

# U.S. B-57 CARRYING SECRET EQUIPMENT DOWN OVER LAOS

Command Says Ground Fire  
Hit Bomber Above the  
Ho Chi Minh Trail

ONE OF 20 REFITTED JETS

Their Flights Began Oct. 1—  
Crew Saved, Systems Are  
Believed Destroyed

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By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 13—The United States Command reported today that an American bomber with top-secret intelligence equipment had been shot down in Laos.

The announcement said that the plane, an Air Force B-57, had been hit by ground fire last night over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos.

The command said it could give no other details because of the top-secret classification attached to the plane, one of about 20 B-57s recently refitted with electronic aids, sensors, radar and navigational and weaponry systems that began combat missions over Laos on Oct. 1.

American informants said the Air Force believed the aircraft's secret detection equipment had been destroyed and had not fallen into North Vietnamese hands.

## Two-Man Crew Rescued

Sources quoted the downed pilot as saying that the "plane went down, there was a big white explosion and nothing was left but splinters." The two-man crew was rescued.

[In Pnompenh, the Cambodian command reported that the new enemy assaults on Prey Totung, 38 miles north of the capital, had been driven back with the help of air strikes.]

Earlier an F-100 was downed in Cambodia, apparently while flying a support mission for Cambodian forces under heavy attack by North Vietnamese and Vietcong in Kompong Cham Province north of Pnompenh, the capital. The pilot was picked up uninjured, the United States Command said.

## Night Missions Flown

It was the 51st United States warplane reported lost over Cambodia since April 29, when United States and South Vietnamese forces first entered that country to attack enemy sanctuaries.

The B-57 was the 75th United States aircraft reported lost over Laos since the United States Command began announcing losses there on March 10. Informants say that since 1964 about 400 United States combat aircraft have been lost in Laos.

The function of the B-57 is

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to seek out North Vietnamese night supply traffic which is elusive for conventional bombers, along the network of narrow dirt roads, river crossings, mountain passes and jungled lanes of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The B-57s are participating in the huge American air campaign that began in October to slow North Vietnamese supply traffic into Cambodia and South Vietnam during the dry season.

The Martin Marietta B-57s with the secret equipment are flown by the 13th Tactical



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B-57 bomber reported down in Laos (1) and new battle flared at Prey Totung (2).

Bombardment Squadron, which arrived at Ubon Air Base in Thailand on Sept. 30—a day before the special missions began. The squadron flew from MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

Ubon is 40 miles from the Laotian border. The twin-engine B-57s can range up to 2,000 miles at 600 miles an hour. Their armaments include two and a half tons of bombs, rockets, 20-mm. cannons and .50-caliber machine guns.

The United States Command in Saigon said field reports indicated there were no United States battlefield deaths in

Indochina yesterday, although five Americans were wounded when their patrol fought an enemy unit on the central coastal plain.

South Vietnamese headquarters said 31 North Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers were killed in four ground skirmishes in South Vietnam. Government casualties were two killed and five wounded, the South Vietnamese said.

## Rocket Attacks

Five rocket and mortar attacks inflicted light casualties on South Vietnamese forces, a spokesman said, and one civilian was reported killed and four wounded. Four of the attacks were in the Mekong Delta.

United States and South Vietnamese forces were reported to have seized two big enemy stockpiles, one south of Danang, the other north of Saigon. The larger cache was reported found by South Vietnamese soldiers on a new operation 63 miles northwest of Saigon along supply corridors leading from Cambodia. It included six flame-throwers, 10 240-mm. rocket launchers, two 60-mm. mortars, five machine guns and some ammunition.

PNOMPENH Cambodia, Dec. 13—The Cambodian Command reported that new enemy assaults on Prey Tug today

had been driven back with the help of air strikes. The town is 38 miles north of Pnompenh.

There was no report on casualties for either side in the assault, but a heavier attack yesterday killed four Cambodians and 10 North Vietnamese soldiers, the command said.

Government troops manning Pnompenh's outer defenses were attacked during the night at Rocakong, 14 miles north of the capital, the command said. There was no report on casualties.

The Cambodian Command also reported that its troops had seized Batheay, a 420-foot hill dominating Route 6 about 30 miles northeast of Pnompenh.