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THE AIR FORCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Role of Air Power Grows

1970

by

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OFFICE OF AIR FORCE HISTORY
September 1972

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FOREWORD

This historical report reviews plans and policies affecting the air war in Southeast Asia, as they were discussed, reviewed, and ordered implemented in 1970 by the White House, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Air Force. It is the fourteenth in a series of such reports published by the Office of Air Force History since 1965.

Previous titles include: USAF Plans and Operations: The Air Campaign Against North Vietnam, 1966; The Air Force in Vietnam: The Search for Military Alternatives, 1967; The Air Force in Southeast Asia: Toward a Bombing Halt, 1968; and The Air Force in Southeast Asia: The Administration Emphasizes Air Power, 1969.

In this study, the author discusses the Air Force's role in supporting the President's decisions to withdraw American ground troops from the theater and rely primarily on air power to provide continuing U.S. support to the South Vietnamese in their fight against Hanoi's military units. She examines the Washington-level decisions of early 1970 to reduce U.S. air operations while taking additional steps to strengthen Saigon's armed forces. The author also reviews the debates among Washington-level agencies on the effectiveness of the various air campaigns, and she devotes a chapter to USAF efforts to improve and modernize the Vietnamese Air Force.

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I. INTRODUCTION

(U) In a report to Congress on 18 February 1970 summing up his efforts to achieve peace in Southeast Asia during his first year in office, President Richard M. Nixon said he had pursued "two distinct but mutually supporting courses of action: negotiations and Vietnamization."¹ Again in 1970 these two policies were to predominate, but with somewhat changed emphasis. In line with his Vietnamization policy, the President withdrew 139,025 troops from South Vietnam during 1970, despite objections by some of his military leaders. He likewise continued to push the modernization of South Vietnamese forces. Concerning the latter, Mr. Nixon advised Congress that his experts were examining how much progress the Vietnamese had made; and he himself posed the question "whether the Vietnamization program will succeed." The enemy, he noted, remained "determined and able" and would continue to fight "unless he can be persuaded that negotiation is the best solution." The President's dilemma was real: the South Vietnamese were not improving as fast as the U.S. forces were withdrawing. And Hanoi, far from easing its negotiating stance, seemed busily preparing for the day when only a few U.S. forces would remain and it would face just a South Vietnamese foe.

(U) Still faced with his two major imperatives--the budget and the coming elections--the President's answer to the Vietnam dilemma was to resort to ever stronger efforts to persuade the North Vietnamese to negotiate a settlement. The year 1970 was punctuated by his increased warnings to Hanoi not to take advantage of the U.S. withdrawals, and by actions he took to follow through on these warnings. The President made no secret of this policy. During the first half of 1970, he reiterated in at least five major public speeches, the warning he first sounded on 3 November 1969:

Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence will be to its advantage. If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation.²

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(U) The measures the President took included a number of rather bold steps, not hitherto countenanced: using B-52's to bomb the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) in Laos; resuming the bombing of North Vietnam; attacking the privileged sanctuaries in Cambodia; blockading the Cambodian coast; and authorizing raids into Laos. These measures served not only to pressure North Vietnam on negotiations but also helped strengthen Vietnamization.

(U) Even as he authorized these additional military actions to avoid a possible damaging enemy attack, the President explained his reasons to the American people and associated them with his efforts. In a television-radio address to the nation on 20 April 1970, he stated:

If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation... There is a better, shorter path to peace - through negotiations. It is Hanoi and Hanoi alone that stands today blocking the path to a just peace. We are a strong people. America has never been defeated in the proud 190-year history of this country and we shall not be defeated in Vietnam... It is your steadiness and your stamina the leaders of North Vietnam are watching tonight. It is these qualities, as much as any proposals, that will bring them to negotiate. It is America's resolve... that will achieve our goal of a just peace.³

(U) In pursuing his objectives, the President continued to rely on air power as his primary tool. While U.S. ground troops withdrew on schedule and U.S. casualties decreased, U.S. air power continued to be used: to pressure Hanoi to begin serious negotiations; to support ground actions, primarily by the South Vietnamese; and above all to interdict and interrupt continuing enemy efforts to infiltrate men and supplies to the South in preparation for future offensives. Lifting a number of restrictions previously imposed on the use of air power in Southeast Asia, the President expanded free fire zones in Laos and authorized air attacks on targets in North Vietnam not previously struck. While thus heightening the pressure on Hanoi to negotiate an end to the war, the broadened U.S. air operations helped buy valuable time for U.S. -South Vietnamese efforts to improve and strengthen Saigon's armed forces while permitting the President to continue his withdrawal of American ground units.

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II. USAF OPERATIONS SUPPORT NATIONAL POLICY

(S) At the beginning of 1970, the primary American emphasis was on keeping to Vietnamization schedules and lowering the flashpoints of combat. For example, Presidential advisor Henry Kissinger recommended moving exposed Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camps back from the Cambodian border to less vulnerable areas.¹ The enemy seemed to be avoiding large-scale combat, but continued to build up his stockpiles across the border. In northern Laos, however, the expected seasonal offensive by Communist forces, begun in late 1969, had developed increasing pressure on friendly forces throughout January.

(U) The administration became concerned that, with its own strength in South Vietnam (SVN) diminishing, North Vietnam might threaten Laos to the point of causing the fall of the Royal Laotian Government (RLG). Formation of a Communist government in its place would mean that U.S. interdiction of the 90 percent of Communist manpower and supplies going through the Laotian panhandle would become, as Dr. Kissinger put it, "legally much more difficult."² It would also raise profound security concerns for Thailand. To U.S. planners, Hanoi's advance into Laos seemed intended to frighten South Vietnam and Thailand, to dramatize the diminishing support from the retreating U.S. forces, and show that negotiation on Communist terms was the only way to end the war.³

(U) It was in this atmosphere that the President voiced his own warnings and tried to enforce his own concept of negotiations. Thus, on 30 January, he twice warned that if remaining U.S. forces came into jeopardy, he would "react accordingly." The United States had "the means to do so" and he would not hesitate to use them, and would deal with the situation "more strongly than we have dealt with it in the past." Since any use of U.S. ground troops was out of the question, the President's warning to respond "more strongly" than in the past meant greater use of air power.

(S) Already in mid-December 1969 the strike area for sorties in northern Laos (known as the Barrel Roll area) had been expanded when enemy troops and other lucrative targets multiplied both north

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and south of the previous Barrel Roll boundaries. In early January 1970, U.S. airmen began attacking targets in free strike areas validated by the U.S. Ambassador in Vientiane, Laos.⁴ When the enemy offensive opened in earnest on 11 February, sorties were increased as more targets became available. On 13 February USAF crews flew 180 sorties a day, the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) 141, and on the night of 15-16 February Air Force Spooky gunships accounted for 174 confirmed enemy killed by air strikes. Throughout 18 February, U.S. aircraft repeatedly struck enemy troops trying to seize Khieng Kuong. Twenty sorties were diverted from bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail as the Air Force flew a total of 224 Barrel Roll sorties, an all-time high.⁵

(U) During the battle for Khieng Kuong, the United States had also sent in a flight of B-52's.⁶ Since this was the first time they had ever been used in the Barrel Roll area, it represented a significant departure. As "reliable sources" in Saigon explained it:

... The B-52 bombings in the Plaine des Jarres were approved by the White House, which intended them as a warning to North Vietnam not to try to conquer all of Laos... When it became apparent that Communist forces were overrunning the PDJ, the White House consulted with Souvana Phouma and decided it was time to give a warning to Hanoi... The President wanted North Vietnam to get the message before it embarked irrevocably on a general offensive in Laos... The raids were not intended as a military effort to hold the plain for the Royal Laotian forces... They were a pure and simple warning to Hanoi not to go too far... to let it know that if Communist forces launched a widespread offensive in Laos, they would have to reckon with the B-52's. Hanoi now knows we mean business.⁷

Dr. Kissinger's explanation tended to downplay use of the B-52's, but acknowledged using the attacks to influence North Vietnam:

... The problem we faced with respect to the use of B-52's in northern Laos was that we saw the Communist build up over a period of months and

