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Senate Probe

Of Lavelle

Bombing Set

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), announced today that the Senate Armed Services Committee would investigate unauthorized bombing of North Vietnam ordered by Gen. John Lavelle.

Stennis said the nomination of Gen. Creighton Abrams to be new Army Chief of Staff would be held up until the Lavelle investigation had been completed.

Stennis said, "very serious questions of command and control — including the supremacy of civilian authority — are raised by this case."

Lavelle, who was U.S. Air Force commander in Southeast Asia until forced to retire after the bombing came to light, has acknowledged that he ordered unauthorized bombing raids concealed on falsified reports as "protective reaction" strikes.

Lavelle told House investigators that Abrams, overall U.S. commander in Vietnam, was aware of the raids. The Defense Department denied that Abrams had any knowledge of the bombings.

Stennis said hearings would begin shortly after Congress returns July 17 from a recess for the Democratic Convention.