

A Big New Raid on Hanoi

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Hanoi

The heavy bombing of the Hanoi area continued yesterday with yet another hour-long raid by tactical bombers that shook the capital.

Judging from the noise of explosions, several bombs fell within three miles of the city center. The blasts were strong enough to shake underground shelters in the central districts of the capital.

A fairly big number of planes appeared to be involved in the raid.

They swept over Hanoi in waves and made low passes, to be met by a barrage of anti-aircraft gunfire and missiles.

SUNNY

The attack occurred in bright sunshine against blue skies after a week of cloudy weather that had marred visibility.

The raid began in the early afternoon, when sirens began wailing for the 49th time

since the resumption of bombing on December 18. The all-clear was sounded an hour later.

After an hour of quiet, the sirens sent Hanoi residents to their shelters for the third time of the day.

Authorities are still not giving any breakdown of civilian casualties. But the scope of destruction visible in the city center — not counting the suburbs — is such that the toll must necessarily be a high one, according to foreign observers.

RUINS

After Tuesday night's massive raids on the city, the heaviest of the war so far, several central areas were in ruins.

Two correspondents had a brief glimpse yesterday of the damage wrought by the U.S. planes in one hour Tuesday night.

The area around the usually teeming Kham Tien street, with its little shops, low brick and mud-walled dwellings housing about

50,000 people, was cordoned off by security forces.

From a distance, we saw many houses in ruins with rescue workers still searching through the wreckage. Not far from this street, and the alleys leading off it, we saw what was left of the capital's central road transport terminus after its destruction in the raids.

APARTMENTS

Several apartment buildings in the vicinity were also destroyed.

In the surrounding streets were refugees and the homeless, clutching meager bundles and carrying babies.

Throughout the night, groups of townspeople slept on sidewalks awaiting evacuation from the war-torn city.

According to Vietnamese eyewitnesses, the southeastern suburb of Khu Hai Ba Trung — one of the most densely populated areas of Hanoi — was also badly hit during the latest raids.

The same sources said

that the Hanoi Polytechnic School near Reunification Lake was partially destroyed.

HOSPITAL

Members of the Hanoi diplomatic corps yesterday visited the ruins of Bach Mai Hospital, flattened by American bombs last week. Chinese Ambassador Wang Yu Ping and some of his colleagues apparently had to fight to control their emotions at the sight.

The hospital's director told the diplomats that surviving hospital personnel, who were continuing to clear the ruins, captured the pilot of a B-52 bomber shot down by ground fire.

The airman parachuted to earth at a spot bombed by B-52s last week. "He shouted like an animal. We tied him up with electric wire that we ripped from the ruins," the hospital director said.

He was unable to give the identity of the airman, recalling only that he was "very big and strong."