

U.S. Report On Hanoi Raid Incident

Bangkok

in Thailand said yesterday that heavy damage to a civilian area of Hanoi, which the North Vietnamese had said was bombed by an American B-52 bomber, was caused by the crash of one of the bombers when it was brought down by a Communist missile.

The destroyed area, in the Kham Thien sector of Hanoi, was shown to newsmen and other visitors to Hanoi earlier this year.

An area about the size of two football fields was reduced to rubble. It was formerly occupied by peasant shacks, small stucco and brick homes and shops and laced with narrow alleys. A few water filled bomb craters were visible.

North Vietnamese officials said 215 persons died in the bombing attack by a B-52, which they said occurred last December 26 during 12 days of concentrated American bombing of targets in the Hanoi area.

Military sources said that an investigation of the incident showed that it happened when the big bomber crashed after being hit by a missile during a raid in the Hanoi area. The bomber had not reached its target and was still carrying its full load of bombs, the sources said.

Aerial photographs displayed showed a pattern of widespread destruction with a few, isolated bomb craters. If the damage had been caused by bombing, the sources said, the photographs would have showed symmetrical rows of bomb craters. They said much of the damage was presumably caused by explosions of the bombs in the wreckage and an ensuing fire.

Visitors to the site saw no signs of wreckage and the aerial photographs showed no traces of the plane. Military sources said the North Vietnamese apparently had removed the wreckage shortly after the incident.

The sources here did not disclose how it was known the bomber had been downed by a missile, but the last U.S. prisoners of war released by Hanoi included three B-52 crew members captured in Hanoi December 26.