

PAUSE IN BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM SAID TO CONTINUE

**U.S. Military Men Assert
They Have No Idea When
Raids May Resume**

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**One American Says Earlier
B-52 Strikes Have Not
Always Been Accurate**

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, Dec. 26 — Informed American military officers said early today that the pause in bombing of North Vietnam that began on Christmas eve remained in effect past midnight. They added that they had received no indication of when the air raids might be resumed.

"Nothing is moving in either the North or the South," one officer said.

[The White House refused to confirm or deny the extension of the holiday bomb halt, the Associated Press reported from Key Biscayne, Fla. "We are not going to have any comment from here on operations in Vietnam," a spokesman said.]

Although the United States military command here has maintained a policy of minimal disclosure about the bombing one officer said the B-52 strikes before Christmas Eve had not always been accurate. "We've hit a few targets we didn't mean to hit like the Gia Lam airport in Hanoi," he said. This airport handles both civilian and military traffic.

Airport Reported Hard Hit

The officer said he was not certain, but he believed that the B-52's had been sent against a thermal power plant on the day last week when they destroyed more than 80 per cent of the main airport terminal, put deep craters in sections of runway and destroyed two Soviet-built airliners and two helicopters. He said the bombers had been about a mile off target.

At the regular military news briefing last evening spokesmen for the command turned away questions about the bombing halt, saying they would not discuss "operational matters."

However, informed officers said the last American strikes in North Vietnam were conducted about nightfall on Christmas Eve, at about the same time that a 24-hour cease-fire announced by Saigon Government forces began. Vietnam time is 13 hours later than New York time.

Spokesman for the United States military command, refused to acknowledge formally that the bombing had stopped. Spokesmen for the United States Navy's Seventh Fleet, which commands the aircraft carriers off Vietnam, and the Seventh Air Force, the command for Air Force operations in Indochina, also refused to discuss the pause in the bombing.

One high-ranking officer said

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he believed that President Nixon had ordered the pause, after seven days of raids on the North to enable leaders in Hanoi to return to the peace talks without losing face. 24 DEC

On Sunday Xuan Thuy, the chief of the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris talks, said in a television interview that his country would not resume negotiations with the United States while the bombing that started last Monday was continuing.

The high-ranking officer said he felt certain that officials in the Nixon Administration were discussing the resumption of serious peace talks with the North Vietnamese during the pause.

'Crucial' Period Seen

"I'm sure there are some hot telephone calls going on right now," the officer said. "I think the next 24 hours are going to be very crucial." He added:

"I think the White House is saying, let's start meeting in Paris again, and this time no fooling around, or we're putting the bombers back up there.

"If the North Vietnamese say 'O.K. come and get us,' then we're really going to kill them."

"They have really gotten whipped. We lost a lot of B-52's but not before they dropped their bombs and they just tore hell out of them."

One Westerner who was in Hanoi during the week said the extent of damage there was "unbelievable," and added that with the saturation bombing, the ground trembled throughout the day.

People Called Frightened

The man, who has been in and out of Hanoi since the early days of American bombing in North Vietnam, said that last week was the first time that he had ever seen the people in the capital "scared and afraid."

He said that for the first time soldiers stayed crouched in their cement bomb shelters instead of standing up and firing their rifles and machine guns at the attacking planes.

The American military com-

mand, at the specific direction of President Nixon for minimal disclosure, made public little more about the raids than losses of American aircraft and airmen after the conclusion of search-and-rescue operations. Spokesmen have evaded questions about targets and extent of damage.

Last night, however, one well-placed officer who said he has seen reconnaissance photographs of the damage said that B-52's had bombed several times within the city limits of Hanoi and that there had apparently been "very significant" damage.

Targets Mentioned

He said that the eight-engine bombers, which each carry more than 24 tons of bombs and usually fly in formations of three, had smashed storage areas, rail sidings, power plants and airfields, with emphasis on Hanoi, Haiphong and the region immediately surrounding them. This area constitutes the most developed sector of the country.

