use we could of our intr-
pretation of the rules," Gen-
eral Lavelle replied.

Tells of Weashington Call

General Lavelle testified that
at some point after the Decem-
ber meeting — but before the
bulk of unauthorized missions
had taken place — received a
message from the Joint Chiefs
urging him to fly more recon-
naissance missions over North
Vietnamese airfields.

Still later, the general said,
a key deputy to Adm. John
S. McCain Jr., commander in
chief of the Pacific forces,
phoned him to say that "he
had been called from Washing-
ton and Washington didn't be-
lieve that we had done a good
job on hitting that airfield."
Later, General Lavelle said, he
received a cable outlining de-
tails of the complaint.

"I resolved, then," General
Lavelle said, "if we were go-
ing back to any more of these,
and if we were going to be
questioned, we had to plan
them more precisely to be sure
that we did do a good job."

Photographs Are Cited

"This was also the strike that
I gave Admiral Moorer the pho-
tographs of the following day,"
General Lavelle testified.

He said that he had dis-
cussed aspects of the raids—
against airfields at Vinh, Dong-
hai and Quanglang in North
Vietnam—with both General
Abrams, who was commander
of United States forces in South
Vietnam until last June, and
Admiral Moorer, Chairman of
the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Both
men had approved the mission,
General Lavelle testified.

The raids, which had been
carefully planned and included
a special effort to destroy a
MIG fighter on the ground at
one field, were subsequently
reported to the press as "pro-
tective reaction."

At one point, General Lavelle
had this specific exchange with
Senator Harold E. Hughes,
Democrat of Iowa, about the
granting of permission by Ad-
miral Moorer to attack the air-
field:

SENATOR HUGHES: You
planned it in order to get the
Mig—you understood that
was your mission?

GENERAL LAVELLE: Yes,
sir.

SENATOR HUGHES: And
you understood you had been
cleared to do it?

GENERAL LAVELLE: Yes,
sir.

General Lavelle also testified
that he had discussed his plan
to destroy the MIG with Gen-
eral Abrams. Much of the testi-
mony regarding the importance
of that particular MIG was cen-
sored, but Senate sources said
that the plane had apparently
been threatening a number of
B-52 bombing missions during
the fall in both Laos and South
Vietnam.

'Aware in Advance'

According to the transcript
of the hearing, Senator Hughes
asked:

"Then it seems in the in-
stance of both General Abrams
and Admiral Moorer at least
in the strike of the two air-
bases at Quang lang and Dong
hoi, they had been aware in
advance of the instance that
it was going to be made . . .
and in neither instance did they
tell you not to make the strike
without clearance?"

General Lavelle answered,
"Yes."

Admiral Moorer has denied
any knowledge of unauthorized
raids, though he has confirmed,
through a spokesman, that he
met with General Lavelle in
Saigon the day before the mis-
sion.

According to the Senate testimony, General Lavelle did not link the admiral to the later series of unauthorized raids, which began on Jan. 23, 1972. But he did repeatedly indicate that he thought that General Abrams knew of the missions.

Ive Said to Use New Radar

As General Lavelle described it, an extensive series of attacks on North Vietnamese military targets was begun in late January because the North Viet-

namese had started using an improved radar system that, in effect, made it difficult for American pilots to determine that enemy radars were "locking on"—one of the grounds for an authorized "protective reaction" strike.

The activation of the new radars, the general explained, was viewed by him as enemy action that called for "protective reaction." Such radar use was widespread during the attacks from late January to March, when the unauthorized missions were halted because of an Air Force investigation that led to his dismissal as commander of the Seventh Air Force.

Asked if he thought that General Abrams agreed with his interpretation at the time the missions were being staged, General Lavelle replied, according to the transcript, "Yes, I believe he agrees with my position."

The general added, "I did point out and did discuss with him and we did agree that the system was activated against us and that crews that were

going in there had to be protected and couldn't just stand around and wait until somebody shot one down before we could attack."

Others Said to Testify

Senate sources said, however, that other members of the Seventh Air Force testified, yesterday and today, that most of the missions in the January-March period were planned in advance against truck depots, oil stockpiles, and similar targets that apparently had little to do with the new North Vietnamese radar.

At another point, while discussing another raid whose precise date was impossible to determine because of heavy censoring, General Lavelle was asked if he thought he had cleared the mission completely with General Abrams. Yes, he replied, and added that he had told General Abrams that he had put his forces "on alert and we were going to try to get them and he agreed."

"I don't know that he told me to do it but he was well aware of it," General Lavelle testified.