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there were many extremely lucrative targets that would have been extremely suitable for B-52's... We used the B-52's once after the offensive started, partly for military and partly for political reasons in order to make clear that we were viewing the situation with some seriousness... Of course our actions are affected by what the Communist do. How else can it be? We are trying to bring about a situation in which they recognize that for greater interest, and not just for the local situation, they will want to preserve the peace and neutrality of Laos.⁸

(U) This politico/military use of air power aroused such domestic concern over possible U.S. escalation of the war that President Nixon made a formal statement on Laos on 6 March. Defending the use of air power in Laos, in the past and in the present, he said the United States was trying, above all, to save American and allied lives in South Vietnam. U.S. air strikes had destroyed enemy weapons and supplies over the past four years which would have taken thousands of American lives. He denied that the United States had escalated the fighting; rather it was Hanoi which had increased the number of its troops in Laos from 50,000 to 67,000 during the past few months,* and U.S. air operations had only been increased accordingly. "What we do in Laos has thus as its aim to bring about conditions for progress towards peace in the entire Indo-Chinese Peninsula." Mr. Nixon also made it clear that the use of air power would continue:

*An interesting sidelight here is provided by two news stories on the President's statement. James McCartney, reporting from Vientiane for the Philadelphia Inquirer (13 Mar 70), said U.S. Embassy officials - including CIA officials, he implied - flatly contradicted the President's charge of a huge North Vietnamese buildup. "One official remarked wryly, 'I guess you know that the embassy really would have no interest in seeking to downplay North Vietnamese strength.' Asked where he thought Mr. Nixon may have gotten his figures he replied, 'He must have gotten them from the Air Force in Vietnam. They'd like to justify the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in every way they could.'" This same attribution of the figures to the Air Force was reported as a fact by Richard Rovere in his 13 March "Letter from Washington" in the 21 March issue of the New Yorker magazine.

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Our first priority for such operations is to interdict the continued flow of troops and supplies across Laotian territory on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. As Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces, I consider it my responsibility to use our air power to interdict this flow of supplies and men into South Vietnam and thereby avoid a heavy toll of American and allied lives.⁹

Cambodia

(S) The 1970 allied incursion into Cambodia provided a second, major example of the President's policy of using warnings coupled with air power. Underlying his concern here, as in the case of Laos earlier, was apprehension that his administration might be involved in some major setback because of the large-scale force reductions under the Vietnamization program upon which he had staked so much. Beginning in late 1969, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had strongly objected to continuing U.S. troop withdrawals in the face of North Vietnam's unchanging belligerence. The JCS objections intensified after the Cambodian coup of mid-March, which ousted Prince Norodom Sihanouk from power. A strong critic of U.S. policy in SEA and defender of Cambodian neutrality, Sihanouk had long been unhappy with North Vietnamese sanctuaries on his territory but was unable to get them out.

(S) On 3 April, the JCS again recommended deferring further redeployment pending assessment of developments over the next 75 days.¹⁰ When the President nonetheless on 20 April announced to the nation plans to withdraw another 150,000 troops, Gen. Creighton Abrams, Commander, U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV), reportedly insisted that, if he were to assure the safety of his men and still meet the 12-month withdrawal schedule, he had to have permission to liquidate the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia.¹¹

(U) With the fall of Sihanouk and assumption of power by a pro-U.S. faction, the opportunity to do something about the Cambodian sanctuaries presented itself.¹² For five years, they

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had afforded the enemy a safe haven and a massive storehouse for his supplies -- all secure from U.S. air strikes. Attacking and disrupting them could mean that the enemy's whole strategy would collapse and leave the way open for negotiations and peace. On the other hand, if the Communists gained ascendancy over the weak new Cambodian government, a very dangerous situation could face the allies in future months. Instead of being deprived of his sanctuaries, the enemy would be stronger than ever and withdrawal of substantial U.S. forces would become impossible. If the sanctuaries remained immune, North Vietnam would have far less inducement to negotiate a satisfactory settlement. But if they were destroyed there was a reasonable chance such a decisive move would make it decide to negotiate.

(U) The President decided to authorize the cross-border attack. On 30 April he addressed the American people once more. Recalling his announcement of 10 days before of the planned withdrawal of 150,000 additional troops from South Vietnam during the coming year, he reported that attacks were being launched, in cooperation with Saigon's forces, to clean out major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border. To help further the operation's success, he also repeated his threat of retaliatory action. He said:

We take this action not for the purpose of expanding the war into Cambodia but for the purpose of ending the war in Vietnam and winning the just peace we all desire. We have made and will continue to make every possible effort to end this war through negotiation. . .

Tonight I again warn the North Vietnamese that if they continue to escalate the fighting when the United States is withdrawing its forces, I shall meet my responsibility as Commander in Chief of our Armed Forces to take the action I consider necessary to defend the security of our American men. . . . We will not be defeated. We will not allow American men by the thousands to be killed by an enemy from privileged sanctuaries. . . .¹³

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The President's post-incursion statement at a news conference on 8 May reflected his confidence in his tactics. Replying to a questioner who suggested his reasons for going into Cambodia were "hauntingly similar" to those of President Johnson as he moved step by step up the escalation ladder, the President replied:

President Johnson did want peace... the difference is that he did move step by step. This action is a decisive move, and -- puts the enemy on warning that if it escalates while we are trying to deescalate, we will move decisively, and not step by step.¹⁴

(U) Given the shrinking role of U. S. ground forces -- despite their role in the incursion -- it was clear that air power would again be the President's main weapon to back up his warnings. Already on 26 March, U. S. fighter bombers had attacked North Vietnamese gun positions inside Cambodia some 65 miles west of Saigon,¹⁵ in what White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler subsequently termed a "protective reaction" attack.¹⁶ For three or four days before the troops went in, B-52's softened up enemy positions and, according to President Nixon, "conveyed" to the enemy "our concern" about the consolidation of their sanctuaries in Cambodia.¹⁷ Then, from 1-4 May, 128 fighter bombers struck just north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ)¹⁸ in a form of pre-emptive warning strike after Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had warned on 2 May that he would recommend bombing North Vietnam should the latter retaliate for the Cambodian incursion with a major infiltration or invasion across the DMZ.¹⁹

(S) In addition these quasi-political air strikes in support of the Cambodian operation, air operations of course played a major role in the campaign itself. All the support sorties required were to be provided on a first priority basis, the tactical air priorities having been revised by JCS on 25 April as follows: 1) Cambodia, 2) RVN, 3) Barrel Roll, 4) Steel Tiger.²⁰ In the expeditions into the Parrot's Beak and Fishhook areas of Cambodia, begun 29 April and 1 May respectively, extensive air strikes were used to suppress anticipated enemy resistance prior to combat assaults, and continuous air cover was made available to support ground troops thereafter. USAF aircraft flew 5,189 preplanned and 1,675 immediate air strike sorties (including 653 B-52 sorties) plus 193 gunship and 44 flareship missions between 29 April and

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30 June in support of the operations. Twenty Commando Vault weapons* were delivered to create 16 helicopter landing zones.²¹ After the initial assaults, ground forces turned to searching for supplies, and air strikes furnished cover and support. Except for heavy contact in a few areas at the start, the enemy offered very little resistance.

Interdiction

(TS) As the enemy withdrew before the Allied attacks, however, it became clear he was simultaneously attacking key towns on major lines of communication (LOC's) in the interior of Cambodia. Throughout May and June the towns fell to the North Vietnamese, who ended up controlling the entire northeast section of Cambodia. Allied strategists saw the possibility the enemy might try to overthrow the Lon Nol government and set up a puppet "Free Red Cambodia," using the captured territory to establish new supply lines by land and by the Sekong and Mekong Rivers. Numerous countermoves were considered: extending South Vietnamese and Cambodian riverine operations up the Mekong, expanding irregular-force harassing actions, and increasing the role of air.²²

(TS) Not too surprisingly, increasing the role of air became the main countermeasure taken against this new enemy threat. Secretary Laird in mid-May asked the JCS for a plan that would assure termination of the U.S. ground effort in Cambodia by 30 June, but that would provide for:

The transition of tactical air operations to those which are deemed militarily useful in Cambodia or along the Cambodian/SVN border. (If new or extended operating authorities are required, include the request for the authorities in the plan.)

