

(Companion story, "Diplomat Is Hurt," by Agence France-Presse, pasted separately.)

France's Mission in Hanoi Wrecked During a U.S. Raid

U.S. IS REGRETFUL

~~OCT 12~~ 1972

**But Pentagon Says
a Hanoi Missile May
Have Caused Blast**

NYTimes

By **BERNARD GWERTZMAN**
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11—The United States moved quickly today to express regret over the damage to the French Mission in Hanoi, but said the destruction might have been caused by a North Vietnamese antiaircraft missile and not by American bombs.

In statements issued here and in Saigon, the Defense Department said that United States Navy planes had attacked "military targets including a major railroad yard and transshipment point across the Red River north of the area of Hanoi in which the French delegation building is located."

"A number of enemy surface-to-air missiles were fired at the United States aircraft," it said. "No United States aircraft were lost and the SAM's could have impacted on the ground."

"We regret any personal injury or damage caused in the area of the French delegation building during the air strikes and the North Vietnamese firing on United States aircraft."

At the same time, the administration underscored its determination to maintain its almost daily air attacks against North Vietnam. It said that neither the damage to the French mission or Henry A. Kissinger's secret talks in Paris, described as at a "sensitive"

Continued on Page 18, Column 5

stage, were cause to alter the bombing program.

Secretary of Defense Melvin A. Laird was asked at a news conference whether "it was wise to target areas so close to Hanoi" while Mr. Kissinger, the president's adviser on national security, was winding

up four days of talks in Paris with Hanoi's negotiators.

"The situation has been that we will continue the use of our air power during this period," Mr. Laird said. "The President has stated that on several occasions, as recently as his last press conference. We will continue to strike military targets in North Vietnam."

At that conference, last Thursday, Mr. Nixon said there would be no unilateral halt in the American bombing of North Vietnam, which was renewed in force following North Vietnam's offensive in South Vietnam last spring. He has said the bombing and other acts of war against North Vietnam would not end until a settlement was reached.

The Administration, nevertheless, was embarrassed by the heavy attention focused on the damage to the French mission, and the concern expressed by President Pompidou after a Cabinet meeting. He called the bombing "a deplorable act."

Secretary of State William P. Rogers sent a message to the French Foreign Minister, Maurice Schumann, which said: "Please accept my own most sincere regret for the injury that French Delegate General Pierre Susini sustained when damage occurred to the French delegate general building in Hanoi today."

The rapidity with which the administration moved to express its regret stemmed from a desire to mollify the French, with whom relations have improved in recent years.

Moreover, the French Government has muted its criticism of American activity in Indochina and has recently spoken hopefully of a breakthrough in Mr. Kissinger's talks with Le Duc Tho, a member of the North Vietnamese politburo.

Other expressions of regret were made at the State Department today by Richard D. Vine, director of West European Affairs, to Emanuel de Margerie of the French Embassy, and in Paris by Ambassador Arthur K. Watson to Hervé Alphand, the Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry.

Protests Termed Moderate

A high-ranking State Department official said the tone of the French expressions about the incident was regarded as "moderate" on the whole. He said the Administration did not expect that Paris would press the matter beyond normal diplomatic protests.

* S OCT 72

The State Department also said that in Algiers, the Foreign Ministry called in William L. Eagleton Jr., the chief United States representative, to protest against reports that the Algerian Embassy had also been damaged by the American raids.

Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman, was asked if it were not true that no matter whose weapon caused the damage, it was the American raid over Hanoi that was the underlying cause of the damage.

"That is a safe presumption," he said.

The timing of today's raids on Hanoi during a period of intense diplomatic activity recalled incidents in 1966 and 1967, when Johnston Administration efforts to get negotiations started were retarded by heavy American bombing raids around Hanoi.

In December, 1966, the North Vietnamese, who up to then had refused to meet with American officials, had indicated a willingness to confer in Warsaw, but they canceled a planned meeting after two series of raids against Hanoi. The United States code name for those efforts was Project Marigold.

In 1967, Mr. Kissinger, then a Harvard professor, along with two Frenchmen, also tried to get negotiations started in a project code-named Pennsylvania. North Vietnam expressed irritation at raids against Hanoi in August of that year and the talks floundered. Full-scale talks did not begin in Paris until May, 1968.

