

Nixon to Call Brief Holiday Halt to Raids

North Pounded For Sixth Day

From News Dispatches

U.S. planes continued the heaviest assault of the war on North Vietnam through a sixth day Saturday, as Hanoi accused the U.S. of waging an "extermination" bombing campaign against populated areas.

U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence agents monitored a radio message reporting that North Vietnam's legendary Defense Minister Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap was killed Friday in an explosion while touring a bomb-damaged area of Haiphong.

But Washington Post correspondent Peter Osnos reported from Saigon that the origin of the report, a spoken and uncoded message from somewhere in North Vietnam, was not clear and intelligence sources expressed doubt that it was genuine.

The North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks denied the report of Giap's death with extraordinary rapidity, Washington Post correspondent Jonathan Randal reported. The formal denial was issued 90 minutes after the report first surfaced in Paris.

Six foreign embassies in Hanoi—those of East Germany, India, Egypt, Cambodia, Cuba and Albania—and the Hungarian trade mission have now been damaged by American bombs, according to reports from several capitals.

The Soviet news agency Tass reported Saturday that U.S. airstrikes on Hanoi had resulted in casualties among American pilots held in the main POW camp in the North Vietnamese capital.

Tass correspondent Alexander Mineyev reported from Hanoi that raids "during three straight nights" had dropped bombs in the area of a prison camp.

"There were wounded among the prisoners," he said. He did not indicate the number of casualties and reported that a POW camp official said the injured had been taken to a hospital for treatment.

U.S. raids against targets in North Vietnam continued Saturday. Hanoi Radio claimed two more B-52s were shot down over Haiphong in Saturday's raids, bringing to 17 the number of big bombers North Vietnam claims to have downed this week.

The U.S. command in Saigon announced that two B-52s were shot down in Friday's

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raids. It has now reported that a total of 10 B-52s have been shot down since the renewed bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong began last Monday.

Agence France-Presse correspondent Jean Thoraval reported from Hanoi that U.S. planes made their 40th raid of the week against the North Vietnamese capital at dawn Saturday.

He reported that while some residents of Hanoi can be seen fleeing to the countryside on bicycles or carts, people remain in the city in big numbers, calmly continuing their daily activities, despite the alerts and the destruction of buildings, sometimes right in the middle of the city, that are in no way military.

Thoraval also reported that the weekly Aeroflot flight which lands at Hanoi's Gialam airport was cancelled Saturday because the only stretch of runway left unscathed by bombs was too short to receive a four-engine jet.

But he said a turboprop Chinese civilian plane managed to land in Hanoi after waiting in Anning, Southern China, for more than 20 hours for a lull in the bombing.

The North Vietnamese message reporting Giap's death said he was killed Friday at the Tran Hung Dao armaments depot in Haiphong when a delayed-action bomb dropped by U.S. warplanes exploded.

Correspondent Osnos reported from Saigon that intelligence officials said a message of such importance would almost certainly have been in code.

"It could well have been a plant," one official told Osnos. There have been erroneous reports before of the death of North Vietnam's top military strategist, who became a legend after defeating the French at Dienbienphu in 1954.

In Paris, the North Vietnamese delegation to the peace talks termed the report of Giap's death "an out-and-out invention of the CIA." A spokesman said: "We do not stoop to deny this product of the American psychological warfare."

The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, in a statement broadcast by Hanoi Radio, accused the United States of waging an "extermination" bombing campaign against populated areas, destroying homes, schools and pagodas.

"By doing this, Nixon has committed crimes even more barbarous than those of Hitler," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

A statement issued by the Hanoi delegation in Paris said B-52s had leveled villages, hospitals and schools in "saturation bombing" raids against "the most densely populated regions in North Vietnam."

The Hungarian news agency and Tass both reported that the Hungarian commercial mission and the East German embassy in Hanoi were damaged in the U.S. bombing

raids. Radio Hanoi Saturday added the Albanian and Cambodian embassies to the list of those which have been reported damaged by U.S. bombs.

In New Delhi, U.S. charge d'affaires Lee Stull was summoned to the Foreign Ministry Saturday to receive a protest over damage to the Indian embassy in Hanoi Thursday. A U.S. spokesman said Stull expressed deep regret over any damage caused by American bombers.

In Warsaw, U.S. charge d'affaires Davis E. Booster saw Poland's deputy foreign minister Friday and delivered "profound condolences" for the death of three Polish seamen killed in Haiphong when their ship was reportedly hit and sunk by U.S. bombers, Warsaw newspapers reported today.

Hanoi Delegation Walks Out in Paris

From News Dispatches

PARIS, Dec. 23—The North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks today walked out of a scheduled technical meeting with American diplomats after reading a protest against the bombing of North Vietnam.

They said the talks had been postponed "till another day," according to a North Vietnamese statement. The walkout was a repeat of the Hanoi delegation's action at the last experts meeting on Wednesday.

The technicians' meetings are an offshoot of the private peace talks between U.S. presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger and Hanoi's top negotiator, Le Duc Tho. The delegates are supposed to discuss technical aspects of the peace negotiations.

A U.S. spokesman said American negotiator Heyward Isham proposed another meeting "on a day next week" and the North Vietnamese replied that they would consider the proposal.

The U.S. spokesman said the American request for another meeting stemmed from a desire "to keep channels of communication open and our belief that these meetings can accomplish useful work."

The North Vietnamese recalled their adjournment Wednesday and said that since then, "the United States has daily launched frenzied air and naval attacks against Hanoi, Haiphong and many other areas of North Vietnam." The embassies of Egypt, Cuba and India were destroyed, whole areas flattened and "barbarous crimes committed against our people."

The statement said the attacks were intended to exert pressure on North Vietnam and were seriously undermining the negotiations for a cease-fire.

"It is our wish to settle the Vietnam problem peacefully..." the statement said. "However, if the United States persists in intensifying the war, the Vietnamese people are determined to fight to the end..."