*These were the M-121 (10,000-lb. bomb) or the BLU-82 (15,000-lb.), dropped from C-130 aircraft.

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The transition of B-52 air operations to those which are deemed militarily useful in Cambodia or along the Cambodian/SVN border. (Again, if new or extended operating authorities are required, include the request for the authorities in the plan. . .).²³

(S) In other words, while U.S. ground operations in Cambodia were to be completely halted, air operations were to increase and, in effect, take on the job of halting enemy progress in Cambodia. The JCS response was a plan for air interdiction operations in eastern Cambodia.²⁴ MACV and Seventh Air Force had suggested that without an identified LOC network in Cambodia or a corresponding logistics flow, initial U.S. air efforts should focus largely on support of friendly ground force operations while including some interdiction.²⁵ But the Joint Chiefs said this went beyond the authority anticipated for air operations in Cambodia, and that any bonus effect from U.S. air would have to come from interdiction operations.²⁶

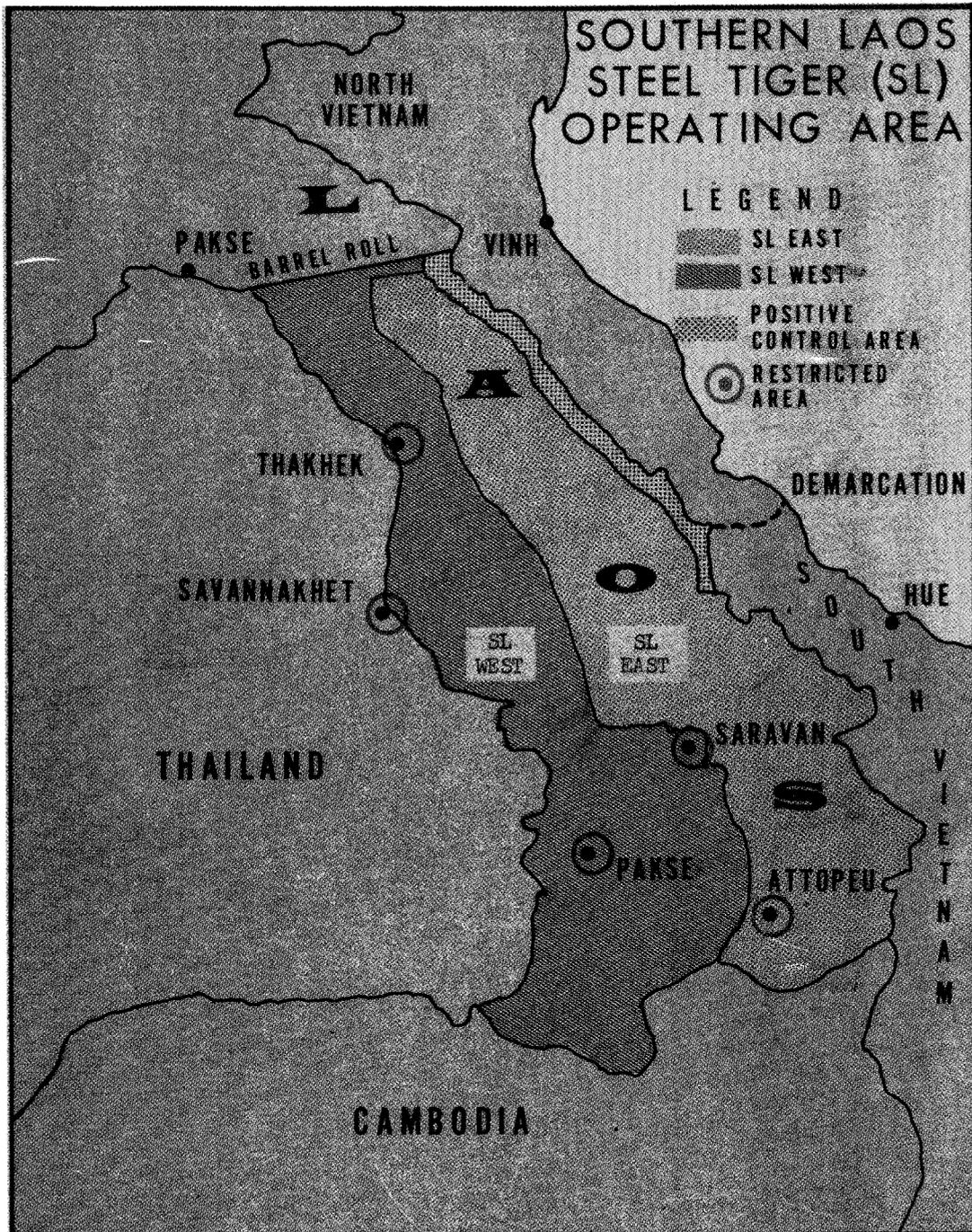
(S) On 24 May, the JCS authorized MACV to execute the new plan, which was to be "an extension of operations currently conducted in Laos under the code name Steel Tiger."²⁷ Forces in South Vietnam, Thailand, offshore in Task Force 77, and B-52's would participate, and the area would be that part of Cambodia bounded by a line 200 meters west of the Mekong River on the west, the Laotian border on the north, and the RVN border on the east, and Route 13 on the south.²⁸

(S) Although there was little information on targets beyond the 30-kilometer limit of American penetration,²⁹ Seventh Air Force, in response to a JCS request,³⁰ forwarded a list of 25 targets on 21 May.³¹ On the same date, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF) authorized Seventh Air Force to reconnoiter Cambodia east of the Mekong and the following day the JCS authorized a one-time Giant Nail (U-2) overflight of 43 airfields throughout Cambodia.³² The interdiction campaign -- called Freedom Deal -- began on 29 May. From 1-20 June, 414 preplanned

*For the Steel Tiger strike boundaries, see Fig 2.

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Source: History, CINCPAC Command, 1970, II, 168

Fig 2

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and 224 immediate sorties were flown in the area.³³ The purpose was to interdict the enemy and his materials moving through Cambodia into SVN and to deny him use of LOC's in eastern Cambodia to the maximum extent possible.³⁴ On 11 June the entire Mekong River from Kratie to the Laos border was validated as a Category B* LOC,³⁵ and by 15 June more than 550 MK-36 mines had been placed in the Se Kong to inhibit water traffic into Cambodia. The Se San was also mined.³⁶

(S) In the first half of June, with continuing heavy enemy attacks on the towns of Lomphat, Labansiek, and Bakiev, it became increasingly clear that some air support for Cambodian ground units was essential. With loss of the towns imminent, Seventh Air Force on 15 June asked COMUSMACV to extend the area of air operations and to interpret the interdiction function more broadly.³⁷ The next day, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, authorized COMUSMACV to do just this. Moorer reported that President Nixon had stressed the need to expand intelligence gathering, to be more effective in employment of air, and to apply a broad interpretation to the term interdiction, especially after U.S. troop withdrawals from Cambodia on 30 June.³⁸ On 17 June the JCS broadened the entire interdiction concept. It authorized the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC):

...to employ U.S. tactical air interdiction in any situation which involves a serious threat to major Cambodian positions such as a provincial capital whose loss would constitute a serious military or psychological blow to the country.³⁹

(S) When General Abrams then requested expansion of the interdiction area and standby authority until 30 September for conducting air strikes outside it,⁴⁰ CINCPAC, interpreting the JCS

*Used by both enemy and friendly personnel, and requiring warnings to the populace prior to air strikes.

