

# U.S. Ends Its Stepped-Up Raids on North

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 17 — More than 100 American warplanes, flying through intense antiaircraft fire, completed today a 29-hour series of attacks on North Vietnamese artillery in and just north of the demilitarized zone, the United States command reported.

Ten antiaircraft and missile sites inside North Vietnam were also tacked by Air Force and Navy planes with bombs and rockets in the course of the strikes against the artillery positions.

The Hanoi radio said that a total of seven American planes were shot down in the last two days in the demilitarized zone, which straddles the border between the two Vietnams, and in the province directly north of it. It said "many pilots" had been killed or captured.

## One Loss Is Reported

The United States command, which releases information on downed planes only after search-and-rescue efforts end, acknowledged that at least one Air Force F-4 fighter-bomber had been shot down, probably by one of the 13 Soviet-built missiles that pilots said had been fired from the round at the attacking planes. The two-man crew of the F-4 was listed as missing.

The attack was carried out, the command says, because of a build-up by the North Vietnamese of long-range 130-mm. artillery in the northern half of the demilitarized zone and an area just north of it, mostly in the coastal plain.

American officials have been saying for months that they expect the enemy to launch a large-scale offensive in February on the form of simultaneous attacks on South Vietnamese Army bases just below the demilitarized zone and in the Central Highlands farther south, timed to detract from President Nixon's stay in China, which takes place next week.

## Have Range of 17 Miles

Five of the 130-mm. guns, which have a range of 17 miles and can outshoot all but the 12 175-mm. guns that the South Vietnamese army has, were reported damaged or destroyed during the air strikes, which began at 1 P.M. yesterday and ended at 6 P.M. today [5 A.M. New York time].

## 2 Launchers Reported Destroyed

This air campaign, the largest series of strikes since the unsuccessful five-day raids on North Vietnamese airfields and storage depots at the end of December, was reportedly ordered only recently, with White house approval, to be completed before President's departure toay from Washington. The raids ended several hours before Mr. Nixon and his party took off.

In separate air actions, two antiaircraft positions elsewhere in North Vietnam were attacked

after they reportedly fired at American planes bombing nearby sections of the Communist supply network across the border in Laos.

Also, two enemy missile launchers in southern Laos were reported destroyed. One was just across the North Vietnamese border below the Ban-karai Pass, and the other, on the supply trail complex northeast of the junction of Tchepone.

The 29-hour raids were the latest phase of a heavy bombing campaign against North Vietnamese base areas that began last Thursday, after the Navy bolstered its aircraft-carrier striking force in the Gulf of Tonkin to three ships, the level it maintained at the height of the war in 1968, and more B-52's were sent from the United States to bases in Guam and Thailand.

The campaign, which has included the heaviest air strikes in two years inside South Vietnam and across the borders in Laos and Cambodia, continued with six B-52 missions and 61 strikes by fighter-bombers inside South Vietnam in addition to the more than 100 strikes on North Vietnam and unspecified numbers of others on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia and Laos.

In contrast to the greatly increased American air activity of the last week, which is said to be directed against a record North Vietnamese build-up, enemy action in South Vietnam

remained very light, with only one sizable attack reported, a mortar barrage and a ground assault on a South Vietnamese base camp 16 miles south southeast of Hue. It was repelled, and the defenders suffered eight wounded.

## 2 G.I.'s Killed in Week

SAIGON, Feb. 17 (UPI)—Two American soldiers were killed in action last week, bringing to 21 the number of United States combat deaths in Indochina this year, the United States command reported today.

The command said the death toll was the same as the previous week. Twenty-eight Americans were wounded in the week ended Saturday, a drop of three from the week before.

The latest figures raised American casualty totals in the war to 45,648 killed and 302,630 wounded.

The South Vietnamese command reported 360 Government soldiers killed during the week, a sharp rise from the 205 the week before. It said 948 were wounded last week, compared with 718 the week before. A total of 133,344 South Vietnamese soldiers have been reported killed in the war.

The allied commands reported that 1,105 enemy soldiers had been killed during the week, a drop from 1,305 the week before. A total of 732,826 enemy soldiers have been reported killed during the war.