

New Charges

'False' Records On Laos Raids

By Seymour M. Hersh
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Washington

The Senate Armed Services Committee has evidence that the falsification of the records of bombing missions in Southeast Asia extended to numerous raids on Laos and continued into last year, well-informed sources said Saturday.

The sources said that most of the newly discovered raids took place in Laos between 1969 and 1972.

The missions, which involved B-52 flights and attacks by smaller tactical aircraft, were apparently conducted under the same

procedures as the 14-month secret bombing campaign in Cambodia, the sources said.

Nearly all the falsified missions were flown over northern Laos, but were deliberately and incorrectly reported to the military's own operations sections as having been carried out over the Panhandle areas of southern Laos, the sources said.

TARGET

Those are the areas in which the Ho Chi Minh supply network winds from North Vietnam down through Laos into South Vietnam, and — as main enemy routes — were heavily bombed throughout the air war.

Most of the publicly announced B-52 raids and other American bombing attacks in Laos were said to have been flown over supply routes in the southern part of the country. But the Saigon command did reveal early in 1970 that American planes were flying heavy raids in eastern Laos and over the Plain of Jars in the north central region.

These were part of an unsuccessful effort to prevent

the North Vietnamese and the Communist Pathet Lao from achieving military successes there.

After those attacks, Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader, said he had been assured that President Nixon did not plan to repeat the B-52 raids in northern Laos. In an interview with the Associated Press in March 1970, Mansfield said he had asked that the raids not be repeated and had received "good enough assurances to suit me." The senator did not say who had provided the assurances.

CAMPAIGN

Later published reports indicated that the U.S. had waged a little-publicized eight-month bombing campaign on the Plain of Jars in 1969, producing as many as 50,000 refugees there.

The Armed Services Committee is expected today to determine when and why the falsified bombing raids were carried out in northern Laos. It will hear testimony then from General Earle G. Wheeler, retired army general and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Senator Stuart Symington (Dem.-Mo.) and acting chairman of the committee, has said that Wheeler's testimony will be taken in public.

It could not be determined who was the source of the committee's evidence on the Laos raids. However, three present and former Pentagon officials testified in secret last week in connection with the senators' investigation into the falsification of records in the secret Cambodia bombing. Those attacks lasted 14 months in 1969 and 1970.