

MAIN HANOI BRIDGE REPORTED BOMBED

SEP 12 1972

3 Sections of Longbien, the Key Supply Link to China, Are Reported Wrecked
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, Sept. 12—United States Air Force jets have bombed the major railroad and highway bridge in downtown Hanoi, the American military command said yesterday.

The command's reports of the raids Sunday said that three spans of the 5,600-foot Longbien Bridge over the Red River were destroyed and that another three were damaged. American jets also bombed storage and support buildings and barracks two to four miles from the North Vietnamese capital Sunday, the command said.

One Plane Reported Lost

The Longbien Bridge—also known, since French colonial days, as the Paul Doumer Bridge—was last bombed on May 10 and 11, but had since been repaired. The heavy bombings were apparently prompted by reports of a continuing flow of military equipment and supplies, such as petroleum products, over the roads and rail lines from southern China into North Vietnam. The bridge is the main link between Hanoi and those supply lines.

The American communiqué said that Air Force and Navy jets flew more than 320 strikes on North Vietnam Sunday and that one plane, a Navy A-7, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile 14 miles southwest of

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Hanoi. The pilot was listed as missing.

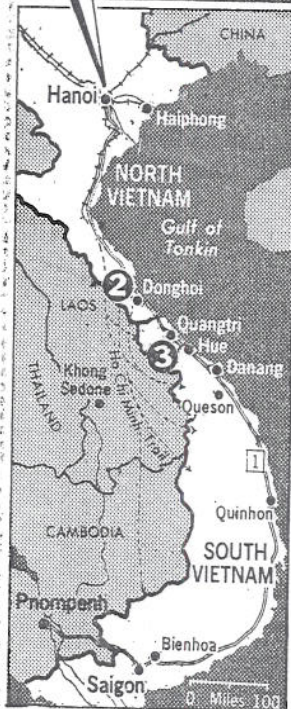
Three American B-52 missions were also flown in the southern panhandle of North Vietnam between noon Sunday and noon yesterday, the command said, and three United States destroyers shelled a supply transfer point in the panhandle 19 miles northwest of Donghoi.

The strikes on the Longbien Bridge, which is one and one-half miles northeast of the center of Hanoi, were said by the command to have heavily damaged the bridge's steel superstructure and to have destroyed parts of it.

Barracks Near Hanoi Targets

The Air Force also said that it had hit four military barracks installations near Hanoi for the first time since the resumption of heavy bombing of the North April 6. These were described as four miles east, two miles north northeast, 42 miles north and 23 miles northwest of Hanoi.

Officers said last week that they expected heavy strikes to be made over Hanoi when the



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Key Hanoi bridge (1) was bombed. U.S. destroyers shelled supply link near Donghoi (2). Fighting at Quangtri (3) increased.

bad weather cleared. No mention of the weather was made in yesterday's communiqué.

American planes also kept up heavy bombing of targets in South Vietnam Sunday, with 30 B-52 missions and more than 200 strikes by fighter-bombers. Fifteen Navy destroyers were also reported shelling from offshore, and the Vietnamese Air Force flew 112 other missions.

In the ground action in the South, fighting has stepped up considerably in Quangtri province, which South Vietnamese troops have been trying to retrieve from the Communists for almost three months.

In June President Nguyen Van Thieu vowed to recapture all territory taken by the North Vietnamese in their spring offensive within three months—Sept. 19, to be exact.

Unofficial reports say that the South Vietnamese command has thrown fresh ranger troops into the battle for Quangtri and that casualties increased over the weekend. According to the reports, 23 South Vietnamese soldiers were killed and 129 were wounded between Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon, and 261 North Vietnamese were killed.

In the area around Saigon, which appears to be the target of enemy infiltrators, the South Vietnamese command retracted an earlier statement that the Bienhoa air base 15 miles east of Saigon had been hit Sunday morning by enemy rockets and said instead that there had been a series of explosions of unknown cause.

The United States command which also uses Bienhoa as an air base for Marine and Air Force planes, said that 40 American soldiers were slightly injured in the blasts and that an AC-119 gunship was damaged.

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