

Cease-Fire Generally Working; U.S. Bombs Supply Lines in Laos;
Hanoi Lists 555 War Prisoners

100-PLANE STRIKE

JAN 29 1973

Attacks Expected to Continue Until Laos Truce Is Reached

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28 —

About 100 American planes, including B-52 bombers, attacked suspected Communist positions and supply lines in Laos after the Vietnam cease-fire went into effect, Administration officials said today.

The Defense Department, on orders from the White House and State Department, declined to comment on the bombing operations, refusing to confirm or deny that American planes based in Thailand were continuing missions over Laos.

Indirect confirmation of the operations came from State Department officials and from William H. Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, who indicated that American bombing would continue in Laos until a cease-fire was reached there.

Appearing on the National Broadcasting Company television program "Meet the Press," Mr. Sullivan, a former Ambassador to Laos, said that "in the interim period between now and a cease-fire in Laos, we are continuing to provide air sup-

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U.S. Planes Raid Supply Lines in Laos

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port to the Royal Laotian Forces in resisting whatever Communist movements that are taking place."

The continued bombing, according to Administration officials, has as much a political as a military purpose in putting pressure on the Communists to accept a cease-fire in Laos.

But Mr. Sullivan emphasized the military purpose of halting a Communist offensive under way in Laos. "There does appear to be a fairly significant Communist offensive going on in various quarters of Laos at this moment," he said, with the Communist forces "apparently attempting to take some ground which would be of significance to them in anticipation of the cease-fire."

As interpreted by Mr. Sullivan and other Administration officials, the continued bombing is permissible under the Vietnam peace agreement signed yesterday in Paris.

The agreement reaffirms the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia and calls for the removal of foreign military forces from the two countries. But the military cease-fire provisions of the agreement apply only to North and South Vietnam, not to Laos or Cambodia.

Mr. Sullivan pointedly noted that "none of the air [power] which has been used in Laos has ever been based or stationed in Laos."

For nearly a decade—ever

since the 1962 Geneva accord establishing the neutrality of Laos in support of Laotian forces and Meo irregular forces organized by the Central Intelligence Agency. The bombing operations from bases in Thailand were conducted in secrecy for several years as part of an unacknowledged war that the United States was waging in Laos. In recent years they were gradually made public under pressure from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Thai Troops Involved

In addition, through the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States has financed the introduction of some 4,000 Thai troops into Laos. Thus far, Administration officials said no move had been made to remove these Thai forces and they indicated that none would probably be made until a cease-fire was reached between the contending factions in Laos.

Mr. Sullivan, interviewed in Paris where he served as a principal deputy to Henry A. Kissinger in negotiating the peace agreement, reaffirmed the Administration's hopes that a cease-fire would be achieved in Laos "in the not too distant future." Last week Mr. Kissinger said it was "our firm expectation" that a formal cease-fire would be reached in Laos "within a short period of time," perhaps in two weeks.

The Administration is being uncommunicative about American military operations in Laos evidently in an attempt to hold out the threat that American

bombings will continue if the Communists do not move toward a cease-fire.

However, continued bombing, may backfire by engendering the antiwar critics in Congress.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana has already deplored the continuing American military activity in Laos. Today Representative Bella Abzug, Democrat of Manhattan and an outspoken critic of the war, described the bombing as "a serious violation of the spirit if not the letter of the cease-fire."

Mrs. Abzug said that the bombing was "a further indication that Congress must act without delay to prevent a resumption of hostilities by President Nixon anywhere in Southeast Asia without Congressional authorization."

The Administration, meanwhile, maintained a cautious but outwardly undisturbed attitude about the continued fighting in certain sections of South Vietnam. The common reaction was that clashes were inevitable in trying to carry out a cease-fire in a highly confused military situation and that they did not reflect a desire on either side to violate the cease-fire.

The White House spokesman at key Biscayne, Fla., had no comment on the military incidents. At the Defense Department, one high-ranking official said, "Everyone expected the fighting to peter out rather than stop on the stroke of a truce."