

Bombing Is 'Just a Job'

Anderson AFB, Guam

The roar of the B-52 going down the runway en route to another bombing raid on North Vietnam seems far away as Captain Larry Earle says quietly: "None of us goes out there thinking that he is actually going to kill people."

"We don't dwell on thoughts like that," adds the 28-year-old pilot from Seattle. "We are trained for a long time and these missions are just an extension of that. This is just a job."

Fellow members of Earle's crew, gathered around a picnic table outside their quarters at Anderson Air Force Base, nod assent.

Stationed at Westover AFB, Mass., they are among hundreds of flyers who arrived on this tiny, sun-baked island a month ago to rein-

force the Air Force's normal contingent when the United States resumed the bombing of North Vietnam.

Now, the rumble of B-52s, and other aircraft taking off from the base, breaks the tropical tranquility with regularity throughout the night and day.

Six hours of flying time away lie the bombers' targets, pin-points on a map.

"We are up so high when we drop our bombs we don't know what it is we're hitting," says Earle. "We have no windows, of course, and if we did we couldn't see anything. It's almost a sterilized atmosphere."

He adds:

"This is an electronic war. They don't see us and we don't see them. You can understand it's not the same thing as fighting on the ground."

The team's navigator, Major Bud Wagner, 36, of Eire, Pa., nods in agreement.

"We don't question the decisions about where we will bomb or anything else about it," Wagner says. "We just go."

Major Dave Saunders, 34, of Gardner, Mass., the team's electronic warfare officer, adds:

"We don't carry the responsibility for these raids. We figure that the moral issue has been resolved before it gets down to us. We are just the instruments of that decision."

Another plane lifts off the runway and points toward its far - away target. Saunders watches it go and then declares matter-of-factly:

"It's not our decision to bomb or not to bomb. We are just doing our job like anyone else." *Associated Press*