

See also Agence France-Presse, NYTimes 30 Dec 72.

SFChronicle Under the Bombs

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By Jean Leclerc du Sablon
Agence France-Presse

Hanoi

American official statements persistently denying that civilian objectives are being razed in Hanoi provoke not only the indignation of North Vietnamese authorities, but the astonishment of foreigners, including westerners, living here under the bombs.

The press office of the North Vietnamese foreign ministry showed journalists yesterday a map of Hanoi, indicating about 15 points where American bombers struck at the city itself,

either by carpet bombing or by individual bombs, and 20 regions hit within a radius of ten miles of the center.

Shortly after we saw the map, Saigon presented its own version in which only two "military" objectives, including the central railway station, were hit. The previous day, U.S. Pentagon spokesman Jerry Friedheim had denied that civilian targets were being bombed in Hanoi itself, and described as "propaganda" reports

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that the Bach Mai Hospital, for example, had been damaged.

The fact is that the 900-bed hospital, where 300 persons were undergoing treatment at the time of the resumption of the air raids against Hanoi, was not only "damaged," it was razed by several giant bombs.

VISITS

Foreign diplomats and journalists here, including the correspondent of Agence France-Presse, visited the ruins.

Bach Mai, one of the two big hospitals in Hanoi, was bombed twice, on December 19 and December 22, according to North Vietnamese officials. It had already been damaged by a U.S. bomb last June in what Washington called "an error."

Observers said this was not the first time the U.S. administration has denied what reliable witnesses have seen with their own eyes. It issued a denial, for example, when Agence France-Presse correspondent Jean Thoraval reported last July the bombing of dikes, after he had seen the bombs falling 200 yards away from him during a visit to the dikes.

MISSION

The same thing happened when Thoraval saw a bomb fall last October on the French general delegation (diplomatic mission) in Hanoi, when he was in the garden of the mission.

The pentagon suggested at first that the damage was caused by a spent North Vietnamese anti-aircraft rocket, before finally admitting that it was a bomb that had hit the mission, killing Pierre Susini, head of the French mission, and several other persons.

Without taking into account the hit targets shown on the North Vietnamese map, which are sometimes difficult to visit for security reasons and the frequent air raid alerts, this correspondent has along with other foreigners seen zones that look as though they had been hit by earthquakes.

Among them is Hanoi's Gia Lam airport, where not only the runway and the buildings have been partially destroyed, but also the residential quarters around it.

HITS

The bombs have ploughed up the three-mile road leading from the airport to the city, and blasted the rail-

road, which is now bordered by uprooted trees, deep muddy furrows, broken electric poles, smashed trucks, wrecked railway cars and destroyed or damaged buildings.

In the center of the city, Kham Tien street has been 75 per cent destroyed along a length of more than a mile and a width of five or six hundred yards. Correspondents saw the craters left by giant bombs at the very spot they had seen crowded and lively a few days previously.

I have walked through the ruins of the An Duong and Nghia Dung working class districts in the north of the city less than a mile from the presidential palace.

OTHERS

Finally, only a few minutes walk from the Hotel of Peace where the Agence France-Presse correspondents reside, one can "visit" the ruins of the railway station, the road station and the blocks of houses around them, or the houses near the Cuban embassy, which itself was partially damaged.

To all this must be added the great nervous strain imposed on the civilian population by the daily bombings, night and day, which make

the entire city tremble, including the walls of the air raid shelters, while explosions set the sky afire.

Even at the bottom of an air raid shelter, no one knows for whom the next bomb will be destined when the sirens wail, as they did again yesterday morning for the 60th time since the U.S. resumed its air raids on December 18.



This official North Vietnam photo purports to show the ruins of a bombed hospital

UPI Telephoto