

Bombing of North Termed Highly Effective by U.S.

Accurate Laser-Guided Bombs Believed Freely Used—Pentagon Planning to Add More Industrial Targets

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By CHARLES MOHR MAY 24 1972
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, May 24—For four days American bombers have reportedly struck North Vietnam with great intensity and apparently unusual effectiveness.

Military spokesmen said yesterday that difficult targets such as bridges, which had been hard to hit in previous years, had in many cases been knocked out in single raids. As a result of these reports, it seemed likely that American pilots were freely employing what they call "smart bombs"—bombs guided by laser beams.

More than 1,000 sorties were flown against North Vietnam in the three-day period from 5 P.M. Friday to 5 P.M. Monday, a statement by the United States command said. Unofficial sources added that sorties, or single-plane attacks, were also on a heavy scale yesterday.

Targets bombed on Saturday, the command said, included an electrical transformer station eight miles northwest of Hanoi, and "preliminary reports indicated that five large secondary explosions resulted from the strike." [In Washington, the Defense Department

said that more industrial sites would be added to the target lists of United States planes, which until now had concentrated on military targets in their raids on North Vietnam.]

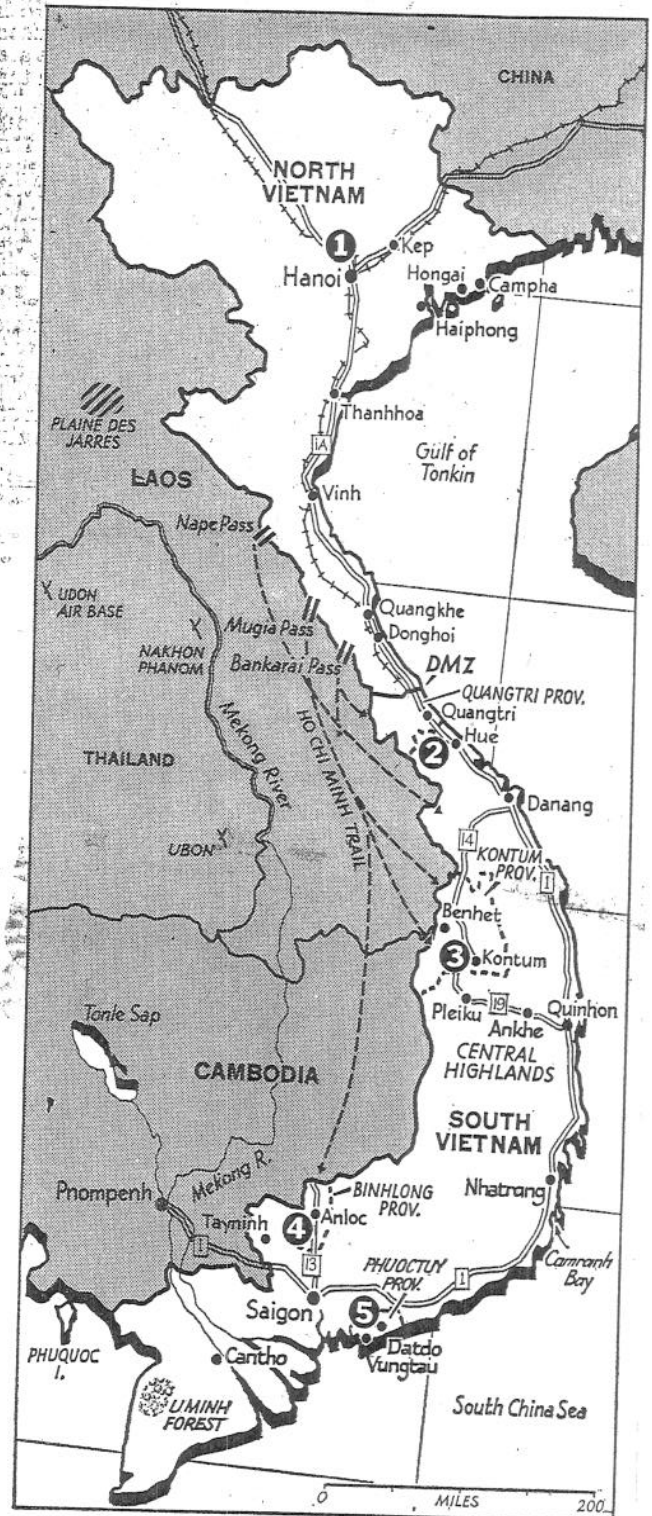
The command said Air Force Phantom fighter-bombers destroyed six bridges Monday on the rail lines connecting Hanoi with China.

