

# 'Hot Pursuit' OK Over the North

*N.Y. Times Service*

## Washington

Pentagon officials said yesterday that American pilots are being permitted to cross the 20th parallel in pursuit of North Vietnamese jets that attempt to attack B-52s and other bombers operating south of that parallel.

The sources revealed that in one instance last Sunday an American F-4 Phantom, in chasing and shooting down a North Vietnamese MIG-21, crossed the line which President Nixon has again set as the northernmost limit of bombing in North Vietnam.

But to minimize the chances of incidents in the northern part of North Vietnam during the current peace talks in Paris, the sources said, U.S. reconnaissance has been limited to unmanned photo drones and SR-71 spy planes. These fly at about 80,000 feet, beyond the range of North Vietnamese air defenses.

The officials noted that during an earlier halt in the bombing north of the 20th parallel — from October 23 to December 18 — reconnaissance was similarly restricted to avoid an incident

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in which, for example, a reconnaissance plane might be attacked and call in other planes to bomb in retaliation.

After closed-door briefings by Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the House Military Appropriations Committee and Armed Services Committee, one congressman told reporters that the admiral said he had not been consulted by the White House either on October 23, when bombing north of the 20th parallel was halted, or on December 18, when it was temporarily resumed.

Representative Michael J. Harrington (Dem.-Mass.), a member of the Armed Services Committee, quoted Moorer as having said that contingency plans had been in existence and were merely ordered into effect by the President without the military.

## UNCONFIRMED

However, Moorer did not directly confirm this when he spoke with newsmen.

Moorer told reporters that the massive U.S. bombing was aimed "at North Vietnam's capability to maintain the land war in the South and in these terms I think it was very effective."

Publicly, the White House and the Defense Department tried to de-emphasize reports in Saigon that President Nixon has issued special authority for American pilots to attack enemy planes or air defense sites north of the 20th parallel that they believe threaten bombers south of that line.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said Mr. Nixon has issued no new orders and that American pilots will continue to have, as before, the right to defend themselves.

At the Pentagon, Defense Department spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim would say only that no "offensive" operations have been permitted, or conducted, north of the 20th parallel since December 30.

Other Pentagon sources said that while there has

been one so-called "hot pursuit" aerial combat that crossed the line over the weekend, there have been no so-called "protective reaction strikes" against air defense sites north of the parallel since December 30.

Continued reconnaissance north of that point, however, is considered essential by the administration for two reasons.

First, there have been persistent reports that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong intend to attempt some kind of winter-spring offensive in South Vietnam to put pressure on American negotiators, and U.S. officials want to keep track of the flow of war material into North Vietnam and the flow of weapons and manpower southward.

## INFORMATION

Second, Washington wants to maintain an up-to-date picture of shifting air defenses and new supply concentrations in the northern part of North Vietnam, both to strengthen its bargaining position in Paris and to use in

compiling new target lists in the event the talks break down again.

Analysts concede that the best means of obtaining tactical intelligence is from manned, low-flying reconnaissance planes. But such missions are always accompanied by fighter escorts and thus raise the prospect of shooting incidents.

Unmanned reconnaissance drones, the analysts say, have proved quite effective as a substitute. They frequently have been sent to take a closer look at buildings seen from higher altitudes by the SR-71, the successor to the U-2 spy plane. The SR-71 not only flies much higher than the U-2—but also much faster—more than three times the speed of sound.

Normally, two drones are launched from a C-130 "mother ship" flying offshore. The drones fly what one specialist described as "a very convoluted course" to the target area. They sweep to within a few hundred feet of the ground,



AP Wirephoto

## ADMIRAL MOORER Bombing 'very effective'

take their pictures, then return by another erratic route to the Tonkin Gulf where, beyond the range of North Vietnamese defenses, each pops out a parachute and is snared by a waiting plane.

"The vast majority of drones have performed their missions without being shot down," the specialist said.