More than 100 B-52's and several hundred fighters bombers had been attacking the country daily. The officer acknowledged that one reason the heavy bombers had not in the past been sent north in such great numbers was that without the ground-based navigational aides that are in South Vietnam, the bombing was much less accurate and that some officials had said that the use of the planes in the North might result in "unacceptable" civilian casualties.

The officer said he believed that the big planes were finally put into large-scale use in the North in hopes that their devastating carpet bombing could deliver a final crippling blow to the North Vietnamese and force them to accept a peace settlement.

Reports from Hanoi on civilian casualties have been sketchy and the North Vietnamese have said little about specific damage, probably, military men believe, because they do not want to help their attackers with reconnaissance.

Another reason the B-52's were called upon last week, more than one officer has said, is their awesome psychological impact. They fly at very

high altitudes and often the first sound heard by a victim is the ear-splitting thunder of hundreds of bombs exploding.

The explosions fill a rectangle about a mile and a half long and a half mile wide with flames and flying steel fragments. The concussion can knock down flimsy houses and shatter windows for thousands of yards in all directions. Hundreds of North Vietnamese soldiers in South Vietnam have said they defected because they so feared the big bombers.

Spokesmen for the command have acknowledged that 11 of the \$8-million bombers and six smaller fighter-bombers have been lost during the raids. The last plane reported down was a Navy A-7 Corsair, which crashed near Haiphong Sunday at about 4:30 P.M., apparently in one of the final strikes before the bombing halt. The pilot was listed as missing, raising to 57 the number of Americans who have been reported lost during the raids.

"We've lost a lot of planes and I don't think we realized the cost would be so high," one senior officer said, directly contradicting a statement by a Pentagon spokesman that the Navy losses had been expected.

Losses View as High

The officer said he believed that losses had been higher than he and his colleagues in Saigon and expected because the North Vietnamese were able to rebuild their air defenses in the two months that the bombing of the North was curtailed to below the 20th Parallel. President Nixon ordered the curtailment on Oct. 22 as a gesture of good will when the chances of an early peace had seemed promising.

At the military news briefing last night, the spokesmen distributed a brief statement on the air raids that read, "During the 24-hour period ending at 0800 today U.S. crews conducted bombing operations against military targets in North Vietnam."

In response to questions about the statement, Maj. Gilbert Whiteman, one of the spokesmen, said, "We're saying there was bombing 'during' the period, I don't mean 'through-out.' You can interpret this as meaning the first 10 minutes

of the period or 24 hours, however you want to interpret it."

Hanoi Reports Heavy Toll

HANOI, North Vietnam, Dec. 25 (Agence France-Presse) — The North Vietnamese press agency reported today that American planes killed or wounded thousands in the Hanoi and Haiphong raids between Dec. 18 and Dec. 24 and that 40,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North Vietnam.

The press agency said this figure was equivalent to 20 of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima or half the tonnage dropped on Britain during World War II.

Virtually all the populated districts of Hanoi and Haiphong and the whole of the outskirts were targets during this "carpet bombing," the agency said.

It said that the B-52's destroyed the Bach Mai, Haiphong and Kien An hospitals, and destroyed or badly damaged the Polytechnic Institute, the Economic Institute, several pagodas and several churches.

The agency listed seven as embassies damaged: the Cuban, Egyptian, Indian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, East German and Albanian.

Ships of the Soviet Union, China and Poland were reported sunk or wamaged.

The agency said that the bombing of Hanoi continued last night, killing many civilians. It added that on the morning of Dec. 21 the town of Bac Giang was "totally destroyed."

In a separate dispatch, the agency quoted the Foreign Ministry as having said that a school had been attacked at Son Dong in Ha Tay Province together with several medical establishments including a hospital where doctors and patients were killed. Nearby homes were also reported wrecked.

The agency also said that, according to the ministry, new mines were dropped near the port of Hon Gai.

Cambodians Under Attack

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Dec. 25 (UPI)—The Cambodian command today reported fighting less than two miles from the center of Kompong Thom late yesterday as the enemy tightened a hold around the northern provincial capital.