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Evening Star and Daily News 29 Sep 72,
filed POWs.

SFXaminer

SEP 29 1972

Schools, Hospitals Bombed by Accident

By Morton Kondracke

WASHINGTON — (CST)

— The Administration admitted yesterday that U.S. planes have bombed North Vietnamese homes, schools, hospitals and churches, but asserted that strikes on civilian targets were accidental and infrequent.

State and Defense Department officials told the Senate subcommittee on refugees that they do not keep count of the number and type of civilian targets hit. The Pentagon refused to give the committee, publicly or in secret, aerial photos on civilian damage.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, chairman of the refugee panel, said that he wanted numbers and pictures "in order to evaluate whether the military gains have been worth the civilian costs."

He criticized the Pentagon

for having accurate data on bombed "trucks and bridges" but none on "schools and hospitals."

The Pentagon's representative, Deputy Assistant Defense Sec. Dennis Doolin, said "I would say that the answer (on civilian damage) is small because it is not our policy to bomb schools and hospitals."

Earlier, Deputy Assistant Sec. of State William H. Sullivan said U.S. bombing had reduced by 35 to 50 percent the amount of supplies reaching North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. The supply flow is at about its level for 1966 or 1967, he said.

It was Sullivan who admitted — for what is believed the first time in open congressional testimony — that U.S. planes are bombing civilian targets.

"I do not think officials here are going to deny that

there have been hospitals, schools and churches bombed and civilians hurt," Sullivan said.

"What we are trying to explain is that the policy of the United States is to avoid those targets."

He said: "The point I wish to make is that these happenings do not constitute a pattern of deliberate terror directed against civilians."

"Instead they are the regrettable byproduct of the violence which is the essence of warfare. Our military men make strenuous efforts and expose themselves to additional risks in order to prevent these regrettable consequences from happening."

In contrast, Sullivan said, Hanoi's forces systematically attack civilians . . . as part of a deliberate policy to terrorize people into submission."

He said that civilian casualties would cease if North Vietnam's leaders would accept President Nixon's peace terms.

"According to Doolin, these measures are taken by U.S. forces to avoid civilian targets: "Every target to be struck is selected and approved by the commander of the Seventh Air Force."

"Targets required special clearance if they are close to or in civilian populated areas."

"If there is a strong possibility of collateral damage to civilians, the target is rejected."

"Cluster bomb units (anti-personnel weapons) are not used where the possibility of collateral damage is high."

"Jettisoning of bomb loads is forbidden where the possibility of collateral damage is high."

Under questioning, Doolin

said that anti-personnel weapons were used against antiaircraft crews. He declined to respond in open session to reports by American visitors to North Vietnam, including former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, that they had seen civilians hospitalized with wounds caused by such weapons.

Doolin said that he was authorized to respond to Clark's charges in secret session only. Clark had reported visiting 15 sites of civilian damage, and Kennedy said other Americans had returned with reports on 40 to 50 other cases of bombed civilian targets.

Doolin and a representative of the Joint Chief of Staff, Gen. John W. Paully, testified behind closed doors but Kennedy aides said afterward that they produced no photos to discredit Clark's testimony.