

Navy Says 11,000 Mines Were Dropped on North

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WASHINGTON, March 29—The Defense Department said today that the United States had dropped about 11,000 mines in North Vietnamese waters.

The department's first detailed report on the mine-laying and sweeping operations was provided today at the daily Pentagon press briefing by Vice Admiral Jerome H. King, who is assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Starting last May 8, United States navy planes dropped about 8,000 mines into coastal waters and 3,000 in inland waterways in North Vietnam. Most were laid at the outset, when, as Admiral King said today, Navy planes were "hot and heavy at it for several days." Periodically additional mines were laid as the original mines became deactivated or destroyed themselves by internal timing devices.

Declines to Give Full Data

Admiral King declined to say how many mines remained active, although presumably such information has been supplied to North Vietnam.

According to the admiral, two basic mine types were used.

One, the Mark-52, is a 1,000-pound device that rests on the bottom and is detonated by the magnetic impulse given off by a passing ship. It can be keyed to destroy itself or become inert after a set period.

The other is a version of the standard 500-pound bomb that is activated by either a magnetic impulse or acoustic signal from a passing ship. This type, used in the inland waterways, has a self-destroying mechanism.

Since the mine-sweeping operations off Haiphong began on Feb. 27 only one mine has been detonated by sweeping, on March 9.

None of the 26 ships blocked

in Haiphong Harbor were damaged by the mines, Admiral King said, but there is indirect evidence that vessels in the inland waterways were damaged or sunk.

Admiral King said North Vietnam had been advised that clearance operations in the Haiphong area should be completed "sometime next month."

He cautioned that "mine-sweeping was "a slow, repetitive and tedious process."

Provisions of Accords

Under the Paris agreements, the United States is responsible for mine clearance on the inland waterways, but the actual minesweeping will be carried out by North Vietnamese with technical advice and equipment supplied by the United States Navy.

Earlier this week the Navy began technical classes in Haiphong to train North Vietnamese on clearing the inland waterways.

One remaining point of controversy is whether the United States is obliged to remove inactivated mines so as not to endanger dredging operations on the channels leading into Haiphong. Admiral King refused to discuss this controversy or to specify whether the deactivated mines might explode if hit by a dredger.

Under the agreement, North Vietnam can request that the United States remove or destroy mines in specific areas. If their removal or destruction is impossible, then the agreement specifies that the mines shall be permanently deactivated and their emplacement clearly marked.

"We are going to comply literally with the protocol," Admiral King said. "If we cannot remove them, we will mark them."