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Air Strikes, Talks To Continue -- Laird

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Defense Secretary Melvin Laird conceded today that American bombs may have struck the French diplomatic mission in Hanoi but said U.S. air strikes against North Vietnam will continue even as private peace talks go on in Paris.

On the basis of preliminary reports, Laird said, he couldn't state positively whether the damage was caused by a faulty bomb drop or by North Vietnamese anti-aircraft weapons falling back on the city.

Asked at a news conference if he thought it wise to bomb close to Hanoi while peace talks were in a delicate stage, he replied:

"We will continue the use

of airpower during this period. The President has stated this on several occasions and we will continue to strike military targets in North Vietnam."

'Military Targets'

Laird declared, as he has on several occasions, that the U.S. planes strike at only military targets and not at "downtown Hanoi."

The French delegation is housed in a group of five buildings in the center of the city.

Today's targets, he noted, included a railroad marshaling yard and trans-shipment point three miles from the French Legation. He called them "significant military targets."

Secretary of State William

Rogers cabled French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann "my most sincere personal regrets for the injury" to the French delegate general at Hanoi, Pierre Susini.

Algeria Protest

State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said also that Algeria protested that its mission in Hanoi was damaged, too. He said the U.S. government does not yet know what damage might have occurred to the Algerian mission.

At the White House, press secretary Ronald Ziegler said information now available does not establish that it was an American bomb which caused the damage and injuries.

Responding to questions, Ziegler said he was not

aware of any communication between French President Georges Pompidou and President Nixon on the incident but said the President has been receiving information from the National Security Council and other U.S. sources.

Not in Talks

Ziegler said the bombing was not involved in Henry Kissinger's surprise extension of his stay in Paris, where he is meeting secretly with North Vietnamese officials.

He also said the bombing was not a subject of discussion when Kissinger conferred yesterday with Schumann. According to available information, the incident had not occurred at the time.

Ziegler refused to discuss specific weapons carried aboard the U.S. planes but ruled out so-called smart bombs which are noted for their accuracy. These weapons are guided to their targets either by laser beams or televised images.