

# One of Lost Jets Downed Near Hanoi, Officer Admits

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY  
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 21—An informed military officer said today that at least one of the four American fighter-bombers that the North Vietnamese shot down over the weekend was destroyed inside North Vietnam east of Hanoi, and not over Laos as the United States command announced last night.

Hanoi claims to have shot down all four aircraft over North Vietnam. A spokesman for the United States command would not comment on this but he backed off somewhat from the initial official assertion that all had been lost over Laos, saying, "We all know that the aircraft were operating over Laos when the engagement began."

The informed military officer gave the following account. He said that one of the four lost supersonic F-4 Phantoms had been flying bombing missions for Laotian ground forces fighting on the Plaine des Jarres Saturday. Another F-4 there was attacked over Laos and shot down along the border by a North Vietnamese MIG-21 fighter—the first dogfight reported between MIG's and American fighter-bombers over Laos.

The first Phantom then pursued the MIG across the border into North Vietnam and back toward Hanoi when it, too, was hit, either by other MIG's, surface-to-air missiles or antiaircraft fire. It went down somewhere north of the port city of Haiphong after the two-man crew bailed out, the officer said. He said it might have been fleeing for the safety of the Tonkin Gulf and that he did not know the exact spot where it went down.

A third Phantom that had been over the Plaine des Jarres also chased the MIG after the pilot saw the plane go down into mountainous jungle on the Laos-North Vietnamese border, the account continued.

This Phantom also flew deep into North Vietnam, going north of Hanoi, but, encountering heavy opposition from other MIG's and from ground fire and missiles, circled around Hanoi and was streaking west again toward Laos when it was shot down or crashed, the officer said.



United Press International

North Vietnamese photograph released yesterday was said to show one of U.S. pilots shot down over weekend standing before newsmen and photographers Monday in

has not officially elaborated on its first statement, which acknowledged only that at least one of the jets appeared to have been downed by a MIG. The command gave the information in the middle of the night, apparently because the North Vietnamese had given out the names of four pilots they say are captive and had later broadcast the voices of two.

But officials say they still are not clear on what happened during the two hours of aerial engagements Saturday. They say they need to go over the reports and to talk to the two rescued crewmen, picked up Sunday in high winds and rain in the mountains along the Laos-North Vietnam border. A 50-plane rescue mission gave up the search for the other crew members a day later.

## Hanoi Condemns U.S.

By TILLMAN DURDIN  
Special to The New York Times

HONG KONG, Dec. 21—Bombardments of North Vietnam were condemned anew in Hanoi yesterday as four American pilots were shown at a news conference.

A report on the conference was heard here today as it was broadcast by the Hanoi radio.

The names of the pilots were given as First Lieut. Kenneth Roth Wells, 24 years

The two men in that crew bailed out over Laos and were the only airmen rescued and brought back to their base in Thailand, the officer said.

The fourth plane was shot down in Laos Sunday by North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire from the plain, and its crewmen were killed, he said.

The North Vietnamese said they had captured four American airmen—two in Hoabinh Province southwest of Hanoi, near the Laotian border, and two others in Quangninh Province, whose capital is Haiphong.

The United States command

old, Maj. Leland Louis Hildebrand, 33, First Lieut. Samuel Richard Vaughan, 27 and Maj. Kenneth Richard Johnson, 33.

The fliers were said to have been captured Saturday after their planes went down in Hoabinh and Quangninh Provinces.

Ngo Dien, head of the information and press department of the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, said that four Phantoms had been shot down while "attacking populated areas.

Mr. Dien called recent American air raids over North Vietnam "utterly grave war acts" and "an imprudent violation of the U.S. Government's commitment to cease all its bombardments in North Vietnam."

He said that the North Vietnamese Government "severely condemns the Nixon Administration and demands of it the immediate cessation of its war of aggression in Indochina."

The Hanoi spokesman said that the stepped-up American air raids were coming at a time when the United States was intensifying warfare in South Vietnam and Cambodia and engaging in "arrogant maneuvers aimed at wrecking the Paris conference on Vietnam."

A radio broadcast by the Communist-led Pathet Lao forces, meanwhile, said that United States bombing raids on

Laos had been stepped up in the past three weeks with tonnages heavily increased over the same period last year.