

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1973

# Hanoi Under the Bombing: Sirens, Shelters, Rubble and Death

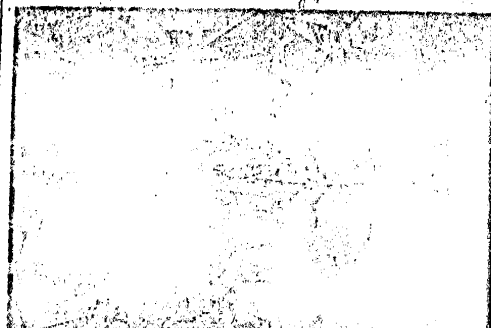
The writer of the following article is a professor of law at Columbia University who recently returned from a visit to Hanoi. A retired brigadier general, he was the chief United States counsel for the prosecution at the Nuremberg war crimes trials and is the author of several books, including "Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy."

By Telford Taylor

The United States B-52s raining perhaps half a dozen per hour on the night of Dec. 18-19 came as no surprise to the North Vietnamese in Hanoi, though their weight was greater than anything the city had yet experienced. Hanoi had already been stripped to the essentials. Schools and universities had been closed and the entire educational system moved to the countryside. Theaters and other public gathering places, except churches, were shut. Boating in the city's lovely lakes was forbidden, and even recreation was taken to avoid dangerous concentrations of people. But there were still lots of people left, and on the night before the bombing, Hanoi was a lively bustling city of shoppers and strollers, its streets crowded with bicyclists and pedestrians.

### A Regular Schedule

The raids soon fell into a general pattern of concentration in the late evening and very early morning hours, and the early afternoon. Journalists and Cuban scientists usually came shortly after lunch, and seldom lasted more than an hour. Evenings were generally bright and clear, but the noise of their "bombs" was so loud that it was difficult to hear anything else. The shelters are omnipresent. Every few yards on every street there is what looks like a sunken ash-can, often enough to hold an adult, often lined with concrete and equipped with a concrete or thick bamboo cover. The principal streets are lined with such shelters, each accommodating



Hanoi residents walking through the rubble of their city after a U.S. bombing raid last month. This photo was made by the Rev. Michael Allen of Yale University, who accompanied Telford Taylor and other Americans to the North Vietnamese capital.

undisturbed sleep after 2 A.M. and the mornings and late afternoons were generally peaceful.

Hanoi's physical situation is well described by its name (properly Ha Noi), meaning "in the middle of the water." It sits on the west bank of the Red River at the head of the delta. One cannot go far in any direction without coming to a water crossing, so its communications are especially susceptible to air attack.

To get from Hanoi to Haiphong or to the coal mines on the Tonkin Gulf Coast at Tonkin, you must cross the broad main stream of the Red River, and it is no longer possible to cross by the great Long Bien road and railway bridge, two spans of which have been knocked out. Vehicular and foot traffic now crosses on two one-way pontoon bridges that have survived the raids.

### Village Was a Target

Beyond the bridgehead on the east shore the village of Gia Lam, through which run the road and railway to Haiphong, was the principal target of the first night's attack by B-52s. Soon the village was a desert of craters. There was heavy loss of life reported, among both the residents and travelers on the crowded highway. The railroad track was torn up in many places, but the road has been kept open, despite renewed assaults by the bombers.

It was during these initial strikes by the B-52s that a number of heavy bombs destroyed the terminal and blew

craters in part of the runway at the nearby international airport. The bombing of the airport was substantial by the fact that it was not hit, though surely it could have been closed down completely had that been thought desirable.

At midday on Thursday, Dec. 21, the fighter-bombers came screaming over the hotel. The bomb explosions were distributed light in the shelter went out.

When the all-clear sounded, we were told that the central power station had been destroyed and saw a large crowd gathering a quarter of a mile away on the Lei Thuong Kiet, the broad avenue through the diplomatic sector on which the Hoa Binh Hotel fronts. A bomb had exploded immediately behind the Cuban Embassy, wrecking several large residential buildings and blowing out most of the windows of the embassy itself.

### Shelters Are Effective

The shelters had served well and despite the extensive destruction, there was only one fatality and half a dozen injuries. Only a few yards away loomed the stockade of the famous "Hanoi Hilton" for American prisoners, and two blocks farther away was the railway station, its main building now in ruins. Probably the bomb at the Cuban Embassy was intended for the station.

That night and the following morning, the inevitable consequences of using the B-52s against targets in the city became apparent. In the An Duong district of northeastern Hanoi, a low-entrenched hospital was obliterated by a "cannon" of heavy bombs. The 80 or so housing units were smashed like matchwood, and the viewer had to pick his way along the edges of enormous craters. According to the North Vietnamese, there were 261 casualties, of which 135 were deaths.

