

'Avoided Villages'

Laos Envoy Denies Bombs

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — A former ambassador to Laos testified today that heavy U.S. bombing has carefully avoided populated areas and that it is Communist pressures that have created more than 700,000 Laotian refugees.

William Sullivan, now deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, rejected contentions that the United States deliberately bombs friendly civilian villages.

'Avoid Villages'

Sullivan told a Senate Refugee Subcommittee:

"The policy of the United States is to deliberately avoid hitting inhabited villages."

Sullivan testifying at the second day of hearings into refugee problems in Indochina, said that only a "small number of Laotian villagers have become refugees because of bombing, most of them fleeing instead because of advancing Communist forces from the north."

Kennedy Claim

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) questioned Sullivan's claims.

"We have evidence that the bombing of Laos contributed to at least 75 percent of the refugees," he said.

Kennedy charged there is "a continuing tendency on the part of our national leadership to underplay" effects of the war on civilians and said "such a mindless use of power . . . shows a continued insensitivity to the people of Indochina."

The Massachusetts Democrat estimated six million South Vietnamese had been injured or made homeless since the war began. He said up to 1.5 million persons had become refugees in Cambodia since Cambodia became involved in the war one year ago, and that at least 700,000 persons had been uprooted in Laos.

"Tens of thousands have fled from battle areas over the past weeks," Kennedy said. "Since the heavy air war over Laos began in early 1969, conservative estimates put the number of civilian casualties at over 30,000, including as many as 10,000 deaths."

Rep. Paul M. McCloskey Jr. (R-Calif.) testified there was a "very real possibility" American bombing of villages in northern Laos during 1968 and 1969 drove 100,000 persons from their homes.

McCloskey, who returned recently from a tour of Indochina and has said he may oppose President Nixon for the 1972 GOP presidential nomination, said at least 76 percent of 96 villages in northern Laos were destroyed by bombing in 1969.

He said the state department had "deliberately con-

cealed" both the extent of bombing and its impact on the civilian population of Laos for the past nine months.