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Soviet Said to Give Hanoi Missile Boats

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 5—Administration officials said today that the Soviet Union recently supplied North Vietnam, for the first time in the war, with a missile boat of the type employed by Egypt in 1967 to sink an Israeli destroyer.

Three Komar-class boats, each carrying two Styx missiles, were spotted on Dec. 17 near islands off the North Vietnamese port of Hon Gai northeast of Haiphong, the officials reported. The craft were attacked by United States Navy jets the following day in the first wave of renewed air strikes north of the 20th Parallel.

The officials said that one of the vessels was sunk and that the two others were damaged. They also said that an accompanying P-6 torpedo boat was damaged in the attack.

Laird Bars Hanoi Data

The disclosure came as Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird ordered Defense Department personnel not to discuss details of bomb damage in the weeks of intensive raids in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas so as not to risk undermining the next top-level round of the Vietnam peace conference in Paris. Meetings are scheduled to resume on Monday between Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser for national se-

curity, and Le Duc Tho, the Hanoi Politburo member who is charged with responsibility for the talks.

"During the next week to 10 days," Mr. Laird said, "no information will be put out of this building at any time that would possibly jeopardize the success of those negotiations."

Officials in the Pentagon and elsewhere in the Government said they felt that the partial news blackout, which reportedly was directed by the White House, was designed to avoid any public embarrassment to Hanoi from news accounts suggesting that the North Vietnamese were forced by bombing to return to the bargaining table.

Speaking guardedly, some Administration officials, who have seen aerial reconnaissance photos of heavy raids on supply depots, railroad marshaling yards and similar targets, used a similar style in describing what they had seen.

One official said: "Some of the photos looked like pictures of the moon, the destruction was so great."

He hastily insisted, however, that the raids, while intensive, were not indiscriminate, despite what he described as some "spilled-over" into nearby non-military targets, such as the Bach Hospital and the civilian-military Gia Lam Airport.

Officials generally tried to dispel any idea that the Soviet

decision to send missile boats to North Vietnam was a sudden reaction to the most recent bombing and mining there.

Some analysts said they believed that it represented a psychological move by Moscow, made some time last summer or fall, to demonstrate that the Soviet Union was not abandoning an ally. Others said they feel that it might have been designed to discourage the American or South Vietnamese navies from operating warships close to North Vietnam after a ceasefire is worked out.

Reported Seen Nov. 23

The Soviet-made Styx surface-to-surface naval missile has a range of about 25 miles. On Oct. 21, 1967, a Styx missile, fired from a Komar-class boat in Alexandria harbor, sank the Israeli destroyer Elath.

Last Nov. 23 long-range reconnaissance planes of the United States Navy caught sight of two Soviet freighters heading toward a port in China. On the deck of each freighter were two crated Komars, Administration officials said.

These four Komar missile boats, three of which were spotted off North Vietnam Dec. 17, are believed to have hugged the coast from China and slipped into anchorage off Hon Gai without crossing any minefields. They reportedly were accompanied by three P-6 torpedo boats.