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message as authorization, approved on 19 June. ⁴¹ The rules of engagement for the expanded interdiction campaign (Freedom Deal Alpha) were the same as those for Freedom Deal, except that there were no Category B LOC's and targets identified by ground commanders were considered as validated.* Under the new terms, MACV on 20 June directed Seventh Air Force to provide air support to the defenders of Kompong Thom -- under Communist attack since 4 June -- and the 82 fighter sorties directed there between 20-30 June were credited with saving the city, as attested by the Cambodian General, Lon Nol:

The image of the aircraft of your 7th Air Force has been solidly anchored since the 20th of June, historical date of the city of Kompong Thom, in the spirits of all the fighters of this city, who owe their survival and their [being] to the action of these aircraft which allowed the solid rise of their morale and stopped any more deaths. ⁴²

From 20-30 June, some 226 sorties were flown in the expanded interdiction area. ⁴³

~~(S)~~ On 29 June, General Abrams notified Seventh Air Force that, effective 1 July, interdiction operations were again to be limited to the Freedom Deal area plus a small southern extension. ⁴⁴ But at the end of July, because of enemy troop buildups, the JCS again approved expansion of the interdiction area until 1 November for "selective tac air and B-52 interdiction against lucrative targets which posed a substantial threat to allied forces." ⁴⁵ On 23 August, the Joint Chiefs authorized extending the interdiction area west of the Mekong -- originally until 1 October, then until 1 November. Toward year's end, with enemy launching concerted attacks in November and December, and trying to isolate the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, all strike authorizations were extended to 1 May 1971. ⁴⁶ Indicative of Lon

*In other words, they were all considered as Category A LOC's; those along which there were no friendly personnel, traffic, installations, or dwellings, with airstrikes permitted within 1,000 meters of each side of the waterway or route. See Fig. 3.

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Fig 3

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Nol's increased dependence on U.S. air support, USAF tactical sorties almost tripled in December and those of the South Vietnamese Air Force increased 55 percent. 47*

(S) In sum, U.S. air power in Cambodia, used modestly at first to support ground action in the May incursion, was increasingly called upon to make up the effectiveness gap in ground forces, i. e., after withdrawal of U.S. troops and after Cambodian forces proved unable to withstand the enemy's aggressive attacks. Most important and basic to this air role, as we have seen, was the mid-year establishment of a broader interpretation of the interdiction function, as suggested by Seventh Air Force, accepted and recommended by MACV, the JCS, and finally approved by the White House. This use of air was not really new, the precedent having been set in Laos, particularly with the President's open acknowledgement of such an air role there. 48 Back on 23 April, the Directorate of Plans, Headquarters USAF, had suggested to Gen. John D. Ryan, 49 Air Force Chief of Staff, that air attacks in Cambodia -- as in Laos -- could be extremely effective in assisting the government to maintain control. However, concern about hostile U.S. public opinion still gave pause. The memo to General Ryan went on,

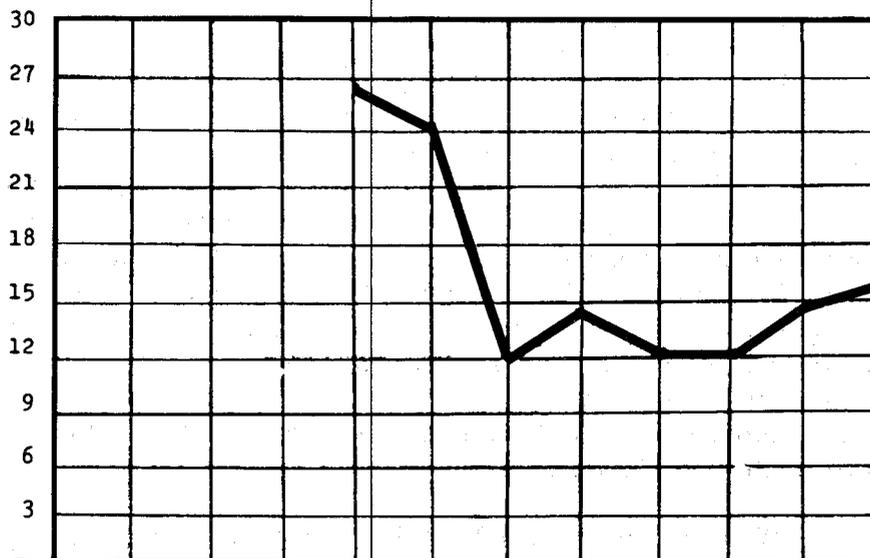
With the present political climate and Congressional attitude toward the conflict in SEA, what are the prospects for being permitted to provide air assistance to Cambodia of the type now being accomplished in northern Laos? 50

Even the Joint Chiefs were still hesitant on 20 May when they demurred against MACV's proposal to support the Cambodian military forces. But on 17 June, after Admiral Moorer discussed the matter at the White House, the President authorized a new, broadened interdiction campaign. 51

*See Fig. 4.

TACTICAL AIR SORTIES IN CAMBODIA

(PERCENTAGE OF SEA TOTAL)



1970	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
USAF					4661	3465	857	1370	1107	302	524	1203
USMC					16	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
USN					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VNAF					1712	1292	976	816	915	1016	1404	1358
TOTAL					6389	4761	1833	2186	2022	1318	1928	2561
PERCENTAGE					26	24	12	14	12	12	14	16

Source: MACJ3

Fig 4

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(U) This decision was to have continuing significance for the whole U.S. strategy in Vietnam after termination of the Cambodian incursion, as may be seen in the following statements to newsmen by U.S. government officials:

After our troops leave Cambodia, our Air Force will be used, be permitted, to interdict the supply lines and communication lines in Cambodia... It is obvious, of course, that there will be times when this will be of direct benefit to the present government in Cambodia....

Secretary of State Rogers, 25 Jun 70

After the Cambodian operation, which will end as far as Americans are concerned on the ground on June 30, we will carry on an air interdiction campaign... The primary emphasis will be on the interdiction of supplies, material and personnel... but I would be less than frank or candid with you if there would not be a side effect as far as Cambodia and South Vietnamese troops operating within Cambodia....

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, 26 Jun 70

...we do not plan to go back into Cambodia. We do plan, however, and I will use this power -- I am going to use, as I should, the air power of the United States to interdict all flows of men and supplies which I consider are directed toward South Vietnam.

President Nixon, 1 July 1970

Resumption of NVN Bombing

(U) One of the most controversial examples of the administration's exploitation of air power was its revived use against North Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs had become increasingly critical of the October 1968 bombing halt because North Vietnam had not kept its promise to "negotiate seriously." They had continued to recommend retention of a capability to resume offensive air operations over North Vietnam. In autumn 1969, as directed, the JCS prepared plans for a 30-day surge of Arc Light operations "to be added to those already

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formulated for possible use in case of continued intransigence of the North Vietnamese in Paris... to provide a clear, recognizable signal to the NVN leadership."⁵² As noted in Annex K of the JCS Phase III Vietnamization plan of 29 January 1970:

A family of retaliatory plans against NVN has been developed in the event higher authority directs resumption of the bombing. These plans call for sizable strike forces to attack the most critical economic and military targets in NVN -- their success depends on continued availability of forces to react effectively on short notice. To support such operations, forces in Thailand and CVA [attack carrier] strength must be retained...⁵³

After reviewing the Phase III plan in March, Secretary Laird asked the Joint Chiefs to examine alternative locations for out-country forces, other than Southeast Asia, from which to resume air operations against North Vietnam if directed.

(S) At the beginning of 1970, overflights of North Vietnam by other than reconnaissance aircraft and their escorts were prohibited; however, certain offensive operations were authorized whenever enemy antiaircraft artillery (AAA) units or surface-to-air missiles (SAM's) fired on the reconnaissance planes south of the 19° parallel of North Vietnam. On 5 January, the JCS asked Secretary Laird to secure Presidential approval for other overflights of North Vietnam, particularly by tactical aircraft flying escort for B-52's in heavy SAM and AAA threat areas.* The purpose was to improve air interdiction effectiveness against massive enemy supply buildups in late 1969. Secretary Laird recommended approval, telling the President he thought the advantages to be gained more than outweighed the added risks.⁵⁴

(U) On 11 February, Secretary Laird announced that the policy of "protective reaction" applied to action over North Vietnam as well as to ground actions by American troops into Laos and

*The JCS said a SAM threat area extended into Laos at Ban Karai and that B-52 operations were presently restricted there because, under existing authorities, adequate escort protection could not be provided against the SAM threat. Although 186 B-52 sorties had been flown in the area during 18 November-19 December, there had been none since because of the SAM threat.

