

(Companion article by Malcolm W. Browne pasted separately.)

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FEB 16 1973

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NYTimes

Pentagon Says Strikes This Week Increased by About 100 Daily

By WILLIAM BEECHER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 15—The Pentagon today announced a significant increase in United States air strikes against North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troop and munitions movements in Laos.

Brig. Gen. Daniel James Jr., a Pentagon spokesman, said that raids by B-52 bombers and fighter-bombers, which had averaged about 280 a day last week, had been increased by about 100 strikes daily this week.

Secretary of Defense Elliot L. Richardson, the spokesman said, "wants you to know today that because of increased enemy activity and further requests for assistance by the royal Lao Government, the daily sortie average for this week has been upped by about 100."

Fighting Increases

Other Defense Department officials said that there had been a substantial rise in the Communists' movement of military matériel from North Vietnam into both northern and southern Laos, as well as increased fighting between the contending sides in Laos as each side tries to improve its position before a cease-fire.

"We're seeing a surge of tanks and trucks and armored personnel carriers into Laos," one military analyst said. "We're not sure to what extent it's aimed at near-term battle plans for Laos, Cambodia, or even South Vietnam, or to what

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extent it merely represents an effort to pre-position as much gear as possible against potential future needs, after the cease-fire has been extended into Laos and Cambodia. At that point, such movements clearly would be barred and large movements would be easy to detect."

Pentagon officials said that they had "reason to believe" that a cease-fire in Laos was not far off, despite the fact that the talks there seem to have reached a temporary impasse. They characterized the last-minute efforts to improve territorial control and increase weapon stocks as typical before the onset of a truce.

Yesterday Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House spokesman, said that the Administration expected a truce in Laos "in a matter of a few days."

Plans for Aid Cited

Administration sources hinted today that this guarded optimism about a truce may have arisen during Henry A. Kissinger's talks in Hanoi earlier this week. The Presidential adviser is believed to have stressed that it will be difficult to persuade Congress to provide billions of dollars for rebuilding North Vietnam while Hanoi continues, in the words of one official, "to make war on its neighbors."

By the same token, this official said, it may be easier to get Congressional approval for such spending if a case can be made that the aid would markedly increase the chances for stability in Indochina.

The increase in air strikes in Laos was announced shortly before President Nixon came to the Pentagon for a two-hour working lunch with Secretary Richardson, Deputy Secretary William P. Clements Jr., the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others.

Mr. Nixon, who last visited the Pentagon in May of 1970 during the American - South Vietnamese incursion into Cambodia, said at the luncheon:

"This is the first time I've been here since the war is over. So it's a very special occasion. All the Defense Department wants is to be the peace force; that's what you are. So let's raise our glasses."