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U.S. Confirms Cambodia, South Vietnam Flights

NYT FILED POWS

Washington

A Pentagon spokesman confirmed yesterday that U.S. aircraft are carrying out unarmed reconnaissance flights over South Vietnam and Cambodia. He stressed that this is nothing new or secret.

But the spokesman, William Beecker, would say only "no comment" when asked about similar flights over North Vietnam.

Another authoritative Pentagon official, however, stated flatly that unarmed U.S. aircraft had been flying over North Vietnam "for some time." This could not be confirmed from other officials.

This official also acknowledged that such flights were in violation of a secret understanding between Washington and Hanoi made when the Vietnam cease-fire ac-

cords were signed in January, 1973.

"We only started the reconnaissance in North Vietnam," he said, "after we repeatedly warned them about their violations of the 1973 cease-fire accords, particularly in bringing down new men and supplies into South Vietnam."

The published version of the accords merely states that the United States will stop "all military activities" against North Vietnam. Until the end of the negotiations that led to the accords, the United States insisted that unarmed reconnaissance flights should not be precluded by this clause, the official said.

But in the final stages of the Paris peace talks, he said, "We agreed that all reconnaissance over North Vietnam 'will cease completely and definitively.'"

A number of other officials questioned by the New York Times would not comment on the issue. One did say, "I'd be careful about the difference between flying over North Vietnam and flying just north of the borders of North Vietnam."

Several administration officials confirmed that the United States shares with the South Vietnamese and Cambodian governments the information derived from reconnaissance flights. They said the flights also were used to check on violations of the cease-fire accords and to protect American military supply programs in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

The question of American reconnaissance activities in Indochina arose in the past few days when Hanoi began charging that U.S. pilots were directing South Vietnamese air attacks against

North Vietnamese forces last week.

Asked about this allegation, several administration officials said that it was highly unlikely and would be totally contrary to instructions from Washington.

New York Times