

# War Foes See No Evidence Of Deliberate Dike Attacks

NYTimes

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH JUN 24 1972  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 23 — A number of well informed critics of the Vietnam war, including some men still serving in the Government, said in interviews today that there was no evidence to support repeated assertions by Hanoi that the United States had been deliberately bombing dikes and dams in North Vietnam.

The interviews were conducted in response to yesterday's renewed charges by the North Vietnamese, one of a series since the air war was renewed in April, that the waterways in the north are being systematically destroyed by United States bombs.

Vo Van Sung, a member of the North Vietnamese delegation at the peace talks, said at a news conference in Paris that United States aircraft had attacked dikes 68 times from April 10 through June 10, dropping 665 bombs along the Red River and other waterways.

## Appeal to the World

Mr. Sung appealed for world opinion to help stop what he called a "premeditated" effort by the United States to destroy the dikes before the heavy rains that begin in North Vietnam in July.

"I know for a fact that the target lists do not include dikes," one well-informed former official said. "If we wanted to bomb them, we would."

This official, who just recently left the Government, said that the United States had "too little to gain from such a risk." The source, who had access to most intelligence material while in the Government, added that the occasional bombing of a dike, whether by error or because of a pilot's violation of rules, was impossible to rule out.

"In fact," he said, "we had some photos earlier this year of dikes that were hit, but I just can't believe it was done by policy."

Two former photo intelligence specialists for the Air Force also said in interviews that to their knowledge the waterways of North Vietnam were never targets for destruction.

Former Sgts. Bradley V. Ocanber and Miles Yoshida, both of whom served with the Pacific Air Force headquarters in Honolulu, said they had never seen any reconnaissance photos depicting any systematic damages to North Vietnamese dikes.

Hanoi's complaints about the bombing of waterways have on occasion been extremely specific.

For example, a broadcast on May 30 quoted a spokesman for the Ministry of Water Conservancy in North Vietnam as alleging that in Thanhhoa Province, some 100 miles south of Hanoi, "for many times in a day of April 19, 20, 24, 26 and 27, and May 13, 17, and 18, U.S. aircraft attacked the irrigation works, dropping a total of 158 big-sized bombs on the embankments of the Ma and Len rivers in Hoanghoa, Dongson, Theiuhoa, Vinhloc, and Hatrung districts."

## Denials by Pentagon

The Pentagon has repeatedly denied all such charges. Asked about the allegations during a recent news briefing, Lieut. Gen George J. Eade, Deputy Chief of Operations for the Air Force, said, "We haven't targeted any dikes and to my knowledge we haven't accidentally hit any dikes which have caused any problem."

Military men offer two explanations for the repeated North Vietnamese accusations.

An Air Force general suggested that North Vietnam, "is trying to obtain world support to put the pressure on us as they did in 1968 to halt the bombing."

The general acknowledged that some bombs might have accidentally landed on river embankments or near dams. "Anything is possible," he said, "but I think it's highly improbable."

Daniel Z. Henkin, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, said in an interview that he believed "Hanoi might be making these allegations so that they could claim, if there were any floods caused by natural phenomenon, that they resulted from the erroneous charges that we have been bombing dikes."

"If there are floods in North Vietnam," Mr. Henkin added, "and I hope to God there will not be, they would be acts of God and not as a result of any targeting of dikes or dams."

Fred R. Branfman, director of Project Air War, a leading anti-war group in Washington, acknowledged that "we have no independent verification" of the Hanoi charges.

"Non one is going to be stupid enough to target dikes," Mr. Branfman added, "particularly since it's a known war crime. But there is a paucity of targets left in North Vietnam and an awful lot of planes going up. Its inevitable that pilots are going to want to bomb lucrative targets."

The Pentagon Papers show that during the first bombing campaign in 1965 and 1966 the systematic destruction of North Vietnam's waterways was proposed. This was rejected by then Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.

Mr. McNamara said at one point in 1967 that "there may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go."