

North Hit By Heaviest Raids of War

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By Michael Getler **DEC 20 1972**
Washington Post Staff Writer

Waves of American warplanes, including a record number of almost 100 B-52 heavy bombers, pounded North Vietnam's heartland around Hanoi and Haiphong for a second day yesterday in the heaviest air raids of the Vietnam war.

The attacks, ordered by President Nixon after Washington blamed Hanoi for a breakdown in peace negotiations, also were among the most costly for the United States.

The U.S. Command in Saigon said that two B-52s and an F-111 fighter-bomber were shot down during the raids Monday night and Tuesday morning. Eight airmen were listed as missing by the command.

Radio Hanoi claimed that North Vietnam shot down three of the big bombers and three smaller fighter-bombers. The North Vietnamese promptly displayed the captured six-man crew of a B-52 downed earlier in the day about 30 miles northwest of the capital at a Hanoi news conference yesterday.

The crew of the second B-52 managed to nurse the stricken plane back to Thailand and was rescued after bailing out. Both of the big planes were believed to have been hit by surface-to-air-missiles.

The F-111 was hit and crashed about 50 miles southwest of the port city of Haiphong.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler continued yesterday to portray the resumption of heavy bombing of North Vietnam above the 20th Parallel as "designed to prevent a buildup or a contingent buildup" of enemy forces and supplies that could lead to a new offensive against South Vietnam.

"We are not going to allow the talks to be used as a covering" for such a buildup, Ziegler said, alluding to supplies that have continued to move across the Chinese border and further southward during the eight weeks since the United States halted bombing above the 20th Parallel.

Despite this White House explanation, many high-rank-

of bombs each.

Almost 100 B-52 and about 25 F-111s a day are hitting the North, using their own radars to find their targets. Neither plane has a reputation for pinpoint bombing.

While the Pentagon has said that raids are being carried out throughout the North, the bulk of the first two days of heavy bombing has been in the surroundings of the two main cities, where the political impact could be the greatest.

Officials maintain that Washington does not intend to threaten the North's leaders that the cities themselves will be bombed if the war continues. But these officials decline to be specific about what lessons they think Hanoi should draw from the attacks, aside from American readiness to continue a dramatic and punishing escalation of the bombing.

The Pentagon yesterday provided no details on the raids but characterized the renewed bombing as "a very major effort," including attacks upon some targets never struck before.

Other officials indicated, however, that the number of new targets is still very low.

Targets struck included petroleum storage areas, rail yards, some electrical power plants, some Mig airbases and radar stations, and some bridges and rail lines from China that had been previously knocked out and repaired.

Hanoi's Gialam airfield, which serves both Migs and commercial aircraft, and a thermal power plant in downtown Hanoi — off limits in the past — have apparently not been hit. Nor has much of the U.S. airpower been used against targets in and around a 25-mile deep buffer zone along the Chinese border. Many attractive targets are said to be located there.

Officials say that if the talks continue to be stalemated and the bombing goes on, then more and more militarily significant targets will undoubtedly be hit. But, as of now, as one official puts it, "The target list looks a lot different than if Gen. John W. Vogt had made it out."

Vogt is the top U. S. air commander in Southeast Asia.

As for the military situation, officials say that the North has indeed continued to move supplies across the Chinese border, has repaired fuel pipelines from China and many roads and bridges and rail lines, and has also moved men southward. However, military sources say there is no sign of any major new offensive brewing and no major change in the assessment offered publicly just a few weeks ago by virtually all top U. S. commanders that it would take

North Vietnam at least 18 months to repair the losses sustained in the past eight months.

Officials say much of the new equipment is being prepositioned in North Vietnam's southern panhandle, rather than being brought into the South.

The F-111 shot down was the fifth of these \$15 million aircraft to be lost since Sept. 27.

The two \$8 million apiece B-52s shot down were the second and third downed by enemy fire in the war. Eleven others have been lost in crashes or accidents. According to the Pentagon, the North Vietnamese fired as many as 100 SAM missiles on the first day of the intensified raids.

Both B-52s and F-111s carry conventional bombs, rather than the more accurate "smart bomb," which are steered to their target electronically.

If the downed B-52 was demolished, Hanoi could possibly salvage some of its electronic gear designed to fool the SAM missiles.

Saigon sources reported that

a fifth U.S. aircraft carrier is now operating in the Tonkin Gulf in addition to the four normally there. U.S. naval gunfire against the North Vietnamese coast above the 20th Parallel has also been resumed.

The six captured U.S. airmen, who will join about 429 other known U.S. POWs, were identified in news dispatches from Hanoi as:

Capt. Robert Glenn Certain, navigator, born in Georgia in 1947, serial No. 214-48-8424;

Maj. Fernando Alexander, born in Texas in 1929, serial No. 454-36-3155;

Capt. Charles Arthur Brown Jr., born in Illinois in 1946, serial No. 025-34-9616;

Capt. Richard Thomas Simpson, born in South Dakota in 1941, serial No. 250-66-2660;

Capt. Henry Charles Barrow, born in 1946, serial No. 136-38-5463;

Capt. Hal K. Wilson, born in New York City in 1938, serial No. 112-304-927.

Haig Meets With Thieu For 3 Hours at Palace

By Peter Osnos
Washington Post Foreign Service
SAIGON, Dec. 19 — Maj. Gen. Alexander Haig, deputy to White House adviser Henry Kissinger, met with President Thieu for three hours this morning at Independence Palace.

Haig was accompanied only by U.S. Ambassador Eils-

worth Bunker and Thieu by his private secretary Hoang Duc Nha. Little was known about the substance of Haig's report to Thieu.

In the afternoon, Haig flew to Phnom Penh where he conferred with Cambodian President Lon Nol, returning to Saigon tonight. On Wednesday, he is expected to go to Vientiane and Bangkok. He will probably confer one more time with Thieu before leaving for Washington Thursday.

The Saigon government had no official comment today on the U.S. bombing raids, but the semi-official newspaper Tin Song, which days ago had been obliquely attacking the United States for preparing a sellout, praised the "tough new measures."

"Let Hanoi understand that it cannot keep being stubborn," the newspaper said. "The ARVN (the army of South Vietnam) and the people of South Vietnam welcome the good will of the United States in the search for peace with honor in Indochina."

The resumption of the heavy bombing and the sudden deflation of peace hopes has left Saigon's foreign community of diplomats and journalists both dazed and disappointed. In the space of a weekend, the widespread certainty of a cease-fire—once said to be only hours away—has been replaced with the expectation of indefinite heavy fighting.

Among the Vietnamese in Saigon, there is no readily discernible reaction. This city's people have grown immune to the shifts in official pronouncements. "We are having a hard time," said one politician, "but we are used to a hard time."