

EX-PILOT CHARGES NAVY ORDERED HIM TO BOMB IN NORTH

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But a Shipmate Contradicts Him at Senate Inquiry on 1971-72 Attacks

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 28 —

A former Navy pilot told the Senate Armed Services Committee today that pilots aboard his aircraft carrier off Vietnam in late 1971 and early 1972 had been instructed to bomb targets in North Vietnam regardless of whether they were fired upon first.

This would have been in violation of the rules of the air war at that time.

But another pilot on the same carrier told the committee that, while bombing raids were planned days in advance, the orders were to not drop the bombs if the planes were not attacked.

Resigned Commission

Senator John C. Stennis, the committee chairman, said after today's hearing that he was "deeply concerned about several matters in this whole picture." The testimony today was on expansion of hearings into charges that Lieut. Gen. John D. Lavelle of the Air Force had ordered more than 20 unauthorized raids over North Vietnam.

The first pilot to appear before the committee today was William Gregg Groepper, who resigned his lieutenant's commission and left the Navy this month after serving his four-year tour of duty.

It was a letter Mr. Groepper wrote to Senator Stennis alleging unauthorized bombing attacks that led to today's hearing.

According to Senator Stennis

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and other members of the committee, Mr. Groepper said that he and his fellow pilots aboard the aircraft carrier Constellation were given closed-circuit television briefings before their raids were to take place.

The raids were ostensibly reconnaissance missions with armed bombers accompany the reconnaissance planes in case there was an enemy attack.

Describes Three Missions

Mr. Groepper was reported to have told the Senators that the gist of the briefings before three missions in December, 1971, and January, 1972, was that the bombers were to drop their bombs even if they did not draw fire from the ground.

On two of these missions, over Quanlang airfield in North Vietnam, the planes were attacked by surface-to-air missiles and antiaircraft fire, and the bombs were unloaded, he said, while the third mission was canceled because of bad weather.

The second man to testify today was Lieut. Charles William Moore Jr., a Naval Academy graduate, now stationed in Jacksonville, Fla.

Lieutenant Moore told the Committee that he had spent a day and a half discussing his testimony with officials at the Pentagon before he appeared today.

According to the Senators, Lieutenant Moore acknowledged that the television briefings often took place as much as two days before the missions were scheduled and that the possible bombing targets were described in detail.

Lieutenant Moore was said to have told the committee that intelligence officers had told them to expect to draw enemy fire and to unload their bombs on the targets. But Lieutenant Moore also said that the pilots were told not to drop their bombs over North Vietnam if they were not fired upon.

One Senator who preferred not to be quoted by name said that there was "no question why they were flying the missions — they wanted to knock out the airstrips."

But Senator William B. Saxbe, an Ohio Republican, declared that he was convinced that the pilots had followed the rules of the war.

Before President Nixon broadened the air war in March, sites in North Vietnam were to be bombed only in reaction to enemy threats to a pilot.