

# Bombing Raids And Peace Talks



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A REVIEW of the secret record has persuaded Henry Kissinger's aides that General John Lavelle's private air war against North Vietnam may well have upset the peace prospects last fall.

President Nixon had limited the air strikes against North Vietnam to "protective reaction." Our planes weren't supposed to bomb above the demilitarized zone, in other words, unless they were provoked by enemy action.

The general instructed his pilots not to report after these raids that there had been "no enemy action." Washington, therefore, didn't know from reading the reports that the raids had been unprovoked.

Lavelle, for his part, was understandably upset over reconnaissance photos, which showed a Communist military buildup across the Demilitarized Zone. He took the authority upon himself to send planes against the most tempting targets.

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WHILE Lavelle's unauthorized bombing was going on, Kissinger was talking secretly with Le Duc Tho in Paris about a settlement. Kissinger assured the Hanoi leader that the United States was attacking North Vietnam only when its planes were attacked.

Le Duc Tho angrily insisted that the bombing went beyond "Protective reaction."

Finally, in mid-November, he broke off the secret talks after more than a year of sporadic negotiating.

Kissinger had reason to know how sensitive the North Vietnamese were about negotiation under the gun. Back in 1967, he tried to get a dialogue going with the North Vietnamese. He sent two French friends, Herbert Marcovitch and Raymond Aubra, to Hanoi with a peace offering.

On their return to Paris, they stayed in regular contact for several months with North Vietnam's Mai Van Bo. But they couldn't persuade Bo to sit down with Kissinger, because the peace offer had coincided with the bombing of Hanoi.

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AS A GESTURE, the United States suspended the bombing temporarily. But Bo handed the two French emissaries a note declaring: "The bombing of Hanoi at the same time as the sending of the (peace) message constitutes a pressure. Stopping of the bombing along with the threat of a renewal has the character of an ultimatum."

When the Frenchmen pleaded, Bo stated firmly: "Because of the continued threat of bombing Hanoi, which has the character of an ultimatum, a direct meeting with Kissinger cannot take place."

Other overtures also failed. Kissinger never was able to talk with Bo and the intermediaries finally gave up. This peace approach, known by the secret code name "Pennsylvania," failed in 1967.

Finally, in 1970, Kissinger held a series of secret meetings with Le Duc Tho. But these, too, were broken off after Lavelle's unauthorized bombing raids.