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Cambodia.⁵⁵ This policy, first defined in 1969, authorized U.S. commanders to take whatever action was required to protect the safety of U.S. troops -- even if this meant shelling or calling in air strikes against enemy positions across the Laotian and Cambodian borders or engaging in "hot pursuit" of enemy units.

(U) Testifying before Congress after the Cambodian incursion had begun, Secretary Laird reported on 4 May that in recent days U.S. airmen had flown reinforced protective reaction strikes against enemy missile and anti-aircraft installations and the surrounding logistic area along the Laos-North Vietnamese border at Barthelemy Pass, Ban Karai Pass, and an area north of the DMZ. The strikes had been successful in knocking out a number of anti-aircraft facilities that had been endangering unarmed U.S. reconnaissance aircraft.⁵⁶ On the same day, Mr. Laird said he would recommend renewed bombing of North Vietnam if Hanoi should retaliate for U.S. attacks on its Cambodian sanctuaries by launching a major infiltration or invasion across the DMZ. Backing up the credibility of this warning, as well as earlier ones made by the President, the most intensive of the "reinforced protective reaction" strikes against North Vietnam since the bombing halt took place from 1 to 4 May. Almost 500 planes were involved, according to the 4 May Washington Post, which quoted "Pentagon officials" as stating that the stepped-up air activity over North Vietnam had the twin objectives of protecting President Nixon's Vietnamization program and pushing Hanoi into serious negotiations to end the war.

(S) As 1970 continued, resumption of bombing in the North -- to which the news media had given great play -- came to be seen as no longer unusual or startling. Admiral Moorer, the new Chairman of the JCS,* said in July that he did not see why the United States should continue to provide North Vietnam a sanctuary in Laos out of concern for the possibility of an accidental delivery of ordnance across the border in the rugged and unpopulated region of North Vietnam adjacent to northern Laos. He thought the "self-imposed restrictions which had validity immediately following cessation of the bombing in North Vietnam were no longer necessary."⁵⁷ JCS planning for possible resumption of attacks on the north also went on. In September, Lt. Gen. John W. Vogt, Director of the Joint

*Admiral Moorer officially succeeded Gen. Earle G. Wheeler as Chairman on 2 July 1970.

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Staff, requested preparation of contingency plans for "taking forceful appropriate action" if the enemy should achieve any major success in the face of U.S. redeployments.⁵⁸ Reviewing CINCPAC's proposals on this, the JCS recommended that CINCPAC conduct air and naval gunfire operations against NVN, and airstrikes against LOC's, storage areas and depots in the panhandle of NVN. JCS also asked CINCPAC to be more specific on deployments back into SVN, for example, "selected PACAF tactical air assets -- and 2/3 Div/Wing Team from Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPAC) -- are available for re-entry."⁵⁹

(U) The next big use of air attacks against North Vietnam came on 21 November, when Secretary Laird announced U.S. planes were hitting missiles and antiaircraft sites in North Vietnam "in response to attacks on our unarmed reconnaissance aircraft," specifically, an RF-4 shot down on 13 November. He and other DOD spokesmen also linked the bombing attacks with U.S. concern "that the other side has not chosen to negotiate in any substantial or productive way at Paris."⁶⁰ Pentagon press spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said that 200 strike aircraft, backed up by 50 planes flying support missions had participated.* Although possibly some supply dumps were hit, he indicated the prime purpose was not to wipe out a major North Vietnamese logistics buildup, but rather "to remind Hanoi what the rules of the game are."⁶¹

(U) Nevertheless, field commanders remained much concerned that if the North Vietnamese succeeded in moving large numbers of men and supplies to the South during the winter months, they could

*The same day, in the early morning hours of 21 November, a special U.S. task group made a surprise assault on the Son Tay Prisoner of War Camp 20 miles northwest of Hanoi in an effort to rescue American prisoners. The camp, however, proved empty and the group withdrew after spending some 28 minutes on the ground. This raid was supported by another 116 Air Force and U.S. Navy aircraft. [Briefing by Brig Gen Leroy J. Manor, USAF, Eglin AFB, Fla., 31 Dec 70.] For a total summary of USAF sorties flown in North Vietnam, see table in Fig. 5.

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USAF SORTIES in NVN--1970
(By Type Aircraft)

AIRCRAFT	Combat Sorties				
	ATTACK*	CAP/ESC	RECCE ⁺	OTHER	TOTAL
A-1	0	33	0	7	40
C-130	0	0	910	1	911
EB-66	0	0	975	3,156	4,131
EC-121	0	0	0	527	527
F-4	439	1,105	4	13	1,561
F-105	157	1,589	0	2	1,748
HC-130	0	0	0	9	9
KC-135	0	0	0	697	697
RC-135	0	0	448	136	584
RF-4	0	0	697	54	751
RF-101	0	0	194	0	194
TOTAL	596	2,727	3,228	4,602	11,153

SOURCE: AIR OPREP 5 (OPREA DATA BASE
MAINTAINED BY J3C4)

*Includes: Strike, Armed Recce, Flak Supp, etc.

⁺Includes: Visual, Photo, IR, Elint, SAR, etc.

Fig 5

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pose a serious threat to the Vietnamization program in the spring of 1971 when U.S. force levels dropped. "In part, we're looking to next summer and beyond," said one Pentagon planner, "In that context, you can talk of this as an inhibitory kind of attack."⁶² Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff, agreed the strikes were aimed at an enemy supply buildup. In a press conference on 24 November, he noted that:

The enemy had over a period of the last several months built up a rather large stockpile of supplies in North Vietnam near the Laos border... in anticipation of the dry season in Laos when roads would be open and there could be a massive logistical push... to refurbish their logistic posture in southern Laos, South Vietnam and also in Cambodia... I do believe that the damage we did to the enemy's logistics posture will set him back for a number of weeks...⁶³

(U) As if to dispel any remaining doubt on his reasons, President Nixon, in a 10 December TV news conference, gave his most explicit justification to date for resuming the bombing of North Vietnam -- to protect his Vietnamization program. Referring to the debate over just what the November 1968 bombing halt agreements had covered, he said:

I want to be very sure that the understanding is clear. First, President Johnson said there was such an understanding at the time of the bombing halt.

But if there is any misunderstanding, I want to indicate the understanding of this President with regard to the flying of reconnaissance planes over North Vietnam.

I must insist that there be continued reconnaissance over North Vietnam because, as we are withdrawing our forces, I have to see whether or not there's any chance of a strike against those forces that remain. And we have to watch for the build-up.

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If our planes are fired upon, I will not only order that they return the fire, but I will order that the missile site be destroyed and that the military complex around that site which supports it also be destroyed by bombing.

That is my understanding.

Beyond that, there is another understanding with regard to the bombing of North Vietnam which at a number of these press conferences, and in my speech on November 3, and in four televised speeches to the nation last year, I have stated. I restate it again tonight.

... if, as a result of my conclusion that the North Vietnamese by their infiltration threaten our remaining forces -- if they thereby develop a capacity and proceed possibly to use that capacity to increase the level of fighting in South Vietnam -- then I will order the bombing of military sites in North Vietnam, the passes that lead from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, the military complexes and the military supply lines.

That will be the reaction I shall take. I trust that this is not necessary, but let there be no misunderstanding with regard to this President's understanding about either reconnaissance flights or about a step-up of the activities. 64

(U) Secretary Laird quickly supported the President. He denied the charge of Senator Stuart Symington, a member of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that "we have now decided to escalate the war," saying:

There was no question that they [NVN] understood the reconnaissance flights would continue. More important they understood that we expected them to sit down to serious negotiations in Paris... They can't have it both ways... if there is no understanding, then they can't complain about bombing missions in the North... if the understandings are thrown out, then I think bombing of the North would eventually follow... 65

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At a 15 December news conference, Secretary Laird appeared to go still farther, suggesting that lack of progress in talks might lead the United States to resume the bombing of North Vietnam.

