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Lavelle Probe Goes To Viet

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DENVER — (AP) — Senators probing unauthorized U. S. bombing raids against North Vietnam flew to Denver today to question a second general implicated in the case.

Armed Services Committee chairman John Stennis (D-Miss.) and Sens. Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) and Peter Dominick (R-Colo.) arrived at midmorning to question Maj. Gen. Alton Slay, former Seventh Air Force deputy chief of staff for operations and now head of the special training command at Denver's Lowry Air Force Base.

Slay is recovering from a hernia operation at Fitzsimmons Hospital.

He served as deputy to Gen. John D. Lavelle, the Seventh Air Force commander who was fired after higher officials learned that he had ordered unauthorized raids.

According to Stennis, Slay was implicated in testimony Friday by Col. Charles Gabriel, commander of the 342nd Reconnaissance Wing at Udorn, Thailand, during the raids last November through March.

Twenty-eight raids involving 147 aircraft hit North Vietnamese targets under the guise of "protective reaction" before renewed heavy bombing of the north was ordered by the White House. The committee is probing the circumstances of the raids as well as the broader question of civilian control of the military.

Gabriel, said Stennis, testified behind closed doors that "the targets were to be hit whether or not there was reaction" from the North Vietnamese.

As he understood Gabriel's testimony, Stennis said, the raids "were planned in advance — hostile fire or the equivalent, or not — and he was to make reports as if they met this hostile reaction."

Gabriel was quoted as saying he received those orders from Slay via a secure phone circuit linking Udorn with Seventh Air Force headquarters at Saigon.

So far, the committee has heard from Lavelle; Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, whose nomination as Army chief of staff is being held up by the probe; Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Ryan; Gabriel, and Sgt. Lonnie Franks, whose letter to Hughes set the events in motion.