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INQUIRY PRESSED IN SECRET RAIDS

Senator Asking Source of
'70 Cambodia Orders

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 15—Senator Harold E. Hughes said today that he had asked for expanded Armed Services Committee hearings into the conduct of the Vietnam air war.

The Iowa Democrat said that the committee, of which he is a member, had renewed evidence of systematic violation of military law in the falsification of B-52 raids in Cambodia that were kept secret by the Nixon Administration.

"I want to determine who gave the orders for the bombing and why the public wasn't told about them," Mr. Hughes said in a telephone interview. "I requested expanded hearings and a full staff investigation."

The committee is to hear testimony tomorrow from a former Air Force major who has said that he deliberately falsified the reports of at least two dozen secret B-52 missions over Cambodia while he was serving with the Strategic Air Command in South Vietnam from February to late April, 1970.

The former officer, Hal M. Knight of Memphis, has told the Senate committee that the bombings were coordinated by Seventh Air Force headquarters in Saigon, in conjunction with the Eighth Air Force on Guam, a Strategic Air Command unit, and with high-ranking officials connected to Military Assistance Command Vietnam, then in over-all charge of Vietnam operations. Similar falsely reported B-52 raids were staged at least since the 1968 Tet offensive, Mr. Knight said.

Pentagon Declines Comment

A Pentagon spokesman refused comment on the charges today, saying: "We're just not going to talk about it."

"We should go into this again," said Senator Hughes, "and get other witnesses who would corroborate or contradict what Major Knight said. I don't know what this might have done to the negotiating process in Paris while this was going on—doing one thing publicly and another thing secretly—but we should go into this more thoroughly."

The Senator added that he had been provided earlier this year with an official computer analysis of all Air Force B-52 strikes in Cambodia, and that it did not show any B-52 attacks until May, 1970—when the Cambodian insurrection began. "Why didn't these raids appear on the computer tape?" Mr. Hughes asked, in a reference to Mr. Knight's assertions. "Were they erased or were they never put on it?"

The only public mention of the B-52 raids in Cambodia before the May, 1970, invasion appeared in a dispatch in The New York Times on May 9, 1969, that reported that such missions were being carried out with the tacit approval of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, who was ousted a year later. The Times dispatch said that the decision to begin the bombings inside Cambodia was made to demonstrate that the Nixon Administration was different and "tougher" than the Administration of President Johnson.

Nomination Is Approved

Senator Hughes first raised the issue of the falsified bombings during a closed committee meeting Friday, at which the nomination of Gen. George S. Brown as the Air Force's Chief of Staff was considered. The nomination was later voted out by the committee and approved by the full Senate yesterday.

As former Major Knight explained it, he was assigned to a secret Strategic Air Command radar station in South Vietnam that served as a forward-direction station for B 52's. At least twice a week, he said, hand-delivered messages were brought to his unit by a special courier from Saigon, and those messages contained the real targets for than night's B 52 missions, which were always in Cambodia—then officially considered a neutral country by the United States.