

NYTimes JUL 31 1973  
**WHEELER ASSERTS  
BOMBING SECRET  
WAS NIXON'S WISH**

**Says Double-Report System  
on Cambodian Raids Was  
Devised by the Military**

**SECURITY WAS THE GOAL**

**Cover-Up Attempt Is Denied  
Again—Fear Was Voiced  
of Diplomatic Blow-Up**

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 30—Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a Senate committee today that President Nixon personally ordered the secret bombing of Cambodia to be conducted under the tightest security measures possible.

"His instructions were of a general nature," the general testified, "but very emphatic. He wanted the matter held with the greatest secrecy."

General Wheeler said that it was after that Presidential directive—given "at least a half a dozen times" during various high-level meetings before the bombing—that the Joint Chiefs instituted the system of dual reports.

**Dual Reporting Begun**

Under that system, now being investigated by the Senate Armed Services Committee, the 3,630 secret B-52 sorties over Cambodia in 1969 and 1970 were officially described through the military's own reporting channels as having taken place in South Vietnam.

Under repeated questioning about Mr. Nixon's relationship to the falsification, General Wheeler said that the military devised the mechanics of the dual reporting system. "The President didn't order this particular procedure," he said at one point. "What he wanted was security."

But the retired officer did add that "the dual reporting system was something that grew because we couldn't support our Presidential directives."

General Wheeler, who was

accompanied by a Marine colonel during his appearance, said he did not think that any mention of the specific reporting mechanisms was made during planning sessions with the National Security Council early in 1969.

**Memos Sent to Laird**

Those details were included, however, in memorandums on the secret bombing that were sent to Melvin R. Laird, then Secretary of Defense, General Wheeler noted. "But whether these were sent to the White House I can't say," he added.

Nonetheless, the general testified, the President was pleased by the success of the security measures. "Everybody seemed to be satisfied. At one point I received a letter from the President congratulating me for the good job of maintaining secrecy."

The bombings, which lasted

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over a 14-month period, were not officially revealed until two weeks ago.

During a meeting with newsmen last week, Mr. Laird, now a White House adviser on domestic affairs, specifically asserted that details of the special reporting mechanisms were known to, and approved by, the National Security Council. He did not mention names, but sources close to him said later that Henry A. Kissinger, the President's adviser on national security, and Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who was a aide to Mr. Kissinger in 1969, "must have known" about the double-reporting system.

**Air Force General's Letter**

During the hearing, Senator Stuart Symington, acting chairman of the Armed Services Committee, released a letter from Gen. John D. Ryan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, saying that similarly falsified raids were made by the Air Force over northern Laos between February, 1970, and April, 1972.

In his letter, General Ryan, who retires from active duty this week, acknowledged that the raids over northern Laos had officially been reported to be over southern Laos "to restrict widespread knowledge of the strikes."

General Wheeler, who retired in mid-1970 after serving six years as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said that the secrecy was aimed at warding off dip-

lomatic problems with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, then the Cambodian Chief of State, in 1969. Since the secret bombing dispute arose two weeks ago, Nixon Administration officials have repeatedly noted that the Prince had "acquiesced" in the bombings, although he stipulated that there could be no public mention of them.

"I do recall," the general testified, "a lot of admonition by the Secretary of Defense and the President to use extra secure means to insure that we did not have a diplomatic explosion."

The official justification for the secret bombing campaign was challenged by Senator Harold E. Hughes, the Iowa Democrat who had initiated the current hearings.

Mr. Hughes cited a number of published complaints and protests against the bombings that he said were issued by the Cambodian Government early in 1969.

He cited one dispatch, stemming from a news conference given in Phnom Penh on March 28, a few weeks after the B-52 raids began, in which Prince Sihanouk was quoted as saying, "Nobody, no chief of state of the world, would agree to let foreign aircraft bomb our country."

The real diplomatic consideration behind the secret bombings, Senator Hughes charged, were the concern of the White House to keep the news of the bombings "away from the anti-war movement and the Congress of the United States."

"It's hard for me to believe," Mr. Hughes said "that the heads of this Government could come up with some sort of a shell game like I used to play as a kid" in order to hide the secret raids.

**Government 'Shell Game'**

Throughout his testimony, General Wheeler challenged repeated assertions by Senators that the reports were falsified to cover the raids up. He asserted, as have previous witnesses, that there was no falsification because those with a "need to know" were receiving accurate reports on the bombing through a special communications channel.

Therefore, General Wheeler said, there was no "intent to deceive"—which is a basis for the charge of falsification in military law.

In a telephone interview with The New York Times two weeks ago, General Wheeler denounced the falsification of documents and disavowed any knowledge of it. He was not asked about those statements today.

"There was no order issued by anyone," the general testi-

fied, "to falsify any records—not by the Secretary of Defense, not by me, or not by the President.

"Militarily," he added, "everyone certainly knew we were bombing. We weren't deceiving the enemy. He knew he was being bombed. And nobody with a need to know was being

denied that information."

That argument was challenged by most of the committee members, in itself an unusual situation for what, until recent weeks, has been an unusually promilitary committee.

At one point, Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia, declared that under the gen-

eral's definition, no one could possibly be guilty of falsification because only those with the "need to know" were entitled to get accurate reports.

"General, how can you run an army like this?" Mr. Nunn asked. "We have created a monster here with this false reporting."