

A Christmas Eve Respite for Hanoi

United Press

Saigon

American bombers that attacked Hanoi for seven consecutive days took a Christmas holiday yesterday, but not before the 11th B-52 was shot down (flying the heaviest raids of the war over North Vietnam.

Officials at the Florida White House at Key Bis-

cayne said President Nixon had ordered a 24-hour Christmas Eve halt. But they refused to comment on whether the cessation might continue after the holiday truce expires today.

The U.S. command in Saigon refused to comment on all questions regarding a temporary bombing halt.

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But informed sources indicated the bombing had been halted, including in the Hanoi-Haiphong area which Mr. Nixon put off limits October 23 to show American "goodwill" in attempts to work out a peace settlement.

TRUCE

Both North and South Vietnamese ground troops have declared 24-hour truces, but the South Vietnamese command claimed there were 39 violations by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

Mr. Nixon ordered full-scale bombing of the North resumed last Monday and since then, American planes have been attacking around the clock.

Earlier, the U.S. command said another B-52 crashed because of damage from North Vietnamese fire and a smaller F-4 fighter-bomber was downed near Haiphong.

The B-52 crashed in Laos and at least one crewman was missing. It was the 11th B-52 lost since bombing resumed December 18.

The two Navy crew members of the F-4 Phantom ejected into the Tonkin Gulf and were rescued. The command said the cause of the downing was unknown.

MISSING

At least ten other Americans were reported missing in Laos after their AC-130 Spectre gunship was shot down. The command said the plane, which normally carries a crew of 12, was

shot down Thursday. Two of the men were rescued.

UPI reporter Matt Franjola said South Vietnamese and anti-Saigon troops were fighting near artillery base November not far from Kontum, 260 miles north of Saigon, at least one hour after the North Vietnamese truce was scheduled to go into effect at midnight December 24 EST. The South Vietnamese truce started at 5 a.m. EST.

Franjola narrowly escaped being wounded or killed in the battle. He said three shell fragments cut through the back of his flak jacket but did not break the skin.

Despite reports one day earlier from the Florida White House that American pilots would observe the 24-hour peace, the command in Saigon refused comment.

"We have no comment on operational matters," a command spokesman said.

LOSSES

American losses over North Vietnam since December 18 have been the heaviest of the war. At least 56 American flyers are missing and 14 planes have been shot down.

The North Vietnamese claim their gunners have shot down 46 planes, including four yesterday.

There was scattered fighting reported around the country before the truces went into effect and Saigon reported that 15 of its enemies were killed in a battle only six miles south of Saigon.