

Why the Bombing Of North Vietnam?



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Jack Anderson

PRESIDENT NIXON ordered the bombing of the North Vietnamese heartland as much to impress Moscow as to deter Hanoi.

He wanted the Kremlin to understand his quest for peace doesn't mean he can be "pushed around."

In his private conversations, he has declared fiercely that he wants to lower tensions around the world and win reelection in November, but that he won't abandon America's commitments to achieve these goals.

Mr. Nixon has expressed admiration for the late President John F. Kennedy for facing down the Russians during the Cuban missile crisis, and he is prepared to do it again if another confrontation should develop.

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SECRET intelligence reports suggest that Hanoi expected the anti-war pressures in the United States to keep American air-sea power at bay after the assault across the demilitarized zone. But Hanoi underestimated Mr. Nixon, who never hesitated to strike massive air blows against North Vietnam.

Earlier, he had made secret overtures through both Moscow and Peking to bring pressure on the North Vietnamese to call off the offensive. Chinese Premier Chou En-lai reportedly tried to persuade the North Vietnamese not to risk a military showdown, but they went ahead with the offensive in spite of the advice from Peking.

The Russians, on the other hand, re-

fused to discourage the attack. Intelligence reports claim that the Kremlin, while it didn't go so far as to encourage Hanoi to invade South Vietnam, had advance knowledge of the invasion plans. The attackers also used Soviet-made tanks, artillery and anti-aircraft missiles.

The President believes the Kremlin could have prevented the invasion by threatening to cut off military supplies. He intends to demonstrate his resolve, therefore, by shutting off the supplier himself, if possible, with a blizzard of bombs.

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THE Central Intelligence Agency has warned all along that bombing will never stop the needed supplies from reaching Communist forces in South Vietnam. General Creighton Abrams, the U.S. Commander in Vietnam, has agreed that the supplies for the present offensive were stockpiled in advance.

But he has warned that Hanoi has the power to continue a prolonged offensive. Twelve of North Vietnam's regular divisions are now fighting in the south. Another division is reported on the way to the front. This leaves only two training divisions at home.

Once the lines become stabilized, Abrams has suggested, the Vietnam War may become a protracted, Korea-style conflict. He recommended the bombing of supply depots around Hanoi and Haiphong, therefore to disrupt enemy logistics and to reduce the supplies that will reach front-line troops in the months ahead.