Bach Mai is the name of an area at the southern end of the city, and it is the site of the largest hospital and medical research center in North Vietnam. It is an extensive complex of buildings and grounds, lying about a mile and a half south of the railway station and half a mile north of the small Bac Mai stadium. We were told that individual buildings of the hospital had been hit in June of 1972 and again on Dec. 18, but the raid early in the morning of Dec. 22, when B-52s unloaded a carpet of heavy bombs that covered the entire complex, wrecked virtually total destruction. Despite the concentration of this attack, it is impossible for me to believe that the hospital was the target of the raid, which was probably directed at the stadium and nearby barracks and classrooms. Fortunately the hospital's patients had been moved to safety before the bombing, but it was reported that about 20 members of the hospital staff, including a doctor and 15 nurses, had been killed.

### An Alert During Prayer

Not all of the evacuees found safety, for the bombers were operating over the adjacent provinces. It was officially reported—and confirmed to me by relatives of some of the victims—that on Dec. 23 there were heavy casualties in two villages west of Hanoi and that some of the wounded evacuees had to be brought back to hospitals in the city. Sunday, the day before Christmas, brought some relief from the bombing. At seven o'clock that evening, Donn Michael Allen of the Yale Divinity School conducted a Christmas Eve service in the lobby of the

Hoa Binh Hotel, dramatically interrupted by a low flying aircraft alert, during the Lord's Prayer.

Despite this intrusion, there was a general belief that the city would not be bombed on Christmas Eve, and a mid-morning mass was read in the Hotel Cathedral, which was filled to overflowing. There was no pipe organ, and Christmas music was provided by a harmonium and a mixed choir, which included one boy soprano with a remarkable voice. Schubert's "Ave Maria" and Gruber's "Silent Night" were lovingly rendered, as well as other songs unfamiliar to this listener. The service and the sermon were in Vietnamese, but the priest summarized the sermon in French, English and German for the benefit of the foreigners present.

Christmas day and night were quiet, but the heavy bombardments that followed more than compensated for the respite. During the night of December 26-27, B-52s laid a "carpet" behind the busy Kham Thien thoroughfare. A few blocks southwest of the railroad station, in the heart of Hanoi, "the district" (dwellings here are, by Western standards, shacks and shanties, and the literary structures disintegrated under the weight of the bombs and the force of the blast.)

Despite the evacuation and the shelters there were 215 reported deaths and 257 other serious injuries. Many acres of closely packed houses were razed and the whole cratered area was a scene of desperate misery, with many survivors loudly lamenting the loss of their kin as they picked through the debris.

### Sons Sleep Near Shelter

If one stays near and uses good shelters in Hanoi, the risk of serious injury is very low. Walking the streets at night, one discovers that the more cautious residents no longer sleep at home, but prefer the discomfort of a makeshift bed beside a sidewalk shelter.

In some streets, families have established temporary hostels in the larger shelters. Travel in areas where shelters are not available is, of course, much more dangerous, as an automobile drive between Hanoi and the airport can be nerve-racking, crossing the pontoon bridges, where one feels stark naked, and racing through the often-bombed Gia Lam district.

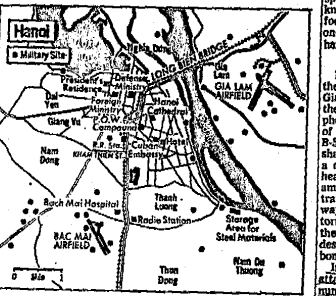
The Vietnamese are an emotional people, affectionate with each other, and family ties are very close. The deep grief and bereavement is matched by delight at finding a loved one safe, and these bombed districts are the scene of poignantly joyful encounters as well as hysterical surrenders to grief. But those who have suffered no personal bereavement are, by now, remarkably adjusted to the constant strain of the bombardments, especially the children who have grown up under them and take them for granted. As in Britain 30 years ago, so today in Hanoi there is a lot of "London pride."

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## U.S. Reports Strikes on Caches in North

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Sunday, Jan. 7 (Reuters) — American bombers raided the North Vietnamese panhandle against yesterday, the United States command said, striking targets near key junctions and storage areas of military equipment destined for the South.

A command spokesman said 45 B-52 bombers dropped more than 1,000 tons of explosives over areas described as "enemy supply caches."

Smaller fighter-bombers made 115 strikes on the four southern provinces of North Vietnam, attacking water and rail transportation facilities and anti-aircraft artillery sites.

The American spokesman said that half of the B-52 missions were made on an area of several miles west of the in-in Paris district city of Vinh. Other military sources believe that the city of Dong Hoi, a long-time and Vietcong children are

week ago, the spokesman said, but he added that American planes might have flown above the bombing limit to knock out anti-aircraft positions, or that weather planes might have gathered data above the 20th Parallel.

The Vietcong, meanwhile, fired heavy rockets into the Lai Thieu district 10 miles north of Saigon yesterday as enemy activity in South Vietnam remained at a high level.

The Saigon command's count of enemy-initiated incidents ended at 6 A.M. yesterday, reaching 108 as Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces intensified their drive for territory before the resumption talks.

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