

The Case of General Lavelle (Cont.)

General Lavelle was running his own private war.

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... The political reasons behind the bombing restrictions simply were not as compelling to General Lavelle as were the argets and the risks to his men in the field. Yet in a limited war the calibration of military pressure is a crucial political factor. Hanoi was surely basing part of its judgment on Washington's worthiness as a partner in diplomacy, on how well or poorly Washington was observing the 1968 bombing-halt "understanding," then (a year ago) still in effect. General Lavelle's raids took place in a period of intense American-North Vietnamese contacts. Whether his raids, militarily negligible as they may have beenn, undercut whatever Henry Kissinger then was telling North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho, may never be known. But the chances of diplomatic damage in such a situation are plain.

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... There is also the possibility that an appropriate "message" will be sent by the manner in which the Air Force acts on the disclosures made in the current hearings ...