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**A Report of  
 U.S. Raids on  
 Pullout Day**

By *George McArthur*  
*Los Angeles Times*

**Hong Kong**

American planes conducted heavy bombing raids in South Vietnam on the last day of the American evacuation from Saigon, according to authoritative sources.

The raids were mounted at least partly from bases in Thailand.

The raids were of such magnitude and sensitivity that they were almost certainly cleared personally by President Ford.

Despite congressional strictures against direct American military involvement in South Vietnam, the raids were ordered on that final day of April 29 when the evacuation of Saigon was clearly in peril.

They were evidently intended to demonstrate conclusively to Hanoi that the United States lacked neither the will nor the strength to protect the evacuation.

"It was a very heavy commitment," said one source with access to official action reports.

(In Washington yesterday, the New York Times quoted administration officials as saying that an American fighter-bomber had made "one tactical air strike" against a Vietnamese Communist missile site near Saigon that day.

(But the officials denied that they had been any

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heavy bombing raids, according to the newspaper.

(A high-ranking State Department official said the plane attacked an anti-aircraft missile site after Communist forces fired missiles at American aircraft; the New York Times reported.)

It is not known whether agreement was obtained from the government of Thailand to use the bases for the raids.

Only two weeks later the Thais protested strongly when the bases were involved as a staging area for marines flown in to support the U.S. response to Cambodia's seizure of the American freighter *Mayaguez*.

The raids were conducted in top secrecy.

They have not become known until now because they were directed at military installations in remote areas and, for reasons of their own, the North Vietnamese authorities have not publicized the attacks.

These were the first and only known bombing raids by American planes within South Vietnam since the Paris cease-fire agreements were signed in January, 1973.

They were conducted largely against missile sites protecting Communist supply bases deep in jungle areas. These sites roughly paralleled Communist supply routes along the Laotian and Cambodian borders.

Hanoi's seeming reluctance to publicize the raids may stem partly from the fact that the installation of radar-directed missiles in these areas was in direct violation of the Paris agreements.

Another possible target was the petroleum pipeline system that North Vietnam had extended well south of the central highlands during the period after the Paris agreements. At any rate, the North Vietnamese are known to be having difficulties with the pipeline system, and these difficulties were not evident before the bombing.

It is not known whether any American planes or pilots were lost or hit during the one-day bombing operation.

On that final day, American authorities announced that jets from the American naval force off the Vietnamese coast were "covering" the evacuation. These planes were seen in the Saigon area and over the helicopter corridor from Saigon to the South China Sea.

On at least one occasion the jets buzzed a helicopter evacuation site near Saigon that appeared to be threatened. They may also have made a few strafing runs on those occasions when some American evacuation helicopters did receive ground fire.

However, the widespread bombing raids appear to have been made by air force planes from Thailand. These were from the base at Udorn and the main headquarters field at Nakhon Phanom.

At that time American air strength in Thailand amounted to about 350 planes, about half of these being jet fighter-bombers available for combat.

The raiding aircraft may also have involved F-111 aircraft based at Khorat. However, available sources were unable to confirm this.