

Officials Split on Bombing

Key Issue Is What U.S. Can Attain

By George C. Wilson
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The Nixon administration is split over how much the current bombing of North Vietnam can achieve.

Civilian and military officials at the highest level of the Pentagon said flatly yesterday that the bombing was part of President Nixon's negotiation process rather than a military operation.

And while this bombing is designed to force Hanoi into signing an ironclad peace agreement, there is a split within the administration over whether any such agreement could stop the fighting between Vietnamese in Indochina.

The key inside argument amidst this heaviest bombing campaign of the war, therefore, is what is now attainable for the United States in Vietnam.

President Nixon, in sending waves of B-52s over the heartland of North Vietnam day after day to put more pressure on Hanoi's leaders, has signaled that he believes the proper kind of agreement can stop the fighting in Indochina.

But other officials high in the administration believe—and are now saying so in guarded conversations—that the most the United States can hope for is an honorable withdrawal of its own forces.

It is time to get out of Vietnam because the war has been successfully turned over to the Saigon army, according to those who hold this view.

They argue that holding out for a piece of paper that cannot stop the Vietnamese from fighting among themselves—no matter how it is written—is dragging out the war for no meaningful purpose.

Thus President Nixon—as he approaches his second four-year term struggling with the Vietnam War—is confronted with the same kind of split

that ran through President Johnson's cabinet in 1968 as he pondered where to go next in Indochina.

Unlike President Johnson, Mr. Nixon—for the moment at least—has opted for heating up the war with heavier bombing.

A Pentagon official used the word "scare" in discussing the use of B-52s that have been bombing by the acre around Hanoi and Haiphong.

The giant bombers, each of which carries six men and 30 tons of bombs, have never been used so intensively before around heavily defended Hanoi and Haiphong.

One reason for their sparing use in the past is that the B-52s cannot achieve the accuracy of a smaller fighter-bomber diving down on a specific target.

Another reason is that the B-52s fly high but cannot maneuver like a fighter-bomber to dodge the Soviet anti-aircraft missiles that are thickly deployed around Hanoi and Haiphong.

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BOMBING, A11

The missile that hit the B-52s last night was a SA-2 Guideline, the same weapon that knocked down a B-52 and his U.S. crew members on May 1, 1966. President Nixon obviously reasoned that bombing as a form of diplomatic pressure outweighed the risk of losing the big B-52 bomber over the North.

Although White House spokesman Ronald G. Ziegler has been saying that an objective of this bombing has been to keep Hanoi from launching an enemy offensive, Pentagon officials reject this explanation.

They said Hanoi's reaction yesterday that the bombing was part of the negotiation process rather than a military operation. Military leaders insist that Hanoi has not recovered from the pounding it took in the Easter攻势, and are not at all likely to launch an offensive.

On the record, however, administration spokesmen yesterday stuck to the explanation that the bombing was motivated by military considerations.

Jerry W. Friedheim, Pentagon spokesman, said that strikes are continuing throughout North Vietnam, including the Hanoi-Haiphong areas against military targets which support the continuing infiltration into and aggression against South Vietnam.

When asked if the B-52

strikes—which have been running at the rate of about 100 a day—against the Hanoi-Haiphong region—constituted "terror bombing," Friedheim said he would not "embrace" the term. He said the raids had inflicted "very significant military damage."

"We are striking military targets," said Friedheim. "We do not strike civilian targets." He added that bombing of civilian facilities has been "extremely rare."

Friedheim listed these among the targets for the new raids: command and control facilities, warehouses, communication facilities, repair parks, power plants, railroad

stations, and other military and industrial targets. He said that the B-52s are being used in an unprecedented number of strikes that have been launched.

As one source in Washington said yesterday, the U.S. military commander in Saigon had listed three B-52s as lost in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

He said that the B-52s were shot down by SA-2 missiles and SA-3 missiles. American planes in the raids.

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The government for Hanoi said the bombing was a "terror bombing" and issued a statement declaring his act by the American air force which caused the death of two Polish seamen, qualified as an act of air piracy which deserves absolute condemnation.

Radio Hanoi made another protest of the bombing yesterday.

day, declaring that persons were killed and 326 wounded in Hanoi from the bombing raids Monday and Tuesday. Hanoi Radio added that 45 persons were killed and 731 wounded in the port city of Haiphong on the Monday raids alone.

The North Vietnamese government staged a press conference with some of the survivors of two B-52s that crashed near Hanoi. Ngon Dang, vice body of Hanoi, said a complete technical manual on the B-52 bomber compiled by the North Vietnamese was exhibited along with the pilots and the wreckage of their plane.

Capt. Richard Thomas Simpson, 31, of South Dakota, said to the broadcast news conference that he was shot down on Monday (Vietnam time) over Hanoi by a SA-2 missile, while Barrow said he was downed on Tuesday morning (Vietnam time). "I have received wonderful medical care," said Barrow.