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.....When the United States did announce the halt in bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong in a press conference yesterday morning, the only information given out was that the Kissinger-Tho talks would resume January 8, and that the technical talks would resume this Tuesday, Jan. 2, and that, in the words of deputy presidential press secretary Gerald Warren, in answer to a question, "The President has ordered that all bombings will be discontinued above the 20th parallel as long as ~~serious~~ negotiations are under way."

Despite repeated questioning, Mr. Warren wouldn't say when the bombing was supposed to end, although he did hint that the halt was already in effect.

It fell to the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks, and to Jerry Friedheim in the U.S. Defense Department, to reveal, in the words of the North Vietnamese, "The American side has just answered that it is in agreement to put an end to the bombings against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam above the 20th parallel, starting at 1900 hours, Dec. ~~19~~²⁰, 1972, Washington time; that is to say, 0700 hours, December 30, 1972, Hanoi time."

The New York Times also reports that the Defense Department also announced Saturday morning as the halting time, but the Times doesn't indicate whether their announcement came after or before North Vietnam's. I would think that would be an important point because it would indicate whether U.S. sources were giving information or just confirming what the North Vietnamese had already announced.

The speculation now is about why the bombing was stopped. The pro-American explanation is that North Vietnam was forced to yield to the U.S. as the result of severe damage caused by very heavy bombings between December 18 and 29. That period was not only the heaviest bombing of the war but also the first time the United States has used the big B52 bombers in populous areas.

Mr. Warren, at his press conference, refused to say at whose initiative the talks resumed. But some speculate that the breakthrough came because of the severity of international and domestic protest of the increased American bombings.

Radio Hanoi, in a broadcast today, said the period from the 18th to the 29th was "a most glorious victory," and claimed the downing of 81 United States aircraft, "the worst defeat ever experienced by the American Air Force." The broadcast said the bombing campaign was designed to "achieve nuclear-scale destruction without resorting to nuclear bombs."

The North Vietnamese version is that the United States lost 5 F111 jets -- the newest jets being used in Vietnam -- 34 B52s and 42 other planes, mostly jets.

The U.S. Defense Department said yesterday that 27 planes were lost, including 15 B52s, something like one-third of what the North Vietnamese are claiming.

Today's broadcast on radio Hanoi said, "We have shattered the biggest strategic air raid ever initiated by ~~the~~ American imperialists. We have secured a magnificent strategic, military and political position never witnessed before." It said, "While the United States counted on taking a ghastly toll and forcing their adversary to bow down, the reverse occurred. As before, the United States is justifying the bombings on the grounds that it can coerce the North Vietnamese back to the peace ~~talks~~ talks and because it intercepts supplies going south, either from China to North Vietnam or from North Vietnam to Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam."

Concerning that first point, Sen. James Buckley, a conservative from New York, said today ~~xxx~~ that he can see no course, other than the one that the President is taking, better designed to assure the prompt return to the conference table. He said, "Frankly I cannot understand all the hysteria which had attended the recent resumption of military pressures. One must be reminded that the first breakthrough in almost four years of stalemated negotiations came last October as a result of the mining of harbors and the resumption of bombing over the north."

The North Vietnamese, at least publicly, claimed that they can't be coerced. Vo Van Sung, North Vietnam's chief diplomat in Paris, told newsmen today that the United States would have to sign, without modification, a draft peace agreement worked out last October.... a statement which the Associated Press interprets as establishing a tough negotiating position for next week.

Mr. Sung said, "For us, the position is clear. There is an accord reached on October 20th. In the interests of the United States, Vietnam and world peace, the American government must quickly sign it." He added: "If the American side continues to demand unreasonable modifications it will be difficult to reach a solution." Mr. Sung spoke after a half-hour meeting with a half-hour meeting with ~~Mxz Maurice Schuman~~ Foreign Minister Maurice Schuman of France who has been involved in efforts to get the peace talks going again.....