

French Diplomatic Building Blasted During Hanoi Raid

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Top Envoy Wounded-- U.S. Apologizes And Promises a Probe

Associated Press

Saigon

The French diplomatic mission in Hanoi was badly damaged and its chief diplomat wounded yesterday during a United States air raid on the North Vietnamese capital.

The U.S. command said Navy planes attacked military targets northeast of the French compound but implied the damage could have been caused by falling antiaircraft missiles.

The United States Government apologized to the French and promised an investigation.

INJURED

A French government spokesman said Pierre Susini, delegate general in Hanoi, was severely wounded and four Vietnamese employees were missing, but other French diplomatic personnel were safe.

A North Vietnamese dispatch said Susini suffered third-degree burns on the head and chest, and a wound in the temple from a bomb splinter. It added that he was found lying almost buried under wreckage.

Michael Maclear, a correspondent for the Canadian television network CTV, reported from Hanoi he saw the attack that destroyed the diplomatic residence, cutting it in half.

CASUALTIES

He said besides the wounding of Susini, a French woman diplomat and five Vietnamese staff members were killed.

Maclear declared that at least three jets swooped repeatedly over the center of

the capital.

"I counted at least a dozen sorties by jets and watched as one, defying heavy anti-aircraft fire, dived very low dropping two bombs. No possibility of pilot error."

Maclear said the area hit had no factories nearby.

Also wounded in the bombing was Qemal Rahmanaj, charge d'affaires of Albania, who was in the French building at the time of the attack, the North Vietnamese agency said.

DAMAGE

The bombing destroyed two-thirds of the residence and reception hall of the delegate general, the agency said.

Algeria protested to the United States that the blast at the French mission blew

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off the roof of its Embassy in Hanoi.

In Washington, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird conceded that U.S. bombs may have struck the mission, a compound of five buildings in the heart of Hanoi.

Laird said he could not be positive whether the damage was caused by a stray bomb

or by falling enemy antiaircraft shells or missiles, which by official account included heavy missiles called "flying telephone poles" by U.S. pilots.

TALKS

Laird said the bombings would continue despite the delicate negotiations in Paris between Henry Kissinger, presidential security adviser, and North Vietnamese.

France, which has been playing a hand in arranging for the secrecy of the talks, exhibited outrage at the attack.

President Georges Pompidou said the damage was caused by U.S. bombs and called the incident "a deplorable act."

General John W. Vogt, U.S. deputy commander in Vietnam and commander of the Seventh Air Force, promised an investigation into the incident.

"I can't imagine how it could have happened," Vogt said. "We'll just have to go into it and see what happened. We're going to take a good hard look at it."

REGRET

While not admitting that American bombs caused the damage to the French mission the U.S. command said: "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 U.S. aircraft."

A U.S. command spokesman said Navy planes hit military targets 2½ to three miles across the Red river from the French mission, including railroad yards and transshipment points.

"A number of enemy surface-to-air (antiaircraft) missiles were fired at the U.S. aircraft," the command said in a statement. "No U.S. aircraft were lost and the surface-to-air missiles, after missing the aircraft, could have impacted on the ground."

Radio Hanoi said two U.S. planes were shot down during the raid on Hanoi, and that a B-52 bomber was downed farther south.

COMMENT

A U.S. official, comment-

ing on the damage to the French compound, declared: "We are not denying that it was caused by bombs, but we are also pointing out that it might not have been."

The U.S. attacks in the Hanoi area were the first in several weeks although Air Force, Navy and Marine planes have been making 3000 or more raids a day against North Vietnam.

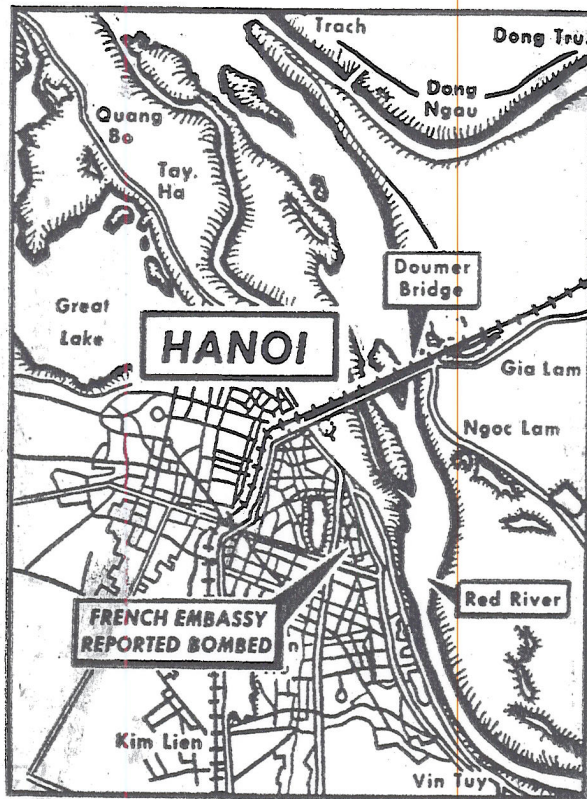
The raids are aimed at slowing the flow of war materiel to the battle fronts of South Vietnam and also at pressuring the North Vietnamese into reaching a settlement of the war.

Kissinger remained in Paris for a fourth day of talks. White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler said the Hanoi bombing was not involved in the extension of Kissinger's stay.



AP Wirephoto

PIERRE SUSINI
The injured diplomat



AP Wirephoto

The location of the French mission complex in Hanoi