

U.S. Heeds Plea for HelpB-52's Renew Raids In Laos

WASHINGTON (AP) — American B52 bombers resumed attacks against Communist forces in Laos, less than 24 hours after a formal cease-fire went into effect there, the Defense Department announced Friday.

The U.S. Pacific command in Honolulu issued a terse statement saying that "at the request of the Royal Laotian Government, U.S. B52s Friday, Southeast Asia time, conducted operations over Laos."

The statement was made available in Washington by the Pentagon.

The command also said that U.S. warplanes had hit in Cambodia at the request of the Cambodian government.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT confirmed unofficial reports that U.S. bombers had gone into action in Laos because the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces continued to attack Lao government units after the cease-fire went into effect at 11 p.m. CST Wednesday (noon Thursday Lao time).

Defense sources said nine B52s, presumably operating out of nearby Thailand, struck at Communist troops near the key town of Pak Song in southern Laos.

The nine B52 sorties compared with a U.S. bombing effort of about 330 sorties a day against the Ho Chi Minh trail and other Laotian targets before the cease-fire.

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said, meanwhile, that the United States is hopeful that the two-day-old cease-fire would be fully implemented soon and that the renewed fighting would end soon.

The renewed U.S. air activity came in the wake of a request by Prince Souvanna, who told a news conference:

"IF THE OTHER side does not keep their words, we are not obliged to keep ours."

U.S. air attacks on the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao had stopped several hours before the cease-fire went into effect. It was the third cease-fire in Laos in more than two decades of war.

Ziegler said President Nixon, Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger had discussed the Laotian situation at a White House breakfast earlier in the day.

Prince Souvanna said the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao launched a general offensive in northern and southern Laos Wednesday and committed at least 29 major violations of the truce. The premier said he would protest to the International Control Commission, although it is not yet operational.

"NINETY PER CENT of the violations are being done by foreign troops," he said, referring to the 65,000 North Vietnamese troops estimated to be in Laos.

"We have been tricked. We knew of the possibility of this happening through several defectors. But we had faith in the good will of the other side. Once again we have been tricked, and I regret it."

The premier looked tired and pale.

Souvanna confirmed that government forces had been forced to give up the important southern town of Paksong after the cease-fire.

He said the most serious attacks were in the southernmost 4th Military Region, where the Communists attacked in force. This is the area of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, North Vietnam's supply line to Communist forces in South Vietnam. It is also the traditional stronghold of the Laotian right-wingers who are the chief foes of the Pathet Lao.

THE CAPTURE of Paksong gave the North Vietnamese complete control of the Bolovens Plateau. They also captured another southern town, Muong Phalane, and forced government forces there to pull back toward the Mekong River.

Reliable sources said the North Vietnamese continued their offensive Thursday night, shelling towns and government positions in both northern and southern Laos.