

(Clipping filed North Vietnam)

U.S. SAYS PLANES HIT HANOI REGION TO COVER MISSION

by Tad Szulc

Washington, Nov. 27 - The Defense Department acknowledged today that United States aircraft struck military targets near Hanoi last Saturday during the landing of commandos who sought to liberate American prisoners of war [at Son Tay].

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When Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird announced on Monday the unsuccessful effort to rescue the prisoners, he denied the use of any "ordnance." The next day, he told a Congressional committee that the only "diversionary" activity during the commando raid were flares dropped from carrier-based Navy aircraft to deflect the enemy radar.

But President Nixon was quoted as having told a group of disabled Vietnam veterans at the White House Thanksgiving dinner yesterday that an air raid was carried out on a military installation next to Son Tay to keep North Vietnamese troops pinned down before the helicopters landed.

Until today, the Administration had steadfastly denied any air attacks north of the 19th Parallel, which runs 150 miles below the Hanoi-Haiphong region ...

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... It was not known what had prompted the Defense Department to confirm that there had been offensive air action near Hanoi the night of the commando raid ...

(Also SFChronicle, 30 Nov 70.)