

Lavelle's Reports 'Didn't Tell' Raids

Washington

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in testimony released yesterday it would be impossible to tell from General John D. Lavelle's field reports whether he ordered unauthorized bombing raids in Vietnam.

Those reports, which would have been read by General Creighton W. Abrams, then - U.S. commander in Vietnam, would easily have indicated a violation of top - level bombing rules unless they were falsified, Moorer said.

Were Lavelle's reports falsified? asked Senator John C. Stennis (Dem - Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee considering Moorer's nomination for a second two - year term as Joint Chiefs chairman.

"The reports did not indicate that there was — it was impossible to tell from the reports that there was a violation," Moorer replied.

RULES

"Did those reports raise any suspicion in your mind that the Seventh Air Force was striking unauthorized targets?" asked Stennis.

"No, sir. The reports did not indicate that the strikes

were other than in accordance with current instructions," Moorer replied.

"In your opinion were the rules of engagement sufficiently specific that they could not have been mistaken?" asked Senator Harold E. Hughes (Dem - Iowa).

"In my opinion the rules of engagement were very clear," Moorer said.

Lavelle was relieved as commander of the United States Seventh Air Force in Vietnam when he admitted ordering 28 bombing raids against North Vietnam in violation of general and specific orders between November 1971 and last March. The Air Force has recommended that he be retired as a three-star rather than a four-star general.

ABRAMS

Lavelle told the House Armed Services Committee June 12 that Abrams, his superior officer in Vietnam, was aware of what he was doing but never debated the rules of engagement with him.

The Lavelle incident has cast a shadow over Abrams' nomination to succeed General William Westmoreland, also a former U.S. Vietnam commander, as army chief of staff. Stennis has said he will hold hearings on Lavelle

before the committee acts on Abrams' nomination.

A transcript of Moorer's testimony before a closed committee session June 23 was released yesterday at the same time it endorsed Moorer's nomination for a second tour of duty.

United Press