

370 AIR STRIKES HIT NORTH IN DAY

Raids, Believed Heaviest in
Year, Linked to Weather

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Friday, Aug. 18 — American fighter-bomber pilots reportedly flew more than 370 strikes against North Vietnam on Wednesday in what appears to have been the heaviest day of raids of the year.

The stepped-up attacks, American military officers said, were made because of improved flying weather over North Vietnam. The raids were completed just before the arrival in Saigon of Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser for national security, to confer with President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The highest number of strikes previously reported for a single day this year was 340. For the first six weeks after bombing was renewed in April, strikes were reported collectively for periods of three to seven days, but none of the daily averages then exceeded 370.

Air Force and Navy commanders say that as the air war is being waged under President



The New York Times/Aug. 18, 1972

U.S. jets bombed North Vietnamese targets near Hanoi (1) and Vinh (2). B-52's struck at Donghoi area (3). Fighting continued at Quangtri (4).

Nixon they are given a broad list of targets to hit and "given the flexibility to make the daily decision" on exactly when and where to strike, based on such military considerations as the weather and the availability of aircraft and pilots.

Steady Pressure on North

They say that they have been trying to maintain constant, steady pressure on North Vietnam, in an effort to choke off the flow of supplies to the battlefields in South Vietnam.

However, much of North Vietnam, especially the Hanoi-Haiphong area, has been covered by low-hanging clouds for the last two weeks and on some days the number of strikes has slipped from the average of 300 to below 200.

A senior Air Force officer said that the weather was still "marginal" in the "higher latitudes" on Wednesday and that the northernmost strike was against a radar station 13 miles south of Hanoi.

"If we get a good clear day I think you're going to see the number of strikes go even higher," he said.

The targets under attack on Wednesday were much the same as on any day in the air war—trucks, barges, bridges, warehouses, radar equipment, air defenses and barracks.

Altogether Air Force and Navy pilots were credited with knocking out 42 trucks, including a group of 14 that Navy pilots said they wound parked and covered with foliage 58 miles north-northwest of Vinh.

Training Area Attacked

Air Force pilots said they attacked the Xuan Mai military training complex 17 miles southwest of Hanoi and destroyed several buildings.

In addition to the fighter-bomber strikes, the United States spokesman also reported eight attacks by B-52 bombers against supply dumps ranging 4 to 36 miles from Donghoi, in the southern part of North Vietnam and three others in the demilitarized zone. The eight-engine planes usually fly in formation of three and each plane can carry up to 30 tons of bombs.

There were 24 B-52 missions reported in South Vietnam aimed at troop and staging areas. The targets reflected the trouble spots either where ground fighting in recent weeks has focused or where it is expected: Quangtri Province in northernmost South Vietnam, the hills west of Hue, the northern part of Binhdin Province on the central coast and Dinh-tuong Province in the Mekong Delta.

Bitter, close range fighting continued in the vicinity of Quangtri city and government troops reported that enemy forces fired nearly 1,800 rounds of rocket, artillery and mortar fire at them. They reported suffering only light casualties.