(U) These strong statements by the President and his Secretary of Defense appeared to put the seal on the administration's policy of intensifying the air war against North Vietnam. For, despite some administration denials, the bombing justifications had throughout preceding months been expanding beyond the protection of reconnaissance flights to include interdiction of all supplies moving south.* U.S. officials also privately confirmed that retaliatory or "protective reaction" strikes had been expanded to include other targets in the general area in order to destroy supply buildups. This, although neither the President nor his spokesmen had issued a formal new bombing policy statement, a new policy was, de facto, being developed.

(U) Commenting on the President's stern 11 December statement, Max Frankel, Washington correspondent of the New York Times, wrote:

Mr. Nixon is said to be giving notice that he will not let past agreements stand in the way of his using the only weapon left to him as Americans disengage from ground combat - air power on a wider scale...

By trying to stretch the "understanding"... the administration is moving toward the belief prevailing in the Johnson years that the damage inflicted by bombing North Vietnam may yield returns at the bargaining table. Administration officials at the highest levels have widely advertised the charge that Hanoi blocked effective negotiation throughout the two years of the bombing restraint...

*Kissinger had acknowledged back in March that the use of B-52's in northern Laos stemmed from the "many extremely lucrative" supply targets which the enemy had built up over a period of months (see pp 4-5).

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The revival of interest here in these approaches appears to rest on two calculations: first that North Vietnam has been sufficiently hurt...to make it susceptible to pressures that failed earlier...and second, that the political imperative to reduce American casualties and keep on withdrawing troops...leaves air power -- combined with vast military aid -- as the only effective way of helping allied forces throughout Indochina...."66

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III. EARLY 1970 EFFORTS TO REDUCE AIR OPERATIONS*

(C) Even as air power was being repeatedly called upon during 1970 to support Presidential policies in SEA, Vietnamization and Defense Department cutbacks went on. Concerning the latter, Secretary Laird was on the side favoring further reductions in defense expenditures, the JCS and CINCPAC opposed the cutbacks, and the Air Force was caught in the middle. Secretary Laird always saw the exigencies of the budget and U.S. domestic policies. The JCS and CINCPAC always saw the enemy threat in the face of U.S. redeployments. The Air Force was thinking of its long-range commitments and resources as well as current ones.

(C) Much of the Air Force's problem in trying to reduce expenditures arose from the fact that--as noted above--new and unforeseen developments in the war in 1970 demanded increased, rather than decreased, use of air.

The JCS Phase III Plan Recommendations

(TS) The Phase III planning directed by Secretary Laird in November 1969 had called for greatly increased South Vietnamese combat responsibility. But the JCS had many reservations on maintaining security under its premises and Adm. John S. McCain (CINCPAC) was even more pessimistic. While complying with Secretary Laird's directive to increase the strength and responsibility of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), the emphasis in McCain's plan was clearly on tactical air and Arc Light capabilities to insure maximum effectiveness and flexibility in all SEA operations in this transition period.¹ The JCS Phase III plan agreed that out-country and offshore forces were "critically important" and could make the difference between success or failure of Vietnamization. They could help make up for losses of capability due to U.S. withdrawals. The B-52 strikes especially were seen as a significant factor in impairing the ability of the enemy to mass his forces for an attack in South Vietnam. The whole interrelated air effort, including the bombing in Laos, had to be continued to protect Thailand and restrict NVN

*USAF aircraft order of battle appears in Fig. 6.

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USAF AIRCRAFT ORDER OF BATTLE, SEA, 30 JUN 70

RVN TOTAL							1,073
<u>Ban Me Thout (6)</u>	<u>Bien Hoa (264)</u>	<u>Cam Ranh Bay (183)</u>	<u>Da Nang (206)</u>	<u>Nha Trang (7)</u>	<u>Phan Rang (102)</u>	<u>Phu Cat (72)</u>	
UH-1 6	A-1 2 A-37 65 C-47 2 F-100 19 HH-3 2 HH-43 2 0-1 55 0-2 78 OV-10 32 UC-123 7	C-7 46 C-130 38 RC-130 6 HH-43 2 0-1 17 0-2 74	A-1 9 AC-119 9 C-47 1 C-123 9 EC-47 10 F-4 48 HH-3 2 HH-43 2 HH-53 3 0-2 72 OV-10 41	C-123 4 C-130 3	AC-119 9 C-123 21 F-100 65 HC-47 1 HH-43 1 UC-123 5	AC-119 6 C-7 17 EC-47 15 F-4 30 HH-43 4	
<u>Tan Son Nhut (103)</u>						<u>Total Aircraft in SEA</u>	
AC-119 5 C-123 17 C-130 28 EC-47 15 HH-43 2 RB-57 3 RF-4 15 RF-101 18						A-1 60 A-37 65 AC-119 32 AC-130 3 B-52 39 C-7 79 C-47 6 C-123 56 C-130 81 CH-3 9 EB-66 19 EC-121 16 EC-47 45 F-4 211 F-100 170 F-105 65 HC-47 1 HC-130 8 HH-3 4 HH-43 27 HH-53 12 KC-135 32 0-1 72 0-2 247 OV-10 102 RB-57 3 RC-130 6 RF-4 56 RF-101 18 UC-123 18 UH-1 12 QU-22B 5	
<u>Vung Tau (16)</u>						TOTAL 1,584	
C-7 16							
<u>Tuy Hoa (114)</u>							
C-47 3 F-100 86 HC-130 6 HH-43 2 0-2 11 UH-1 6							
THAILAND TOTAL							511
<u>Don Muang (6)</u>	<u>Nakhon Phanom (111)</u>	<u>Takhli (86)</u>	<u>Udorn (95)</u>	<u>U-Tapao (78)</u>			
C-130 6	A-1 47 C-123 5 CH-3 9 EC-47 5 HH-43 2 0-2 12 OV-10 20 UC-123 6 QU-22B 5	EB-66 19 F-105 65 HH-43 2	AC-119 3 C-130 6 F-4 34 HC-130 2 HH-43 2 HH-53 7 RF-4 41	B-52 39 HH-43 2 KC-135 37			
<u>Korat (50)</u>							
EC-121 16 F-4 32 HH-43 2							
SOUTHEAST ASIA TOTAL							1,584

Source: PACAF and TIA

Fig 6

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infiltration into South Vietnam. Further, the JCS urged retention of a capability to resume offensive air operations over North Vietnam should higher authority so direct. Their proposed sortie levels were 1,400 B-52, 18,000 USAF tactical air and 4,200 Navy tactical air sorties through fiscal year 1971. The levels dictated by currently available funding were 1,200 B-52 and 13,600 tactical air sorties (10,000 USAF) by 30 June 1971.² To support the higher sortie levels, the JCS recommended that sufficient additive resources (one billion dollars) be made available to the Defense Department since the current budget was stringent to the point of inflexibility.³

(S) Even before he received this plan, Secretary Laird wrote to the Chairman, JCS, in late January 1970 to express alarm over the air increases he had been "given to understand" the Chiefs were recommending in it. He said:

The overall air activity in SEA continues, in my judgment, at a level sufficient--if not more than sufficient--for the situation. The trend is towards a decline in certain areas of air activity, but the overall support is still at a high level both in absolute terms and in relation to some earlier periods of the war. Furthermore VNAF* air support is increasing... Planning for future air support has necessarily been predicated, as you know, on judgments about prospective resources available.

It gives me cause for concern, therefore, when I am given to understand the JCS may be considering a recommendation that U. S. air support activities be increased in the future beyond levels for which funding is now available...if we are to consider seriously increases in one type of support, we must be willing to identify the trade-offs involved and specify what we shall give up in other areas to fund the increased activity...."⁴

The JCS replied that the question of attack sortie levels was only a part of the larger problems which would impact on planning. They would study the matter further and consult the services and field commanders on possible trade-offs and risks. These might eventually have to be worldwide.⁵ In the meantime, an inspection

*Vietnamese Air Force.

