

U.S. BOMBS TOWN IN LAOS, CHARGING A TRUCE BREACH BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE

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whether the offensive against Tha Vieng, which has been going on for several days, has strategic significance or was only an effort to test our response."

Word of the renewed bombing in Laos came amid reports from well-placed Administration sources that the Soviet Union had supplied advanced SA-3 antiaircraft missiles to North Vietnam for the first time. This could render any American decision to resume bombing there more costly than before.

Officials said the first of the new missiles were detected in the Hanoi area shortly before the Vietnam cease-fire went into effect on Jan. 28. At the time, one source said, "hundreds of crated pieces of equipment" associated with the SA-3 system, including missiles, were seen on railroad cars heading from the Soviet Union across China.

The SA-3, officials say, can operate effectively at altitudes of 1,000 feet and less, well under the effective altitude of the SA-2 missiles that have been deployed in North Vietnam for some years.

Number Not Known

Since the cease-fire, the United States has been barred from flying reconnaissance missions over the North and analysts are unclear on how many of the new missiles have been put in place.

"There has been time for a sizable deployment," one senior official said. "If a decision is made to bomb in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, it could double our previous loss rates there."

On at least three occasions

recently, President Nixon has warned Hanoi to stop cease-fire violations or face a reaction. It is known that one of the options being actively studied has been a resumption of bombing in the North.

Other options reportedly include renewed mining of the ports of North Vietnam; American air strikes against missile installations and concentrations of tanks, artillery and troops in South Vietnam; and encouragement in the Saigon Government to send forces into Cambodia to relieve some of the pressure there.

Posts Reported Overrun

VIENTIANE, Laos, April 16 (AP)—Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops with mortar and artillery support overran three government positions in northeastern Laos over the weekend, the Defense Ministry spokesman, Brig. Gen. Thongphan Knoksy, said today.

The spokesman called the attacks a "serious and provocative cease-fire violation." No casualty reports were immediately available.

The spokesman said North Vietnamese troops supported by mortars overran two frontal outposts of the Government mountain base at Buam Long, 18 miles north of the Communist occupied Plaine des Jarres.

Another strategic defending position at Tha Vieng, 100 miles northeast of Vientiane, was also overrun and Government troops retreated some five miles southeast of Tha Vieng, the spokesman said.

Earlier, the acting Defense Minister, Sisouk na Champasak, said a new regiment of North Vietnamese troops had moved to the Tha Vieng area.

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B-52'S IN ACTION

NYTimes

Officials Say Further Strikes Depend on Hanoi's Moves

By WILLIAM BEECHER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 16 — American bombers, for only the second time since the cease-fire in Laos, today struck North Vietnamese positions in that country, Pentagon officials said.

Several dozen B-52 bombers and F-111 fighter-bombers hit in and around the town of Tha Vieng, on the southern edge of the Plaine des Jarres, after it had reportedly been overrun by tanks and troops from North Vietnam.

Jerry W. Friedheim, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, labeled the ground assault on Tha Vieng a "major violation of the cease-fire."

Request for Raid Reported

The Pacific command in Honolulu subsequently announced the bombing raids, which it said were conducted at the request of the Vientiane Government.

The cease-fire in Laos went into effect on Feb. 22, three weeks after a cease-fire in South Vietnam. The next day nine B-52's and about a dozen fighter-bombers struck North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao positions at Pak Song, in the southern panhandle, after reported ground assaults by Communist troops.

The agreement called for a cease-fire in place and the withdrawal of all foreign troops within 60 days of the formation of a new cabinet and the reactivation of the International Control Commission, made up of India, Canada and Poland. So far, the political talks toward setting up the new government have floundered.

The United States has asserted that it would honor the cease-fire so long as it was not violated by the North Vietnamese.

Administration officials said they could not be sure whether today's raids would be repeated. "It depends, in part, on what the other side does," one official said. "We don't know

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