

INTENSIVE BOMBING OF NORTH RESUMED

U.S. Planes Hit Hanoi, Haiphong

By George C. Wilson
12/19/72

Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States has resumed full-scale bombing of North Vietnam in the wake of a deadlock in the peace negotiations with the Hanoi government.

American bombers began hitting targets near the North Vietnamese capital of Hanoi yesterday and the port city of Haiphong on Sunday night Vietnam time. U.S. planes also began reseeded minefields at the entrances to harbors.

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, confirming that the bombing restrictions had been lifted for the area above the 20th parallel, told reporters at the Pentagon that "air operations are being conducted throughout North Vietnam at the present time."

The White House indicated that the intensified bombing will continue for some time, as distinguished from a single "hard knock" series of raids to make a diplomatic point.

Said Ronald L. Ziegler, White House press secretary: "The President will continue to order whatever action he considers necessary, by air or by sea, to prevent any buildup that could lead to the opening of a new offensive in the South.

"We are not going to allow the peace talks to be used as a cover to build up another offensive," Ziegler said.

"This policy will continue until such time as a settlement is arrived at," he said. "We stand ready to negotiate in a serious and constructive manner at any time. It is the President's view that neither side can gain from prolonging the war or from prolonging the peace talks."

The President's press secretary sidestepped a question on whether the resumed bombing meant that Mr. Nixon had decided to get a settlement of the war by military means. "We stand ready to end the conflict rapidly," Ziegler replied.

He said the resumption of the bombing north of the 20th parallel, after a hiatus since Oct. 23, was "consistent" with Mr. Nixon's policy statement of May 8.

Mr. Nixon in that speech said the U.S. in peace negotiations had offered "the maximum of what any President of the United States could offer" only to be met with

See VIETNAM, A19, Col. 5

VIETNAM, From A1

"intransigence" at the conference table.

In the absence of a negotiated peace, the President said on May 8, "There is only one way to stop the killing. That is to keep the weapons of war out of the hands of the international outlaws of North Vietnam."

In pursuit of that objective, Mr. Nixon said, he had ordered the mining of "all entrances to North Vietnamese ports" and an air and naval campaign to cut supply routes within North Vietnam.

Reports from the Pentagon and American commanders in Vietnam indicate Mr. Nixon went to an escalated version of that May 8 strategy right after his chief negotiator, Henry A. Kissinger, disclosed on Saturday that peace talks had stalled again.

United Press International said that the North Vietnam delegation in Paris immediately suspended technical talks with the United States on a cease-fire and said the Hanoi and Vietcong delegation may boycott the regular Thursday peace talks in protest if the resumed bombing.

Pentagon sources said the new bombing strikes mounted against the Hanoi-Haiphong areas over the weekend were the heaviest of the war. And the U.S. command in Saigon put out a statement which confirmed those areas as targets:

"We are conducting air strikes throughout North Vietnam against military targets from which North Vietnam is supporting continuing infiltration. This includes the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

The weekend bombing in the far north apparently started Sunday night (Vietnam time) as U.S. planes were re-seeding harbors with mines designed to keep supply ships out.

Radio Hanoi on Sunday night reported raids around Haiphong and said they were designed to force a peace settlement.

The Haiphong mining and bombing operations were followed on Monday night by a raid against Hanoi, according to the North Vietnamese broadcasts.

Hanoi Radio said the raids against its capital occurred at 8 p.m. Hanoi time (11:30 a.m. EST). The Soviet news agency Tass said the raid against Hanoi lasted 40 minutes, with bombs falling within a half-mile of the center of the city.

Tass said the air raid sirens sounded while the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam—the Vietcong—was showing a film for North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, heads of foreign diplomatic missions in Hanoi and visiting journalists.

A spokesman for the foreign ministry of North Vietnam issued this statement on Monday about the weekend raids, according to Agency France Press:

"On Dec. 17, 1972 the American number of aircraft over the banks of Long Chau, Catba and the suburbs of Haiphong, dropping mines in territorial waters of Namhieu and firing rockets at a number of places in the suburbs of Haiphong.

The same day U.S. aviation and naval vessels fiercely attacked numerous populous

lean imperialists sent a large regions ranging from Nghe Province to the Vinhlinh region. Dozens of other aircraft formations, including pilotless planes, carried out reconnaissance over many North Vietnamese localities in order to prepare for further U.S. military adventures.

These acts, undertaken at a time when the U.S. is demanding a change in the text of the agreement reached on Oct. 20, 1972—thus delaying an end to the war and the restoration of peace in Vietnam—show that the American imperialists are not yet renouncing their acts of aggression against Vietnam but are continuing to insist that the Vietnamese people should be obliged to accept, by force of arms, their arrogant conditions."

Fighting at Quangtri Continues 3d Day

From News Dispatches
SAIGON, Dec. 18—Heavy fighting was reported for the third successive day Monday in South Vietnam's northernmost Quangtri Province, just below the Demilitarized Zone.

The Saigon command said fresh, tank-backed North Vietnamese troops massing near Quangtri were badly mauled by South Vietnamese paratroopers. At least 307 North Vietnamese troops were killed in 16 hours of fighting ending at dusk Sunday, the command said.

In Laos, Communist forces fired 31 rockets early Monday into the airfield at Luang Prabang, the royal capital 140 miles north of Vientiane.

A U.S. spokesman said the attack wounded at least one soldier and two civilians, destroyed a winch crane plan and damaged a helicopter as the fuel storage depot. It was the first rocket attack on the field since Nov. 13.



By Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post
Laird, right, briefs his successor as Defense Secretary, Elliot L. Richardson.