

Heaviest B-52 Raid On North Vietnam

Associated Press

Saigon

U.S. B-52s made their heaviest attacks of the war against North Vietnam yesterday and Thursday, pounding enemy troops and supply dumps just above the demilitarized zone.

The record number of raids by the giant bombers in a 24-hour period followed

the close of another round of secret Paris peace talks, but U.S. sources maintained the stepped-up attacks had no political significance.

Nearly 50 B-52s, in 16 separate missions, bombed targets in an area southeast of Dong Hoi, on the coast north of the demilitarized zone.

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Two other missions hit the DMZ.

The previous record for B-52 raids against North Vietnam was 15 on November 22, the U.S. Command reported.

All bombing raids over the North have been below the 20th parallel since October 23 when the U.S. limited the target area because of renewed secret peace talks. This places the North Vietnamese capital of Hanoi and its major port, Haiphong, off limits to bombers.

The B-52s have been concentrating their attacks in an area where U.S. military sources have reported heavy enemy troops and truck concentrations preparing to move toward battlefronts in South Vietnam.

Bombing raids against these reinforcements intensified December 5 and have been carried out almost daily since. More than 80 missions and 7000 tons of bombs have pounded the area.

In South Vietnam, B-52s flew 14 missions against suspected enemy troop positions Thursday and yesterday. The U.S. command said seven were in Quang Tri province, where government troops are battling enemy forces.

American fighter bombers made 324 attacks in South Vietnam on Thursday, the most in two months. The U.S. command said more than half were in the northernmost First Military Region.

In North Vietnam, fighter bombers made 50 attacks Thursday but the U.S. command said there "no significant bomb damage assessment" to report.

Early today Communists

fired 122-mm. rockets into the Bien Hoa Air Base three times, military sources said.

Shortly after 1 a.m. seven of the six-foot-long rockets slammed into the South Vietnamese Air Force section of the base but caused no casualties and "no significant damage," a military source said.

Two hours later six more of the big rockets landed outside the base near a housing area but caused neither casualties or damage, military sources said.

More rockets landed at the base at 9:30 a.m. but there were no immediate details.

Government paratroopers supported by planes and artillery battled North Vietnamese forces south of Quang Tri, killing 44 of the enemy, the Saigon command said. Government casualties were given as one dead and two wounded.

In the Central Highlands, near the Cambodian border, South Vietnamese infantry and armor reported killing 16 North Vietnamese two miles north of Duc Co.

In Saigon, a bomb in the parking lot of an army installation killed a soldier, damaged three trucks and set a fuel tank ablaze, the government reported.

At Long Binh, 12 miles northeast of Saigon, saboteurs set off explosions that damaged ten trucks and jeeps.