

Raids Continue; 'All North Viet a Target'

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'Haiphong Mines Not Ruled Out'

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WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Melvin Laird said today he would not rule out mining Haiphong harbor or establishing a naval blockade of North Vietnam to blunt the Communist invasion of the South.

Laird responded with a terse "Yes" when asked by Sen. J. W. Fulbright if any thought was being given to these possibilities. Laird was testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by the Arkansas Democrat, a longtime critic of policy in Vietnam.

The Defense Secretary said there are many contingency plans and noted that these two possibilities had been discussed by the previous administration. But when pressed by Fulbright if they were merely old contingency plans, Laird said: "I would not rule it out."

In a four and a half hour appearance before the committee, Laird said that "any area of North Vietnam, as long as the invasion continues, is subject to attack."

No Statement on Bombs

But he declined to state specifically whether the aerial bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area was continuing.

"I am not going to outline target areas," he said, adding that U. S. air power is being used in the North, in the South and within the demilitarized zone dividing the two Vietnams.

Prior to the committee session, Laird told newsmen there was no substance to reports that President Nixon has suspended the bombing of North Vietnam's heartland to see if Hanoi backed off from its offensive in the south. The reports were attributed to official U.S. military sources in Saigon who

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continued to insist that this was the policy.

Secretary of State William Rogers said yesterday the President would take whatever steps were necessary — short of reintroducing ground troops or using nuclear weapons — to thwart the North Vietnamese offensive.

Laird said the Hanoi-Haiphong area bombing was necessary to protect U.S. troops.

Irresponsible

As for the suspended Vietnam peace talks in Paris, Laird said it was "the height of irresponsibility" to talk about resuming them while the North Vietnamese were still pursuing what he called their invasion of South Vietnam.

Laird said if North Vietnamese divisions withdrew, "then, the suggestion of negotiations would be a viable alternative."

"As long as the violations are continuing," he said, "talk about further negotiations at this time is the height of irresponsibility."

Authorized

The White House declined to respond directly to questions about the bombing and other phases of U.S. military operations in Vietnam. Gerald Warren, deputy press secretary, said Laird was "stating the authorized position of the United States government," and added: "It will not be stated by any sources in Saigon or elsewhere."

In his testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee, Laird also said the U.S. naval buildup would continue as "absolutely essential and urgent" insurance to protect remaining American troops in South Vietnam.

Laird was subjected to close questioning by members of the committee—who

voted yesterday in favor of cutting off U.S. financing of the war at the end of this year. He testified in a public session after appearing earlier in the morning at a private session of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Responding to questions by Fulbright, Laird said American commanders in Vietnam had the authority to order air attacks "below the Demilitarized Zone, in the DMZ and above the DMZ," and he said those raids were continuing.