ABOARD THE USS CORAL SEA (UPI)-Rear Adm. Howard E. Greer said Wednesday there is no way for North Vietnam to continue its current offensive indefinitely if U.S. air power keeps up its blockade of Hanoi's ports and railroads.

Greer, commander of Carrier Division 3, part of the 7th Fleet's huge task force off North Vietnam, said, "It probably won't be felt for a number of weeks. It depends on how much they have in the (supply) pipeline and how much destruction we can inflict on that pipeline."

"But if we continue to close that port and the railroads that come in from China, then there isn't any way for North Vietnam to continue for an extended period the type of offensive they have going—that is, an offensive with large numbers of personnel spending huge quantities of ordnance and operating rather sophisticated equipment such as tanks and missile systems."

In an interview, Greer shrugged off claims by the North Vietnamese that the United States is re-mining their harbors; supposedly because the original mines laid early last month have been swept up. Radio Hanoi said Wednesday U.S. Navy planes dropped more mines Monday off Vinh, 164 miles south of Hanoi.

"We have no indication they are conducting any minesweeping," Greer said, "and we've got pretty good surveillance." He declined to go into detail beyond saying, "We don't monitor the minefields as if we had a telephone system hooked up to them.

"We feel confident we will be able to stop the flow of supplies from China," Greer said.

Greer also mentioned so-called "smart" bombs (which follow a laser beam or a television image to the target), bigger U.S. bombloads, the mining and the fact that the North Vietnamese are today conducting a war much more dependent on supply lines, as factors in making the current effort a more decisive one than in the past.

earlier 1964-68 air war over North Vietnam began. He said the air war today is more effective, for one thing because targets are less restricted and commanders have more flexibility.

"I can remember months we spent with the only authorized target being positively identified military truck traffic," Greer said.

He declined to go into what restrictions, if any, exist on how close U.S. bombers can approach the Chinese border. He did say the main restriction is "to minimize, or completely avoid, civilian casualties."

"We are trying to avoid schools, hospitals, religious areas and population centers. We are not wiping out the cities."

Vann told newsmen that the day-long negotiations were still going on at dusk between the Communists and the South Vietnamese defenders of the highlands town of 27,000.

The surrender offer—first ever in the war by a North Vietnamese unit—came at what appeared to be the tail end of a week of heavy fighting in Kontum, 260 miles north of Saigon.

"I do not think the battle for Kontum is over," Vann told newsmen at his headquarters here, 30 miles south of Kontum. "Phase one may be over, and it has been characterized by the failure of the North Vietnamese to achieve any objectives."

Vann said the Communists lost 3,000 soldiers killed during the first phase and came close to overrunning Kontum.

He put South Vietnamese casualties at 1,000 killed, wounded and missing.