

McCloskey Blames Nixon For Destruction in Laos

Washington

Representative Paul McCloskey (Rep.-Calif.) charged yesterday in a CBS-TV interview that United States bombers may have deliberately destroyed thousands of villages in Laos.

McCloskey also suggested that limitations on U.S. air attacks may have been relaxed after President Nixon took office and a new ambassador, G. McMurtrie Godley, was appointed.

Fresh from a brief tour in Southeast Asia, McCloskey said his findings had increased his determination to raise the issue of air power, possibly by running against President Nixon in Republican presidential primaries next year.

McCloskey, interviewed on the "Face the Nation," said he and Representative Jerome Waldie (Dem.-Calif.) interviewed 16 separate groups of refugees from seven destroyed villages. "Without exception," he said, "they described that every home in their village had been destroyed by American air power in 1968 or 1969."

PROGRAM

He said that "... for a period of some 18 months in 1969, 1968 and 1970, and we're not sure which ones yet, that we pursued a program of deliberately destroying Laotian villages. There are some 9400 villages in Laos, and it looks to me like we may have destroyed thousands of them."

Asked why he suspected "thousands" of villages had been deliberately destroyed, McCloskey said he had asked Air Force authorities to produce photographs showing which villages still exist. "They produced none," he said.

"They fly aerial reconnaissance flights over all of northern Laos ... their inability or their refusal to produce any pictures at all causes me to want to pursue this inquiry further, because these seven villages with which we talked, every house had been destroyed by American bombing in '68 and '69."

The United States has acknowledged that air attacks in support of Royal Laotian troops have been carried out against communication lines of North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces operating in

northern Laos and the Plain of Jars region to which McCloskey referred. President Nixon said a year ago that the air operations had increased over the years in response to increased North Vietnamese activities.

LIMITS

McCloskey said he was told that military orders prevent U.S. planes from attacking within 500 meters of a village but claimed his researches proved these orders were not being followed.

He said that former U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan had taken "meticulous

steps" to protect the villages but added that "it appears that after Ambassador Godley became ambassador ... the rules of engagement were relieved ..."

The Congressman referred several times to air attacks in both 1968 and 1969. Godley was not appointed ambassador until May, 1969. Mr. Nixon had taken office the previous January.

Asked directly if he believed Godley ordered a deliberate destruction of Laotian villages, McCloskey replied, "I'm not yet prepared to say that."

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