

# LAIRD APPROVED FALSE REPORTING OF SECRET RAIDS

## Senators Get 1969 Memo, Written by Wheeler, on Bombing in Cambodia

### TARGETS WERE LISTED

### Ex-Defense Official Initialed Document—Press Was to Get Cover Story

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 9 — Former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird specifically approved falsified reporting of the Nixon Administration's secret B-52 raids in Cambodia in 1969, a highly classified Pentagon memorandum showed today.

The memorandum, released at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing into the falsification of reports, was written by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler—who was then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and who is now retired—and approved by Mr. Laird, now a White House domestic adviser, in his own handwriting.

The memorandum, released at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing into the falsification of reports, was written by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler—who was then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and who is now retired—and initialed by Mr. Laird, now a White House domestic adviser, in his own handwriting.

#### 'Credible Story' for Press

Mr. Laird and General Wheeler have repeatedly insisted that they did not personally authorize any falsified reporting but instead were carrying out the orders of superiors.

The document was dated Nov. 20, 1969, seven months after the B-52 missions began, and provided for a 41-plane force of B-52's to strike clandestine targets inside Cambodia with other B-52's attacking normally assigned targets in South Vietnam and Laos.

"Strikes on these latter

targets," the memorandum said, "will provide a resemblance to normal operations thereby providing a credible story for replies to press inquiries."

#### Denial by Witnesses

The memorandum added: "All sorties against targets in Cambodia will be programed against preplanned alternate targets in RVN [the Republic of Vietnam] and strike request messages will so indicate. In the event the operations should be canceled, release would be made on these alternate targets."

With the military's own classified-data system, under the system outlined in the memorandum, the bombing raids over Cambodia were officially reported to have taken place over South Vietnam.

Military witnesses before the committee have denied that any false reporting was involved, because, they said, those few officials with an official "need to know" were provided with the true results

Continued on Page 8, Column 4

#### Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

of the raids. But falsified statistics, which did not show any bombing over Cambodia in 1969 and 1970, were also provided to the Senate committee with a "secret" classification in 1971 and 1973, and this brought about the current hearings.

The tight security surrounding the bombing was made apparent by the classification of the Wheeler memorandum, which was marked: "Top Secret-Sensitive-Noform — Eyes Only-Absolutely for Eyes of Addressee Only."

"Noform" stands for "Not releasable to foreign nationals."

A total of 3,630 B-52 sorties were made in secret over Cambodia and May, 1970, and more than 100,000 tons of bombs were dropped. After the first newspaper accounts of the B-52 missions were published last General Wheeler initially denied any knowledge of falsified reports.

#### Attributed to Nixon

Mr. Laird subsequently said that the orders for the falsification of records came from the National Security Council, headed by Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security. And last week General Wheeler told the Armed Services Committee that Mr. Nixon had personally ordered that the raids were to be held "with the greatest secrecy."

Mr. Kissinger, in an interview last month, declared that the White House had "neither ordered nor was it aware of any falsification of records" in connection with the bombing.

After today's hearing, Sen-

ator Harold E. Hughes, Democrat of Iowa who initiated the current inquiry, charged that the memorandum was "the first piece of evidence which indicates to me that the use of deceptive information was approved at the highest level in the Government — the White House."

The Iowa Senator said of the White House request for secrecy: "This was a political decision to keep the information out of the hands of the American people. The enemy knew what we were doing."

out of the hands of the American people to keep the information we were doing," he said, in reference to the heavy secrecy.

"The enemy knew what we were doing," he said, in reference to the heavy secrecy. The Wheeler memorandum was provided by the final witnesses in this phase of the committee hearings, Adm. Thomas H. Morrer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and William P. Clements Jr., the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

The two Pentagon officials, who often clashed angrily with Senator Hughes and Senator Stuart Symington, the acting committee chairman, also provided a 1967 Pentagon memorandum that they said had authorized the use of cover strikes similar to those in Cambodia.

