

# Pilots Tell of 'Shooting War' in Skies

12-30-71  
NYT

DANANG, South Vietnam, Dec. 29 (AP)—American pilots bombing North Vietnam are encountering more MIG's, surface-to-air missiles and anti-

aircraft fire than they ever have seen before in Indochina.

Three-tour veterans at this northern fighter-bomber base say that North Vietnamese air defenses are "much stronger" than they were before the 1968 bombing halt.

"There were always hot spots, but never like this," said Lieut. Col. John W. Wall, 41 years old, of Aspen, Colo. "We're seeing SAM's every day in places they were unheard-of." He added:

"Hanoi is trying to control the air over Laos as well. Hell, when I was last here Laos was so safe we used it as a training area."

Lieut. Col. John O'Gorman, 42, of St. Louis, said: "The southern part of North Vietnam is now more heavily defended than Hanoi's Red River Valley in 1966. They're putting far more MIG's in the air. Potentially, they pose the biggest threat, but so far the SAM's have been giving us the most

trouble. The MIG's steer clear of us when we're there in force."

F-4 Phantom jets based in Danang are participating in the current saturation raids over North Vietnam, along with Navy jets from carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin and Air Force fighter-bombers from bases in Thailand.

Phantom crews were permitted to speak to newsmen for the first time today, but they could not discuss specific targets, tactics, rules of engagement, plane losses or the number of MIG's and SAM's—surface-to-air missiles—sighted.

"All I can tell you is there's a real shooting war up there," said Colonel O'Gorman. "I had a SAM come so close I could almost read the tail markings. You get bandit calls all the time." Bandit calls are MIG sightings.