In the period since Friday afternoon, the command reported, at least 13 other North Vietnamese rail and highway bridges were bombed, and four of them were destroyed. The others, the command said were "hit," or "struck" or damaged.

In South Vietnam, where the Communist offensive was nearing the end of its eighth week, the First North Vietnamese Division was said to have entered Kiengiang Province in the Mekong Delta from southern Cambodia. Only two-thirds of the Government's Ninth Division is left to protect the entire western delta area, along with regional forces and independent units.

There were also signs that after almost two months of conventional fighting near the

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U.S. jets struck at a power station near Hanoi (1) and knocked out six bridges on rail line to China. An enemy force reportedly was battered near Hue (2). Fighting continued near Kontum (3). Garrison at Anloc (4) fought attackers. Foe harassed area east of Saigon (5).

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South Vietnamese borders, the Communists were beginning to use Vietcong and infiltrated North Vietnamese forces to harass weakly defended positions deep within South Vietnam.

The situation in Phuoc Tuy Province just east of Saigon was serious enough that American troops going on rest and rehabilitation leaves in the resort and beach town of Vungtau had been ordered to take rifles and flak jackets, a military officer said.

Other developments in the war included the following:

On the northern front, allied sources said that North Vietnamese infantry and tank forces, which had crossed the Mychanh River just northwest of Hue, were being pushed back into a small area with the sea at their back and were being "mopped up." Reports of the number of North Vietnamese amphibious PT-76 tanks destroyed has varied from 16 to 21 in recent days. One tank was reported destroyed yesterday.

At the battered town of Anloc, 60 miles north of Saigon, North Vietnamese riflemen and tanks again drove from the west and northeast, occupying small salients in the town. By afternoon the long-isolated troops of the South Vietnamese Fifth Division defending the Binhlong Province capital had reportedly destroyed three tanks and retaken a considerable part of the enemy positions. About 1,000 North Vietnamese artillery shells were said to have wrecked the town.

A rescue force trying to reach the garrison in Anloc fought a separate battle and reportedly remained stalled about one mile south of town. The relief column, led by the 15th Regiment of the 21st Division and crack airborne troops, knocked out seven "tracked vehicles," which could include tanks and armored cars, and killed 57 North Vietnamese, an

American military source said. The thick foliage of the rubber plantations just south of Anloc were evidently hampering movement of the Government forces.

Fighting continued in the Central Highlands on the outskirts of the encircled city of Kontum where South Vietnamese troops reported they held their ground and killed 47 enemy soldiers and found 110 bodies of North Vietnamese killed by air strikes. A Government force trying to move up Route 14 to Kontum from Pleiku was said to be making slow progress.

The reports of unusually effective bombing of targets in North Vietnam in recent days contrast with many of those of the late nineteen-sixties when some bridges withstood three years of bombing beginning in 1965. A common phrase in military reports of that period was that pilots had "cratered the approaches," meaning they missed.

The guided bombs apparently employed in a number of raids weigh 2,000 to 3,000 pounds.

In most cases, it is said, one plane focuses a laser beam on the target and a second "throws" the bomb so that it bisects the beam and, through internal guidance mechanisms, rides the beam down.

The summary of recent northern bombing indicated that seven surface-to-air missile sites had been among the targets that were attacked. Eight missiles and two radar guidance vans were reported destroyed, with some fires set.

Among the more than 1,000 other targets reported struck were several fuel dumps, oil pipelines and pumping stations, railroad sidings, warehouses, trucks and truck convoys and shipping on inland waterways. Naval shelling of coastal targets by United States ships was also reported.

By JUAN M. VASQUEZ

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 23—The Defense Department said today

that more industrial sites in North Vietnam would be added to the target lists of American planes.

This widening of the air campaign, which until now has concentrated on military targets and suspected military targets such as petroleum storage depots, railroad yards and army barracks, was made known by the Pentagon spokesman, Jerry W. Friedheim.

Asked for details about the bombing over the weekend of an electrical transformer station eight miles northwest of Hanoi, Mr. Friedheim said: "I certainly would not rule out any sort of industrial target that supports the enemy's war effort."

Last Thursday, Mr. Friedheim said that "our efforts remain limited to military targets," but officials in Saigon made public a list of North Vietnamese targets bombed over the weekend that included the power plant.

'Very Extensive Campaign'

At the height of the 1967-68 air war over North Vietnam, a number of power plants were knocked out by American bombers, but such sites have not been reported on target lists since.

"This is a very extensive campaign over the North and it is ongoing," Mr. Friedheim said.

"Those power plants, as you know," he continued, "provide power for the air defense system and for the communication system, for things like railroad yards and transshipment points and warehouse areas and army barracks, and the effort will continue in a major way."