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U.S. Scientist Back From Hanoi 'Numbed' by Raid Devastation

By DAVID BIRD

An American scientist who just returned from a 19-day inspection trip to North Vietnam said yesterday that he was "embarrassed and saddened and numbed" by the bomb damage there.

Dr. Arthur Westing, a botanist, went to North Vietnam as a representative of Scientific Aid for Indochina, a task force of the Scientists' Institute for Public Information.

He said that traveling south on the 500-mile route from Hanoi to the South Vietnamese border he found not a single permanent structure standing, adding that he was never out of sight of a bomb crater.

'Utter Devastation'

Dr. Westing, a former Marine Corps officer who still wears his brown hair close cropped, said at a news conference in the Commodore Hotel that he was "totally unprepared" for the "utter devastation" he saw.

"We would go from city to city and see every single building and bridge and other structure destroyed," he said. "It was a laying waste that took our breath away. It was unbelievable."

He described bomb-crater fields as "one of the most ubiquitous sights." "Craters are the one thing you come home

still seeing in your sleep," he said.

Dr. Arthur Galston, a Yale University biologist and a member of the executive committee of the scientists' task force, said that Dr. Westing and another scientist, Dr. Bert Pfeiffer, who was unable to appear at yesterday's news conference, had been sent to assess the situation in North Vietnam.

Dr. Galston said they had been sent because the group felt that since scientific developments had helped destroy North Vietnam science should help rebuilt it.

Nation's Needs Listed

Dr. Westing said that among North Vietnam's main scientific needs were a laboratory of plant physiology and plant chemistry to help produce more and better crops, a forestry institute to develop trees and ways of planting them to control the erosion caused by bomb craters and metal detection equipment to find the bombs and mines still in the land.

The Scientists' Institute for Public Information is a 10-year-old organization that describes itself as "an association of scientists to provide the citizen with objective information on science-related public issues." Its president is Dr. Margaret Mead and its chairman is Dr. Barry Commoner.