But despite the heavy bombing raids against North Vietnam since April of this year, State Department experts said Hanoi has shown no hesitation about negotiating with the United States. And there was no sign that today's incident would lead to any halt in the negotiations, they said.

Statement Phoned From U.S.

By **JOSEPH B. TREASTER**
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 11—As reports of damage to the French mission in Hanoi began to reach Saigon today, the American high command was swamped with inquiries. At first spokesmen would only confirm that United States planes had been operating over North Vietnam today.

Then, according to informed officers, the statement alluding

to the surface-to-air missiles was formulated in Washington and telephoned to the United States military spokesman in Saigon for release here.

Ordinarily, the command does not comment on air raids over North Vietnam until 24 hours after they have been completed. But informed officers said the sensitivity of the charges against the United States in this case demanded some formal response.

One senior officer said the statement had been necessarily vague because, "I don't think they know what happened yet." "They're still trying to check it out," he said.

The missile most widely used by the North Vietnamese is a radar guided SAM-2, which is supplied by the Soviet Union. With a booster, it is 35 feet long, weighs 3,000 pounds and has a range of 28 miles.

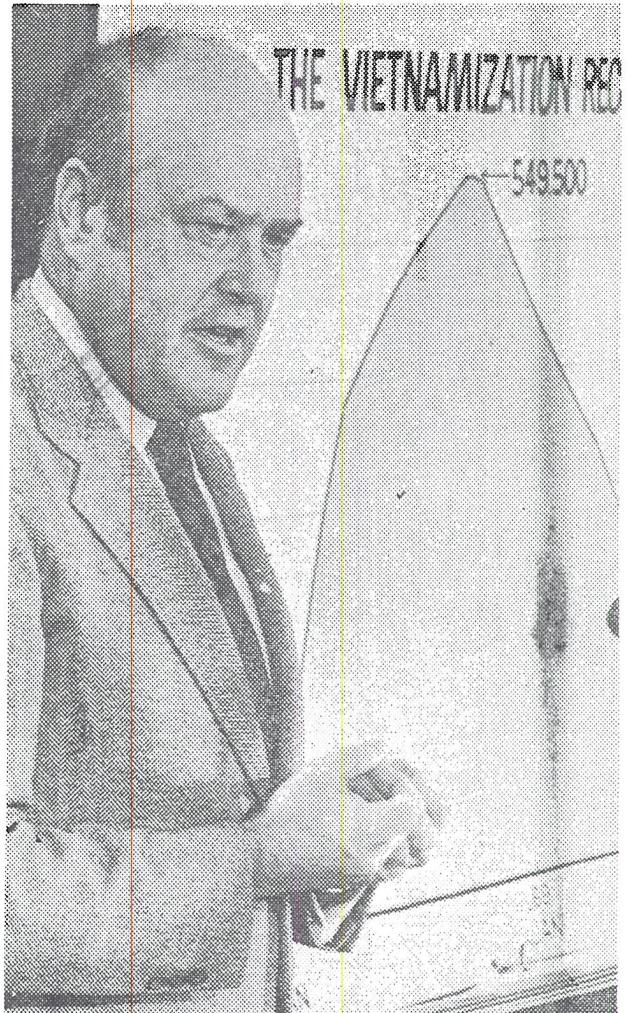
American officers say that when the missile is functioning properly it explodes high in the sky and disintegrates into thousands of pieces of shrapnel no more than two or three inches in diameter.

This shrapnel is meant to bring down a plane, but the American officers say it would do little if any damage to a building on the ground.

The officers say the missile is equipped with an automatic "self-destruct" mechanism, which is set off by an altimeter if the missile goes past its target and starts heading for the ground. Controllers on the ground can also destroy the missile if it strays, the officers say.

Sometimes, however, the systems fail, the officers say, and pilots have reported seeing the missiles lift off their pads out of control and then plunge into the earth with a tremendous explosion.

* * * Herbert Marcovich and Raymond Aubra (see Jack Anderson, New Orleans States-Item 23 Jun 72, this file).



The New York Times/George James

Melvin R. Laird, the Secretary of Defense, speaking during his news conference yesterday at the Pentagon.