

U.S. Jets Keep Up Bombing in Laos

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Washington

About 100 American planes, including B-52 bombers, attacked suspected Communist positions and supply lines in Laos after the Vietnam cease-fire went into effect, administration officials said yesterday.

The Defense Department, on orders from the White House and State Department, declined to comment on the bombing operations, refusing to confirm or deny that American planes based in Thailand were continuing missions over Laos.

Indirect confirmation of the operations came from State Department officials and from William H. Sullivan, deputy assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, who indicated that American bombing would continue in Laos until a cease-fire was reached there.

Appearing on the National Broadcasting Co. television program "Meet the Press," Sullivan, a former ambassador to Laos, said that "in the interim period between now and a cease-fire in Laos, we are continuing to provide air support to the Royal Laotian forces in resisting whatever Communist movements that are taking place."

The continued bombing, according to administration

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officials, had a political as well as a military purpose in putting pressure on the Communists to accept a cease-fire in Laos.

But Sullivan emphasized the military purpose of halting a Communist offensive under way in Laos. "There does appear to be a fairly significant Communist offensive going on in various quarters of Laos at this moment," he said, with the Communist forces "apparently attempting to take some ground which would be of significance to them in anticipation of the cease-fire."

As interpreted by Sullivan and other administration officials, the continued bombing is permissible under the Vietnam peace agreement signed Saturday in Paris.

The agreement reaffirms the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia and calls for the removal of foreign military forces from the two countries. But the military cease-fire provisions of the agreement apply only to North and South Vietnam, not to Laos or Cambodia.

Sullivan pointedly noted that none of the air-power used in Laos has ever been based in Laos.

Sullivan, interviewed in Paris where he served as a principal deputy to Henry Kissinger in negotiating the peace agreement, reaffirmed the Nixon administration's hopes that a cease-fire would be achieved in Laos "within a short period of time," perhaps in two weeks.

The administration is being uncommunicative about American military operations in Laos evidently in an attempt to hold out the threat that American bomb-

ing will continue if the Communists do not move toward a cease-fire.

However, continued bombing, may backfire by angering the anti-war critics in Congress.

In another comment, Sullivan held out the possibility of American military retaliation in the event of flagrant violations of the cease-fire in Vietnam by the Communists.

White declining to speculate on what American military action might be taken in the event of a breakdown of the cease-fire, he pointed out that the U.S. would retain air units in Thailand and with the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific and said: "Hanoi certainly is aware of the existence of these elements, where they will be deployed, and can draw some conclusions."

Cambodia's Cease-Fire

Phnom Penh

An air raid siren blared across the Cambodian capital for five minutes this morning to mark the beginning of the unilateral "suspension of offensive operations" by government troops.

While reserving his regime's "right" to recover lost territory and continue "defensive operations," President Lon Nol announced the unilateral cease-fire yesterday in a speech before a joint National Assembly session.

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