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tour in Southeast Asia appeared to confirm Secretary Laird in his views. In a trip report dated 6 March discussing "problem areas," he said, there were two alternatives for reconciling requirements and funding--"use existing resources more effectively or increase U.S. redeployment."6

(TS) In his official reply to the Phase III plan on 13 March the Secretary of Defense repeated his earlier objections, again stressing that his major concern was the plan's lack of adequate justification for increased funding. It was most unlikely that Congress would provide it, and all plans had to be made within existing budget ceilings or else trade-offs had to be made. He was also concerned that the JCS examination of the threat was too "restrictive." He noted that intelligence estimates showed an enemy decline since the development of the U.S. Vietnamization program, with a further decline projected.* He deferred approval of the out-of-country/offshore requirements and the "one air war" concepts so urgently put forth in the plan by both the JCS and CINCPAC. But he requested them to examine alternative locations for out-country forces, other than SEA, from which to resume air operations against North Vietnam, if directed.7

The Implications of JCS Recommendations for the Air Force

(TS) Even before the Air Force received Secretary Laird's 13 March memo, it had been considering the implications of the JCS Phase III plan. Since the JCS recommendations, with their request for an additional billion dollars, primarily involved USAF operations and their attendant munitions requirements, the Air Force was confronted with a major problem. In early March, Secretary of the Air Force Robert C. Seamans drafted a reply to Secretary Laird, saying the JCS Phase III plan was putting an undue burden on the Air Force because most of its costs were generated by the proposed increases in Arc Light and tactical air

*On 17 April, Secretary of State William Rogers also noted the JCS seemed to be overestimating enemy force levels, but conceded it would be more appropriate for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to comment on this. (JCS 2472/552-28, (TS).)

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sortie levels. While the SEA reductions (from the peak authorizations of 1969) planned by 30 June 1971 for the Army were 47 percent, for Navy 69 percent, and for the Marines 99 percent, Air Force reductions would stand at only 15 percent. About half of the proposed increase in USAF sorties stemmed from the shortfall resulting from the withdrawal of Marine air from Southeast Asia which the Air Force was now to make up. All this meant a major shift in the cost of the war towards the Air Force with no additional fund allocations.⁸

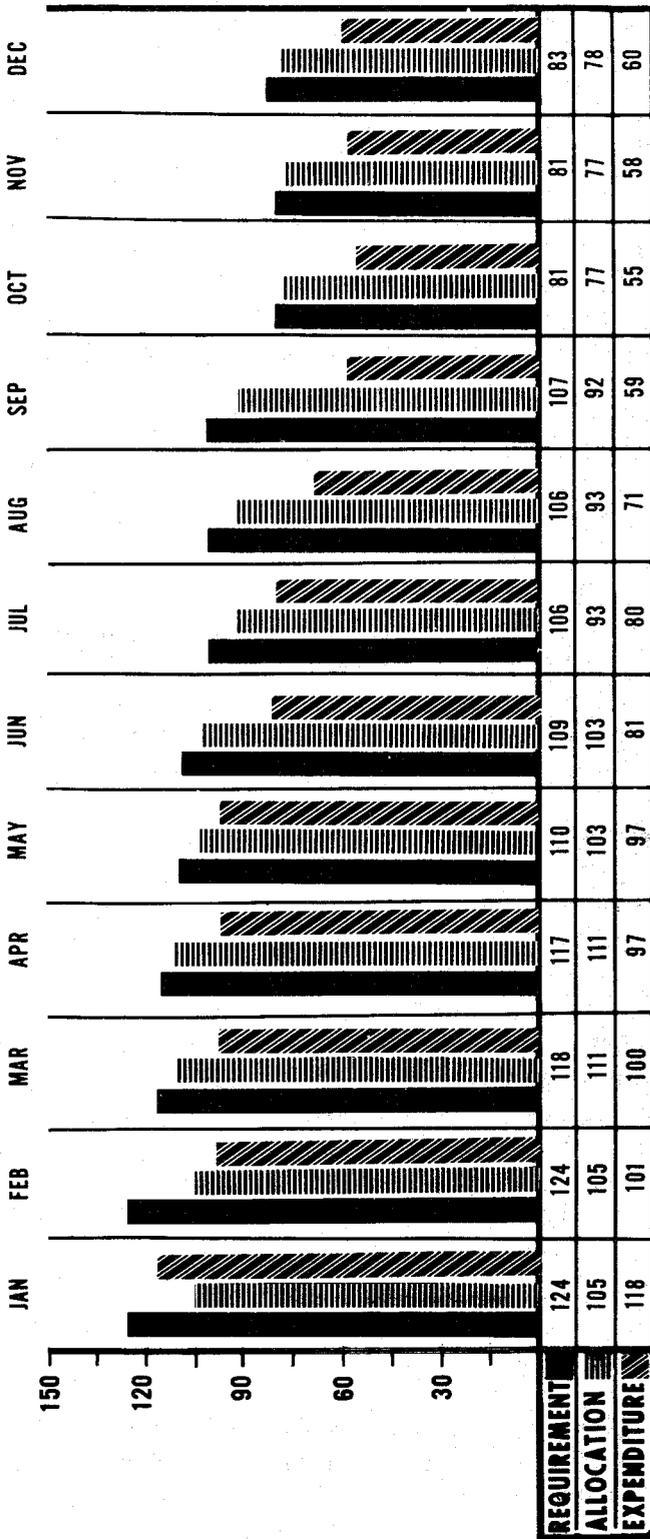
(TS) On 5 March Secretary Seamans pointed out that if munitions expenditures continued at fiscal year 1970 rates,* the Air Force would face expenditures "considerably beyond" those budgeted.⁹ One of his aides, less sanguine, commented that the figure under discussion was "a mere drop in the bucket compared to what is in store for us if consumption doesn't drop drastically." Instead, he warned, with Navy and Marine reductions, USAF requirements might well increase.¹⁰ Lt. Gen. Russell E. Dougherty, Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, Headquarters USAF, sent a 7 March memo to the Director of the Joint Staff, detailing additional Air Force sortie and munitions costs of \$1,139,800,000 for fiscal years 1970 and 1971 required to support the JCS Phase III recommendations. Of this, \$501,500,000 was for B-52 and tactical air munitions, including a \$40,000,000 munitions budget shortfall for the VNAF and Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF).¹¹

(S) Secretary Seamans was very concerned about the serious impact the reprogramming of over a billion dollars would have on other USAF programs and objectives of great importance to national security. Expressing this concern to General Ryan, Chief

*Secretary Laird had been particularly concerned over air munitions expenditures in the month of January due to increased sorties (in response to enemy supply flow which had increased four-fold in December) and to increased use of the MK-82M117, which upped the average tonnage per sortie. Over 117,677 tons had been expended during January as against the 104,656 tons allocated and, while the latter rate could be supported through December 1970, in-theater air munitions would drop to levels precluding any surge expenditures [CINCPAC Command History 1970 (TS) Vol II, p 260.] See Fig. 7.

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**SEA AIR MUNITIONS
REQUIREMENTS/ALLOCATIONS/EXPENDITURES**
(IN 1,000 SHORT TONS)
CY 1970



SOURCE: PACOM Digest Feb 71, p. 109.

Fig 7

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of Staff, he offered possible remedies:

I am not certain we need to continue to program and fly our current level of sorties, for several reasons. First, in-country, VNAF should be able to take over more of the responsibility. In Steel Tiger, gunships, particularly in view of the upgrading of the other AC-130 aircraft with certain Surprise Package* components, should further improve our truck kill ratio. This should permit us to devise tactics to maintain nearly the present levels of truck kills while substantially reducing sorties against trucks by the high-speed jet aircraft. These aircraft would then be free to carry out, as required, the other facets of the interdiction program. Finally, based on the overall results to date, whether we should continue to support Barrel Roll at anywhere near current levels, should come under the closest scrutiny. Significant reductions seem possible. Based on these considerations, I would like to determine the best way to reduce the number of sorties in Laos and South Vietnam without unduly reducing our overall effectiveness....¹²

(C) The Vice Chief of Staff sent a detailed reply to Secretary Seamans on 18 March.¹³ In South Vietnam, rather than reducing close air support strikes, he suggested reducing air strikes against suspected enemy locations and infiltration routes in-country by about 60 percent. Or VNAF sorties might be increased to offset a reduction of some 1,000 USAF sorties being flown in support of South Vietnamese troops. In northern Laos, the 22 additional T-28's recently received by the RLAF should permit them to increase their sorties enough to compensate for a reduction of 675 USAF sorties in the Barrel Roll area. In southern Laos (Steel Tiger area), daylight armed reconnaissance and interdiction activities could most readily absorb the remaining 725 sorties required to achieve the budgeted level of 10,000 tactical air sorties a month. Sorties involved in the emplacement of Special Munitions Packages (SMP) were specifically not recommended for reduction.

