

U.S. WON'T DISCUSS DETAILS OF RAIDS

Military Command Refuses to Divulge Data Routinely Made Public in the Past

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 20—The United States military command here refused for the third day today to discuss fundamental elements of the intensive bombing and shelling of North Vietnam, which was begun Monday night and which is believed to be the heaviest of the war.

At the regular allied military news briefing this evening a spokesman reaffirmed that three B-52 bombers and two fighter-bombers were lost on Monday and Tuesday, that 15 airmen had been captured or killed and that North Vietnamese guns had damaged an American warship, killing two sailors and wounding three.

The Hanoi radio reported that two other B-52's and four additional fighter-bombers had crashed, but adhering to longstanding policy the spokesman refused to comment on this report.

He turned aside nearly all questions into the scope and nature of the attacks. He refused, for example, to disclose the number of fighter-bombers and B-52's that had participated in the raids, their targets or any of the results—information routinely made public in the past.

Terse Statement Issued

Instead, the spokesman stood behind a terse statement that said: "During the 24-hour period ending at 0800 today, United States crews conducted bombing operations against mil-

itary targets in North Vietnam."

At the same time it was learned that the United States Navy had abruptly canceled two visits by journalists to aircraft carriers operating off Vietnam that had been scheduled for Tuesday and Friday of next week. The bases in Thailand where the rest of the fighter-bombers attacking North Vietnam are stationed have always been closed to newsmen except for a handful of brief, carefully controlled guided tours.

Despite the official silence, other military sources said that more than 100 of the eight-engine B-52's, each of which usually carries more than 20 tons of bombs, and several hundred—perhaps as many as 500—smaller planes struck North Vietnam on Monday and yesterday and early today. Never before has the United States used such force against the North Vietnamese.

'Protection of Information'

Until Monday evening American bombers and warships had limited their attacks in North Vietnam to below the 20th Parallel. President Nixon had curtailed the raids to that point on Oct. 22, when the chances of an agreement to end the war looked promising.

This evening the military briefing officer was asked by several newsmen who had ordered the "clampdown" on information about the American operations in North Vietnam and for what reason. He did not answer those questions but took issue with the term "clampdown." He said that the command was engaged in "protection of information."

Since the North Vietnamese obviously know the extent of the American bombing and shelling in their country, a newsmen asked, from whom was the command protecting the information.

The officer replied, "We're protecting an ongoing opera-

tion."

He was asked to give some military justification for the official silence but was unwilling to do so.

The officer was told that the Hanoi radio had charged that "many heavily populated areas" had been bombed and he was asked whether civilian targets were now being hit.

Targets Called Military

"We are targeting and striking military targets," he said. "I think it's safe to assume we're not hitting civilian targets."

Asked for a definition of military targets, he replied, "Logistical and other military installations which go into the support of the military operations of the North Vietnamese forces invading South Vietnam."

So far the Hanoi radio has provided very little information on damage caused by the attacks. In one report, the radio said that "many heavily populated areas inside and outside Hanoi" had been bombed and that Haiphong and its suburbs was attacked more than 30 times on Monday. But the radio has mentioned only a small number of casualties.

There has been some speculation here that the current American attacks might be of limited duration, perhaps of less than a week, and that at the end of the period the command might provide a summary of the military activity and at least a partial report of results.