

## Editorials

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# 'They Do It All the Time'

IN THE FLOOD OF STATEMENTS which have issued from Washington since the brief resumption of bombing of North Vietnam two weekends ago, none has been more interesting than that of Defense Secretary Melvin Laird. He publicized the brilliant, futile commando raid on a suspected prisoner of war camp, he said, because he feared the reappearance of that old Johnson Administration nemesis, the credibility gap. Senator J. William Fulbright says there is one and that Laird himself is responsible for it.

The record since the raid on the camp at Son Tay and the bombings support the senator's accusation. They also raise the suspicion that some of the Defense Department planners associated with the Eisenhower Administration's U2 affair and the Kennedy Administration's Bay of Pigs' disaster may still be around, having learned little in the meantime, and may be capable of causing the Nixon Administration a major misstep.

WHEN THE RESUMED BOMBING RAIDS against North Vietnam were announced early Saturday, November 21, Secretary Laird said they were "preventive reaction" attacks against anti-aircraft gun and missile sites entirely below the 19th Parallel and thus 150 miles to the south of the heavily populated Hanoi-Haiphong areas. When Radio Hanoi broadcast and the French press agency reported bombings in these regions, the Pentagon denied they had occurred. By Monday, Secretary Laird was saying publicly that the only U.S. air activity in the Hanoi area was the flight of commando-carrying helicopters on their way to the empty prison camp. By the following Friday, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Daniel Z. Henkin, confirmed that anti-aircraft and missile emplacements in the Hanoi area had been attacked to protect the helicopters. Lesser Pentagon spokesmen said the attacks had been made over an area as wide as 150 miles around Hanoi. The tardy admission was made only after President Nixon told a wounded GI, invited for Thanksgiving dinner, that bombing had occurred near the prison camp.

"They misrepresented the facts," said Senator