#### Matter of 'Precedent'

That memorandum, approved by the late John T. McNaughton, an Assistant Secretary of De-

fense under Robert S. McNamara, provided for B-52 strikes in Laos with strikes against nearby targets in South Vietnam to "be conducted within the same time frames to serve as press cover."

r. Clement declared that the Nixon Administration had relied on the "precedent" outlined in the McNaughton memorandum in approving details for the secret bombing of Cambodia.

Senator Symington subsequently said that "you don't justify a mistake by making another mistake."

There was conflicting and inconsistent testimony about the concept that falsification was involved in the dual-reporting system for the Cambodian raids.

At one point, Admiral Mcoorer asserted that "no one authorized the falsification of reports" in connection with the raids. He explained that the raids

TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE - NOFORM - EYES ONLY.  
AUTHORIZED FOR EYES OF ADDRESSEES ONLY

#### STRIKE SCHEDULE - DAYTON TIME

(SEVEN STRIKES EACH NIGHT FOR A TOTAL OF 41 SORTIES.  
TOTALS WILL BE BETWEEN 1900 AND 0600)

DATE	BASE AREAS	STRIKES
24-25 Nov	740	7
29-30 Nov	351 740	4 3

8. (TS) All sorties against targets in Cambodia will be programmed against preplanned alternate targets in RVN and strike request messages will so indicate. In the event that operations should be cancelled, release would be made on these alternate targets.

9. (TS) In view of the favorable results from previous MERU Operations, the high military value of the available targets, and the minimal risk to Cambodians, strikes against these base areas should be continued as long as the threat persists. Therefore, recommend authority be obtained to conduct B-52 strikes against target areas as proposed. To insure proper planning and efficiency of operation, a mini of 48 hours notice to MACV prior to the first time over to will be required.

APPROVED

EARLE G. WHEELER  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Map

Part of memorandum on secret raids against Cambodia that was released yesterday at a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It was signed by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, then Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and initialed as approved, lower left, by Melvin R. Laird who was then Secretary of Defense.

were so highly classified that they could not be logged into the Pentagon's large data Computer, which, he said, could only store information classified "Secret" or lower.

The admiral said that the computer had to reflect every B-52 flight in South Vietnam in order to keep track of ammunition, fuel and other supplies. "It's unfortunate that we've become slaves to these damned things," he added.

#### Exchange on Memorandum

Moment later, both Admiral Moorer and Mr. Clements conceded that the Wheeler memorandum had called upon the military chain of command to falsify targets.

The following exchange about the memorandum took place with Senator Hughes:

HUGHES — This is a direct order to falsify targets.

CLEMENTS: Well, that's part of the cover.

HUGHES: There was an actual order on paper to enter in false coordinates.

MOORER: That's the only way I know that they could be handled without having sorties disappear [from the computer].

CLEMENTS: I don't know of any other way to do this if we're going to have a cover story.

The Defense official added: "I personally think was a first-class military operation. I don't think anybody has anything to apologize about for this."

Earlier, after a sharp exchange between Admiral Moorer and Senator Hughes and Senator Symington over the falsified reporting, Senator Strom Thurmond, Republican of South Carolina, heatedly declared, "I think these hearings are a lot of hullabaloo."

Senator Thurmond, a staunch defender of the military, urged Senator Symington to "get" the civilians responsible for the falsification orders "and stop trying to embarrass these men in uniform."

"What we're trying to do," Mr. Symington said in response, "is get to the bottom of how the military was manipulated by civilian control. What we want is the truth."

"It's getting tiresome and worrisome to continually be asked to pu up this money" he added, referring to military programs that are kept secret from the committee.

Both Mr. Clements and Admiral Moorer expressed regret that the committee had been given misleading statistics about the B-52 operations in Cambodia and promised to brief all members of the committee on fully on any similarly secret operations in the future. Only a few senators had been told of the Cambodian operations in 1969.