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U.S. preparing for new acts of war, says Hanoi

North Vietnam claimed in Paris yesterday that the United States Defence Secretary, Mr Laird, was carrying with him plans for new "acts of war and aggression" against the north.

The charge was made by a Hanoi Press spokesman, Mr Nguyen Thanh Le, after the otherwise routine 98th session of the deadlocked Vietnam peace talks.

Mr Le said that, in the past two months, the Nixon Administration had "multiplied its threats" against North Vietnam as well as escalating aerial action over the country.

According to Mr Le, U.S. reconnaissance and other planes violated North Vietnamese air space 2600 times during December, compared with only 1660 violations in November. U.S. planes were said to have made 204 attacks in North Vietnam during December.

Among these attacks, Mr Le said, were 47 raids by B-52 bombers in the Vinh Ling region alone, as compared with a total of 137 B-52 raids on all of North Vietnam

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during the first 10 months of 1970.

Mr Le also claimed U.S. warships twice entered North Vietnamese territorial waters — once in November and again in December.

Referring to Mr Laird's present visit to Saigon, the North Vietnamese spokesman observed that two previous trips by Mr Laird to South Vietnam — at the beginning of 1969 and in February, 1970 — had led respectively to the "Vietnamisation" programme and to the extension of the war into Khmer (formerly Cambodia).

Mr Le also accused the Nixon Administration of "deliberate falsification, defamation, sophistry and sowing doubt" in its reactions to a North Vietnamese list of 368 American airmen captured by Hanoi.

The U.S. Press spokesman, Mr Stephen Ledogar, last week challenged the completeness of the list by noting that it named only 29 pilots dead while, according to previous information, 22 airmen were known to have died.

Mr Le said the list of 368 was a "complete and definitive" list of all U.S. pilots captured alive in North Vietnam. Of the 368, 20 had died afterwards — 15 of their wounds, five of rare diseases.

Three other pilots had been found dead after their planes crashed.

The three had not been on the list of 368 airmen captured alive, because they had been found dead.

Commenting on these disclosures, Mr Ledogar said more than 400 U.S. military men were missing over North Vietnam. He said the North Vietnamese should be asked: "How many others were dead on arrival?"

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