

ART HOPPE



Seven Days in Anytime

THURSDAY — A Pentagon spokesman today confirmed reports that “a small, tactical nuclear device” had been dropped on Red China Tuesday.

He said it may have inflicted “some casualties” on a “little village in remote Sinkiang Province.” He said “one or more” American planes were involved.

There was no protest from Peking. Peking Radio has been silent for the past 48 hours.

FRIDAY — Secretary of Defense Laird told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Chinese casualties “might be somewhat higher than at first anticipated.”

He denied, however, that it was an American bombing attack. It was, he said, “an advance retaliatory protective mission” aimed at “saving American lives in Southeast Asia.”

The mission was necessary, he said, to prevent Chinese anti-aircraft batteries from firing on unarmed American reconnaissance planes attempting to assess the damage.

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SATURDAY — President Nixon was said to have told four Republican women from Dubuque at a private White House garden reception that they need “no longer worry” about Red China. “It has ceased to exist,” they quoted him as saying.

The Pentagon would say only that it was “revising its casualty estimates.” One source, however, said, “It won’t go any higher than 500 million at most.”

Sunday — Appearing on Face the Press, Senator Fulbright accused Secretary Laird of having lied to the Foreign Relations Committee. Instead of “one small device,” he said, “we rained more than a thousand megatons of nuclear bombs on every corner of China.”

Secretary Laird immediately called a press conference to deny he had lied. “Senator Fulbright,” he said, “didn’t ask the right questions.”

At the same time, Laird said radioactive fallout from the mission “poses no danger at this time, except to localized areas of the Western Pacific.”

Monday — Evacuation of American troops and officials from Vietnam and other Asian areas began this morning. The Pentagon described the move as “precautionary” in view of “a small radioactive cloud in the area.”

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TUESDAY — The White House said The Cloud was now centered over Guam but “should dissipate within a very few hours.” A spokesman said U.S. regrets for any inconvenience The Cloud may have caused had been cabled to American allies in the Far East. No replies have yet been received.

Wednesday — In a televised address tonight, President Nixon said there was “no cause for alarm.” At the same time, he paid tribute to “our brave fellow Americans” in the Western United States.

“They were part of our cherished national heritage,” he said, “and both Pat and I shall deeply miss them.”

Thursday — The President, broadcasting from Air Force One at 50,000 feet, said “the short-lived crisis” was definitely over. The Cloud, he said, was now moving out over the Atlantic.

“I know I shall be criticized for having done what was right, as I have been in the past,” he said. “But never before have we been given a greater opportunity to build a better and stronger America.”

“Each of us, in my opinion, has been given a fresh start. And that goes, rightly or wrongly, for every living American down there below me tonight.”

Unfortunately, there weren’t any.