

U.S. Resumes Bomber Attacks On Reds in Laos

Vientiane, Laos

American B-52 bombers resumed their attacks on Communist-led forces in Laos less than 24 hours after a cease-fire went into effect.

It was learned in Washington that the U.S. resumed limited air activity in response to a request from Prince Souvanna Phouma, the premier of Laos, after President Nixon and his top advisers discussed the situation.

Souvanna had said he would make the request, confident of U.S. agreement to it, if North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao continued

violating the truce. Thailand based U.S. air raids against the Communist side had stopped before the noon yesterday, when the cease-fire went into effect.

"We have been tricked . . . If the other side does not keep their word, we are not obliged to keep ours," the 72-year-old prince-premier had told newsmen summoned to his office.

VIOLATIONS

Souvanna said 90 per cent of the truce violations were by foreign troops, meaning the estimated 65,000 North Vietnamese in Laos. Sisouk Na Champassak, the Laotian defense minister, said

the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao violated the armistice at least 40 times in the first 24 hours.

The minister flew to southern Laos yesterday to check the military situation at a Mekong river town coming under increasing threat as a result of the new offensive.

Government forces gave up Paksong, a town 30 miles east of Pakse, a half hour after the truce was to have started, the army said.

Brigadier General Soutchy Vongsavan, commander of the Southern Laos military region, said, "Twenty-three of my soldiers have been killed, 35 are wounded and 64 are missing since the cease-fire started."

ARTILLERY

Eight battalions of North Vietnamese, totaling 2400 troops, "are hitting us with infantry and artillery . . . they are very strong," he said.

By the standards of fighting in Laos, the action at Paksong was large-scale. Casualties for the whole country have averaged fewer than ten a day in more than 20 years of war.

Government troops felt handicapped by the absence of U.S. air support, Soutchy said, although Laotian air force T-28 bombers and C-47 gunships were in the air.

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