

McCloskey Says U.S. Hid Extent of Laos Bombings

By JOHN W. FINNEY
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WASHINGTON, April 21—Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr. said today that the State Department had deliberately concealed the extent to which American planes had bombed villages in northern Laos.

The California Republican, has threatened to oppose President Nixon for the Republican nomination next year, made his charge, on the basis of a recent trip to Laos, in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, headed by Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

The charge was quickly taken up by Senator Kennedy, who contended there was a direct relationship between the growth of Laotian refugees and the increases in American bombing in Northern Laos, starting in early 1969.

'Bloodbath' Is Seen

In opening a new series of hearings by his subcommittee, Senator Kennedy said that American military activities in Indochina, especially the unrestricted air war—were contributing to a "bloodbath" and



Associated Press

Ambassador William E. Colby, head of the pacification program in Saigon, before the Senate subcommittee on refugees.

"agony" among "a rapidly growing number of civilians in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia."

The Kennedy hearings, combined with hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on "how to end the war," were reviving the Vietnam debate on Capitol Hill, but with a new emphasis upon the morality of American actions.

"We cannot allow the specter of a highly dubious 'bloodbath' of the future to blind us from that is going on today—every day—in Vietnam and all of Indochina," Senator Kennedy said. "This 'bloodbath' started long ago—and we are part of it—and it will continue as long as the war continues, so long as efforts to end that war are avoided and delayed.

"No one here disagrees that the insurgents of Indochina are also contributing to this 'bloodbath.' But the question for most Americans today is how much longer will we tolerate policies by our Government which make easy the killing and maiming of millions?"

The Laos bombing charge, which Mr. McCloskey has been developing ever since he returned last weekend from an eight-day trip to Indochina with Representative Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, following the pattern of questioning the morality of United States involvement in Indochina. The Congressmen spent three days in Laos.

State Department View

In testimony last spring and summer before the Kennedy subcommittee, the State Department maintained that United States bombing operations in northern Laos were carefully controlled to avoid hitting villages. The department also contended that bombing had been a relatively minor factor in generating refugees.

Mr. McCloskey reported that much the same position had

been taken by G. McMurtrie Godley, the American Ambassador to Laos, and his staff at a dinner in the Ambassador's home on April 13. But the next day, he said, "a young political officer" in the embassy suggested that he obtain a United States Information Service report on a survey of attitudes among Laotian refugees, taken in June and July.

Mr. McCloskey made public a copy of the report on interviews with more than 200 refugees from 96 villages in the Plaine des Jarres area in northern Laos. The survey concluded that "the bombing is clearly the most compelling reason for moving," that 75 per cent of 190 Laotians interviewed said their homes had been damaged by bombing and that 76 per cent said the bombing attacks had taken place in 1969.

The hearing room was with Vietnam veterans on Washington this protest the war. This Senator nedy clashed repeatedly William E. Colby, who charge of the pacification rural development South Vietnam, over there had been an improve in the refugee situation. Mr. Colby said the problem had decreased "mously" in the last two or years, partly because of ing security in the and partly because of country term efforts of the government to rebuild a society.

But Senator Kennedy maintained that 150,000 new refugees had been created since November, largely as a result of United States supported military and relocation operations by the Saigon Government. The refugee rate, the Senator maintained, was now running at the highest level since the Communist Tet offensive in the spring of 1968.

'A Lie,' Veteran Says

When Mr. Colby observed at one point that "the single most important source of refugees in the past three years has been the Tet offensive," goans went up from the Vietnam veterans and one shouted out: "That's a lie!"

The veterans groaned when Dennis Doolin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, in supporting a Colby assertion that the military was under instructions to restrict firepower so as to protect the civilian population, said American forces were "precluded" from conducting "reconnaissance by fire."

When Senator Kennedy asked whether there might be another definition for the tactic of firing into an area to flush out the enemy, several of the veterans shouted out "Murder!" and "Genocide!"

For the most part, however, the veterans listened in silence as Mr. Colby described the progress in the refugee and the Vietnamization programs. Occasionally, however, Senator Kennedy had to gavel them to silence.