

NYTimes DEC 27 1972 U.S. SAYS BOMBING IS BACK AT LEVEL PRECEDING PAUSE

Warplanes From Thailand, Guam and Carriers Take Off for North Vietnam

HALT LASTED 36 HOURS

Hanoi Reports 8 B-52's Shot Down in Day—Pentagon Calls Loss Rate Normal

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, Dec. 27—With its 36-hour pause in the bombing of North Vietnam ended, the United States command said yesterday that the planes were once again operating as they had last week, when the raids were the heaviest of the war.

Maj. Jere K. Forbus, a spokesman for the command, announced yesterday afternoon that the Christmas pause in bombing had ended three hours earlier, at 1 P.M. (midnight Monday, New York time). At that time, warplanes started taking off from aircraft carriers in the South China Sea and from bases in Thailand and Guam.

Informed officers had said before the pause that about 100 B-52 and several hundred smaller fighter-bombers had been participating in the attacks.

[North Vietnam's press agency said eight more B-52's were shot down Tuesday, according to a Reuters dis-

patch from Paris. The Pentagon had no comment on the report but said earlier that the loss rate of B-52's was not materially greater than in raids last spring though now "there are more B-52's involved.]

57 Listed as Missing

Many officers in Saigon said yesterday that despite denials from the Pentagon, B-52 losses since the raids began Dec. 18 have been much higher than had been expected.

As of last evening the command had acknowledged having lost 11 of the heavy eight-engine bombers, which each carry more than 24 tons of bombs and which usually fly in formations of three. The command has also reported six fighter-bombers down.

Altogether, the command says, 57 American airmen are missing in action, Hanoi says it has captured at least 21.

The North Vietnamese in broadcasts over the Hanoi radio say they have shot down 54 American planes, including 11 B-52's. The Hanoi radio said last night that the latest plane shot down was an F-4 Phantom that was hit northeast of Hanoi 35 minutes after the new bombing began.

Pause on Christmas Day

The intensive raids started the night of Dec. 18, a few days after the United States and North Vietnam had become deadlocked over a plan to end the war, and continued until 1 A.M. on Christmas Day, when President Nixon ordered the halt into effect.

The North Vietnamese had asserted publicly that they would never re-enter negotiations with the United States while the bombing was on and

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some high-ranking officers and diplomats believed the pause had opened the way for a fresh start.

These people said they felt certain that the Nixon Administration had approached the North Vietnamese during the pause on the question of starting new meetings. And some of them said they had been optimistic that the two sides could find a way to move toward peace and to keep the bombing suspended.

Painful for Both Sides

"It has to have been a fairly painful shot to the North Vietnamese and I'm sure it was painful for the Americans to do," one diplomat said of the bombing.

"The bombing halt looked to me like a graceful way out for both sides," he continued. "I thought there was a real possibility of a happy solution but that just isn't so at this time."

The United States military command here, which has been practicing a policy of minimal disclosure, would not confirm that a halting in the bombing had been ordered until after its conclusion yesterday. Major Forbus maintained that the reason for the official silence had been military security.

Officers Discuss Pause

On Monday, however, a handful of newsmen managed to reach several informed officers who said they could not see how security was involved and they freely discussed the pause in the bombing and some details of the raids that the command had been withholding.

At the beginning of the raids the command used the military security argument to justify its refusal to report what targets were being bombed in North Vietnam and the extent of the damage. Yesterday afternoon Major Forbus chose not to answer a question on "what useful purpose" was served by continuing to withhold from the American public information believed to be well known to the North Vietnamese bombing victims. He also said he would not "go into" questions about the purpose of the halt in the bombing.

The command has steadfastly refused to discuss the nature and scope of the current bombing operation. But informed officers say they feel strongly that it has been planned with a definite beginning, middle and end. These officers say they believe it is not likely to continue for a very long time

at the present rate. Earlier some officers had said they thought it might well be over in a week.

One reason the officers give for predicting a limited duration is that "there's just not that much left to bomb."

Informed military officers say that pilots are aiming for the same kinds of military targets they have always been sent against in North Vietnam, but that during the current operation they have hit some specific targets that had been ruled out before because they were in heavily populated areas. Among such targets in Hanoi, one officer said, have been some power plants, factories producing war equipment and truck-repair shops.

Flight From Hanoi Canceled

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Dec. 26—A flight to and from Hanoi scheduled today by the three-nation International Control Commission was canceled at the last moment because of a radio communication from the control tower at Hanoi's Gia Lam Airport, saying it would be unsafe to land.

The communication said that the airport had been raided again today and also that heavy mist obscured visibility.

In addition to the five officials of the control commission who were scheduled to fly from Hanoi to Vientiane, 14 other persons, most of them diplomats, were to have been evacuated.

Among others who had been expected to be on the flight were Telford Taylor, a professor of law at Columbia University, Joan Baez, the folk singer, and two other American anti-war activists who have been in Hanoi for the last 11 days.

The International Control Commission, which was set up in 1954 to supervise the Indo-China truce arranged in Geneva, has tentatively rescheduled the flight for Friday. Officials said, however, that it seemed uncertain that the flight would be able to leave then.

U.S. Calls Raids Major Effort

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 26—A Pentagon spokesman said today the air war against Hanoi and Paiphong had resumed, and continues to be a very major effort.

Jerry W. Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, said at a morning news briefing that bombing in the North had had "major effect" and caused "very significant damage."

He said the extent of the pause in the bombing for the Christmas holiday had not been

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publicly disclosed because of the safety of the crews involved. He did not elaborate.

Mr. Friedheim said a large number of surface-to-air missiles were being fired at American planes over the two northern cities. He estimated that 50 to 60 missiles had been fired for each plane shot down. He set aircraft losses at "2 to 3 per cent—a broad figure because I do not want to be precise."

He said the loss rate to the missiles "is not materially different from what it was in the early months of Operation Linebacker [April and May],

when there were heavy firings."

"The big difference is that there are more B-52's involved," he said.

Asked if Hanoi would be destroyed if the bombing continued for a few months or weeks, Mr. Friedheim replied, "It could very well destroy military targets in the vicinity of Hanoi." Asked about the North Vietnam claim that eight more B-52's had been shot down today over North Vietnam, the Pentagon spokesman had no comment.

White House Is Silent
KEY BISCAVNE, Fla., Dec.

26 (AP)—The White House maintained silence on the resumption of bombing attacks on North Vietnam today following the vain wait by President Nixon for a peace signal from Hanoi.

The holiday pause in the bombing of targets above the 20th Parallel in North Vietnam lasted for 36 hours, although American warplanes limited the pause in South Vietnam to 24 hours.

Sources in Saigon said the 12-hour extension on strikes in the North had been continued on an hour-to-hour basis because Mr. Nixon had hoped it would bring an indication from

from Hanoi that the North Vietnamese were ready to resume private peace talks.