

NYTimes
**U.S. Letting Pilots Pursue
Foe North of 20th Parallel**

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 9—Pentagon officials said today that American pilots were being permitted to cross the 20th Parallel in pursuit of North Vietnamese jets that attempt to attack United States B-52's and other bombers operating south of the 20th Parallel.

The sources, who were speaking privately, revealed that in one instance last Sunday an American F-4 Phantom, in chasing and shooting down a North Vietnamese MIG-21, crossed the line, which President Nixon has again set as the northernmost limit of bombing in North Vietnam.

But in order to minimize the chances of incidents in the northern part of North Vietnam during the current round of peace talks in Paris, the officials said, United States reconnaissance has been limited to unmanned photo drones—which do not have to be protected by fighter escorts as do low-flying reconnaissance planes—and to SR-71 spy planes. These fly at about 80,000 feet, beyond

the range of North Vietnamese air defense missiles, guns and aircraft.

The officials noted that during an earlier halt in the bombing north of the 20th Parallel—from Oct. 23 to Dec. 18—reconnaissance was similarly restricted to avoid an incident

where an RF-4 might be shot at in the Hanoi-Haiphong area and call for strikes by accompanying jet fighters.

Following closed-door briefings today by Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the House Military Appropriations Committee and the Armed Services Committee, one Congressman told reporters that the admiral

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said he had not been consulted by the White House either on Oct. 23, when bombing north of the 20th Parallel was halted, or on Dec. 18, when it was temporarily resumed.

Representative Michael J. Harrington, Democrat of Massachusetts, who is a member of the Armed Services Committee, quoted the admiral as having said that contingency plans had been in existence and were merely ordered into effect by the President without prior consultation of the military.*

However, Admiral Moorer did not directly confirm this when he talked with newsmen.

Publicly, the White House and the Defense Department tried to de-emphasize reports circulated in Saigon today that President Nixon had issued special authority for American pilots to attack enemy planes or air defense sites north of the 20th Parallel that they believed threatened American bombers south of that line.

Ronald Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said Mr. Nixon had issued no new orders and that American pilots would continue to have, as before, the right to defend themselves.

At the Pentagon, Jerry W. Friedheim, the Defense Department spokesman, would say only that no "offensive" operations had been permitted, or conducted, north of the 20th Parallel since the President ordered an end to air strikes in that region on Dec. 30.

No 'Protective Reaction'

Other Pentagon sources said that while there had been one so-called "hot pursuit" dogfight that crossed the line over the weekend, there had been no so-called "protective reaction" strikes against air defenses sites north of the parallel since Dec. 30.

Continued reconnaissance north of that point, however, is considered essential by the Administration for two reasons.

First, there have been persistent reports that the North Vietnamese and Vietcong intend to attempt some kind of winter-spring offensive in South Vietnam to put pressure on American negotiators, and United States officials want to keep track of the flow of war material into North Vietnam and the flow of weapons and manpower southward.

Washington also wants to maintain an up-to-date picture of shifting air defenses and new supply concentrations in the northern part of North Vietnam, both to strengthen its bargaining position in Paris and to use in compiling new target lists for use in the event that the talks break down again.

Low Flying Best

Analysts concede that the best means of obtaining tactical intelligence is from manned reconnaissance planes flying low and making repeated passes under the clouds when the pilot thinks he sees something interesting. But such

missions are always accompanied by fighter escorts and thus raise the prospect of shooting incidents.

Reconnaissance drones, the analysts say, have proved quite effective as a substitute. They frequently have been sent to take a closer look at build-ups seen from higher altitudes by the SR-71, the successor to the U-2 spy plane. The SR-71 not only flies much higher but also much faster—more than three times the speed of sound.

Normally, two drones are launched from a C-130 "mother ship" flying offshore. The drones fly what one specialist described as "a very convoluted course" to the target area. They sweep to within a few hundred feet of the ground, take their pictures, then return by another erratic route to the Tonkin Gulf where, beyond the range of North Vietnamese defenses, each pops out a parachute and is snared by a waiting plane.

Vast Majority Successful

"The vast majority of drones have performed their missions without being shot down," the specialist said.

The statement by Representative Harrington that the military leaders had not been consulted before the halt and the resumption of the bombing north of the 20th Parallel following persistent reports that those decisions were made by the White House primarily for political and diplomatic purposes rather than for military ones.

Following Admiral Moorer's testimony, Representative F. Edward Hébert, Democrat of Louisiana, who is chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, also seemed to feel that the decisions were made for diplomatic purposes.

"We brought them to the conference table in the beginning by bombing and we brought them back to the conference table by bombing," Mr. Hébert told reporters.

When Admiral Moorer was asked by newsmen what justification the White House had offered him on Dec. 18 for resuming bombing and mining operations north of the 20th Parallel, he said: "The restriction of Oct. 23 was simply lifted."

Position on Bombing

The admiral did say he felt the bombing would effectively hamper North Vietnam's ability to conduct sustained operations in South Vietnam. He also insisted that every effort was made to minimize civilian deaths in the target areas, through both the choice of weapons and tactics employed.

Committee sources said Admiral Moorer showed reconnaissance photos to the two committees and denied North Vietnam's assertions that American prisoner-of-war camps had been struck.

"Protective reaction" was defined in rules established in 1968 to guide pilots during a halt in the bombing. According to a report of a House subcommittee last month, the rules permitted American pilots to strike enemy missile sites that fired at them or were "activated against" them by radar. Under the rules, missile and aircraft sites could be attacked—in self-defense or retaliation.

The concept was in the news last year after Gen. John D. Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff, dismissed Gen. John D. Lavelle as commander of the Seventh Air Force in Vietnam on the ground that he had carried out air strikes during a bombing halt that were not considered to have been "protective reaction."

Censored transcript
made public 26 Feb 73.
See Wx Post, SFChron,
27 Feb 73.

* See excerpt from story by
Anthony Ripley, "Clements
Won't Rule Out A-Bomb Use,"
NYTimes 12 Jan 73, over.