

U.S. Air Armada Smashes Base 100 Miles From Hanoi

Spokesman Says Depot Wiped Out

SAIGON, South Viet Nam (AP) — A powerful armada of U.S. Navy and Air Force planes blasted the Phu Qui ammunition depot only 100 miles south of Hanoi Monday.

It was the sixth and possibly most punishing raid of a series launched against Communist North Viet Nam Feb. 7.

Results of the two-hour strike, intended to wipe out one source of supplies, to the Viet Cong via the Ho Minh Trail, officially were described as excellent.

Secondary explosions spurted from the target area under rockets, bombs and 20mm cannon fire of the planes, which a military spokesman said totaled "100 plus." It was understood as many as 150 planes may have taken part.

The heaviest previous attack was March 2, when more than 160 U.S. and South Vietnamese planes divided their explosives between two targets — Xom Bang and Quang Khe.

Col. Hal I. Price, director of operations for the 2nd Air Division, said 30 buildings for the storage of ordnance were hit at Phu Qui. When full reports are in, he said, the depot probably can be referred to in the past tense.

Price reported the loss of one plane, a propeller-driven A1 that crashed short of a carrier on returning from the strike. Most of the raiders were jets. Price said damage from ground fire was light, though a considerable number of anti-aircraft emplacements ringed the widely dispersed buildings.

Radio Hanoi declared three planes were shot down and many others damaged.

The raid was the most northerly of the series.

Phu Qui itself is a center of coffee and tea plantations and forestry operations 180 miles above the 17th Parallel. It is 25 miles from the South China Sea and about 60 from the eastern frontier of Laos, by which the Communists move Viet Cong recruits and supplies with the help of Pathet Lao guerrillas.

U.S. authorities tightened restrictions on news coverage of the air activities and a spokesman said the new policy rules out disclosures on a number of subjects.

As to the precise number of planes, he would say only "100 plus." As to the takeoff points, he offered the generalization "Southeast Asia."

Some of the raiders obviously flew from Da Nang, a strategic base 380 miles northeast of Saigon. But most evidently operated from 7th Fleet carriers. The spokesman said the force was two-thirds Navy, one-third Air Force.

In Washington, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff met with the President at the White House. In the two-hour White House meeting Army Chief of Staff Gen. Harold K. Johnson reported on his recent trip to Viet Nam. He told reporters, "I think they (air strikes) have given (the North Vietnamese) cause to pause and think a little bit."

But the general said he doesn't believe the strikes have turned the tide in South Viet Nam's fight against Communist guerrillas.

Clashes In Burma

RANGOON, Burma (AP) — Six Shan tribal rebels were killed and 10 others were wounded in two clashes with Burmese government forces last week, officials reported Monday. They said the fighting took place in the Kunlong region, 600 miles northeast of here.

B&K Find Nikita's Act Hard To Follow

Will Khrushchev Return To World Stage?

By HARRISON E. SALISBURY  
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MOSCOW — Will Nikita Khrushchev emerge from semi-obscure to play a major role in world affairs?

Khrushchev's dramatic appearance at a Moscow voting place Sunday has raised the question.

In fact, speculation concerning the possibility that Khrushchev might again play a major part in Kremlin policy-making was heard in diplomatic quarters even before Sunday, stimulated by increasing signs that Khrushchev's heirs are encountering mounting troubles at home and abroad.

However, Khrushchev's age — he will be 71 next month — militates against his return to full power.

The Soviet press did not report on the former premier's reappearance, but activities of retired Soviet leaders are rarely reported.

Khrushchev's reappearance was believed to have been designed by the Soviet President to dampen rumors that the former premier was under close surveillance. However, some specialists pondered the possibility that Khrushchev was permitted to reappear because of political instability within the Presidium.

That the Kremlin has entered a period of marked stress and strain has been noted by a number of observers. They point out that in no major area has the new team of Leonid Brezhnev, the party secretary, and Premier Aleksei Kosygin been able to score a success.

In relations with China the new Soviet regime is confronted with an even more violent outbreak of polemics than Khrushchev ever faced.

The exchange of charge and countercharge between Moscow and Peking over the action of Soviet police and troops in quelling a Chinese-led demonstration at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow has exceeded in savagery any skirmishing carried on while Khrushchev was in power.

Even more serious from the Moscow viewpoint, the conference of Communist parties, held earlier this month with the aim of rallying support for the Russian position, not only failed in its fundamental purpose, but also demonstrated increasing disunity in the Communist world and continuing Soviet inability to influence major Communist parties in the West and even in Eastern Europe.

It would require a capital shake-up to put Khrushchev back at the top.

But, in a time of stress, one faction or another might find it expedient to utilize his political ingenuity and such support as he still can enlist both within the Soviet party and with the people. Thus, the election-day appearance may have been designed to test popular reaction.

Attorneys for the defendants, in briefs filed with the Supreme Court last Wednesday, objected to the Justice Department's plea for quick action. One reply said that there existed no real need for such haste, and attorneys could not be prepared, without hardship, to argue the cases before the Supreme Court on May 3.

The Justice Department appeal was filed March 3 and, under usual routine, the defendants now have 30 days to file their answers. After the answers are filed, the Supreme Court will decide whether to grant a hearing in the case.

If a hearing is granted the case would not be called in the normal course until sometime next fall. However, if granted, the Justice Department could again ask for an early hearing date.

After Cox dismissed the major charges, the Justice Department appealed directly to the Supreme Court, asking an expedited hearing of the case. The department suggested that it be scheduled for May 3.

A conference of Supreme Court justices Monday afternoon resulted in an order rejecting the Justice Department hurry-up request, and stating that the defendants should be given the customary time for filing replies to the department appeal.

The Atlantic Missile Range said that both major launchings could not be supported in that short a time period. It said certain ground equipment, including computers, would not be available for Ranger 9 if Gemini went the following morning.

The dispute reportedly has been simmering since, and Dr. Robert Seamans, NASA associate administrator, ruled in favor of a March 21 launching for Ranger 9.

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