*Surprise Package was an advanced AC-130A gunship, which was provided with special equipment for improved offensive and survival capabilities.

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The Vice Chief thought Arc Light sorties could be reduced to 1,200 sorties a month because of recent refinements in B-52 operations, increased flexibility and improved B-52 weapon effects.

(S) The Strategic Air Command (SAC), it should be noted, had long been trying to return some of its B-52's to the Continental United States (CONUS) because SEA operations were degrading its bomber alert force, but had always been opposed by CINCPAC, MACV, and the JCS. In late January 1970 Gen. Bruce K. Holloway, the Commander in Chief, SAC (CINCSAC) had brought the matter to General Wheeler's personal attention. He suggested that 12 of the 90 B-52's could be returned without impairing the SEA mission, stating that they were "direly needed at home to support the SIOP."^{*} The Joint Chiefs objected because of the possible need to revert quickly to a higher sortie rate and the undesirability of presenting a visible reduction in the war effort. General Holloway argued that even without the 12 bombers, the Arc Light force could still surge from 47 to 63 sorties a day and, if necessary, additional aircraft could be quickly redeployed.⁺ Further, with constant rotation of the B-52's between Pacific bases, it would be hard for any observer to assess accurately the size of the force. Apparently convinced, on 26 March, General Wheeler authorized return of the 12 aircraft, providing the JCS conditions were met.¹⁴

(S) The Joint Chiefs had, meanwhile, sent CINCPAC several proposals for reducing aerial munitions consumption.¹⁵ CINCPAC responded by urgently enjoining his component commanders to conserve the dwindling ammunitions resources and take measures to build a reserve for surges and counter offensives, including:

Phase down sortie rate reductions so as to avoid a precipitous reduction on 1 July

Reduce B-52 sorties per mission and achieve greater bomb dispersal

Restrict in-country tactical air sorties to "known" - as opposed to "suspected" - enemy locations.¹⁶

^{*}Strategic Integrated Operations Plan.

⁺For an analysis of Arc Light sortie distribution in SEA See Fig. 8.

ARC LIGHT Sortie Distribution 1970

	<u>Cambodia</u>	<u>Laos</u>	<u>DMZ</u>	<u>MR 1</u>	<u>MR 2</u>	<u>MR 3</u>	<u>MR 4</u>	<u>Total</u>
Jan		681	6	118	131	420	89	1,445
Feb		786	4	49	303	137	27	1,306
Mar		917	5	78	143	228	66	1,437
Apr		579	12	61	271	395	79	1,397
May	406	366	27	141	345	138	37	1,460
Jun	353	551	52	312	45	15	67	1,395
Jul	185	677	39	354	37	76	73	1,441
Aug	231	606	21	313	9	38	21	1,239
Sep	122	556	0	235	11	48	11	983
Oct	23	922	0	56	0	6	6	1,013
Nov	29	942	0	8	0	0	0	979
Dec	33	912	56	0	0	0	9	1,010
Total	1,382	8,495	222	1,725	1,295	1,501	485	15,105

SOURCE: USMACV Command History 1970, vol I, p VI-27.

Fig 8

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New Requirements for Air

(S) These earnest efforts to save resources were interrupted by an unexpected change in top defense officials' views in the direction maintaining high air sortie rates.* On 13 March, Secretary Seamans received a memo from Mr. Robert C. Moot, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Financial Matters, saying that "Sec Def required not later than March 18:

- 1) FY 70 and 71 appropriations (NOA) and outlay, deficiencies related to:
 - a) Continuing the current rate of B-52 and tactical sorties in SEA.
 - b) The military services' recommended rate of B-52 and tactical sorties in SEA.
- 2) The specific program reduction actions necessary to accommodate a) and b) within the currently approved NOA and outlay levels for FY 70 and 71...
- 3) Sortie projections should be provided for a) and b)"

When Secretary Seamans met with Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard and Mr. Moot on 18 March, the latter said he had already received the information he required, informally from the Air Staff. His understanding was that the Air Force could find \$100 million to reprogram from fiscal year 1970 funds and this was all he needed to know at this time.

(S) Secretary Laird spelled out the new requirement more definitely in a memo to Secretary Seamans on 25 March:

...if current levels of sorties in SEA were to continue, an immediate decision to increase the level of munitions funding is required...An analysis of munitions requirements provided by AF indicates that the 1970 funding deficiency to support current sortie levels is \$191.4 million ...In order to continue munitions production at

*This seeming reversal, it may be noted, came at the point where events were beginning to stir in Cambodia, culminating in the overthrow of Sihanouk on 17 March and the U.S./South Vietnamese incursion some six weeks later.

the level necessary to protect an option for higher-than-budgeted sortie levels in FY 71, immediate funding action is required. Accordingly, I understand you wish to take the necessary action to reprogram \$100 million of Air Force funds for additional FY procurement of air munitions. If that is true, such action is approved. The necessary Congressional notification of reprogramming actions should be forwarded not later than 26 March. 17

(*) Secretary Seamans forwarded this memo to General Ryan and asked whether USAF sortie rates could be reduced during May and June, and whether any of the \$100 million would be available for anything besides munitions production.¹⁸ General Ryan replied that he was consulting Generals Nazzaro and Brown* on possible reductions in May and June. All available funding would be used for munitions but possibly 1971 funds might be released later and the situation reappraised then. He reported the following actions currently being taken:

a) Reprogram \$18.2 million to increase production of M-117 750-lb bombs from 30,000 to 45,000 monthly.

b) Reprogram \$7.0 million within Air Force authority to provide fuses and related components.

c) In lieu of releasing \$50 million from the CBU-42 to reduce production from 700 monthly to 300 monthly, stretch the 300 a month rate through the FY 71 delivery period, thus releasing some \$63 million applicable later to selected munitions production.

d) Compress production of MK-82 500-lb bombs from a 17 month delivery period to a 12 month delivery period and increase production in FY 70 by 180,000 bombs. This provided \$40 million more deliveries in the normal FY 70 delivery period. (The CBU-42 funds released in FY 71 can be later applied to continue increased production of 500-lb bombs to the extent necessary.)

*Gen. Joseph J. Nazzaro, CINCPACAF, and Gen. George E. Brown, Commander, Seventh Air Force.

Summarizing, General Ryan said these actions had the effect of applying some \$65 million in 1970 funds to increased munitions production and providing flexibility to apply a further \$63 million in fiscal year 1971.¹⁹

Secretary Laird Continues His Efforts to Cut Back

(~~TOP SECRET~~) Parallel with these emergency moves to maintain high air sortie rates, the overall efforts at reduction went on. Immediately upon receiving Secretary Laird's stern 13 March memo, the JCS had forwarded Laird's entire memo to CINCPAC and suggested various proposals for meeting the problem. CINCPAC's long detailed reply, on 10 April, specifically opposed cutting B-52 and tactical air sortie rates. Indeed, he recommended that they be increased to a level consistent with actual requirements or, as a minimum, maintained at the current level.²⁰ He said the Thai reduction* would "seriously degrade" the interdiction program and support for Royal Laotian forces, as well as the option to resume air operations over North Vietnam. He had thought "a visible, credible capability had been considered a key-stone behind the U.S. declared policy that strong and effective measures could deal with any increased enemy action which jeopardized our remaining forces in SVN."⁺²¹ The U.S. Ambassador to Thailand was even more vehement in his objections;

In sum, the cuts projected might be enough to cause the Lao to lose their war and to convince the Thai they will have to loosen their operational relations with the U.S. and go it alone. ... This is a very grave risk to take, especially before Vietnamization has proven itself and while we are heavily dependent on the use of Thai facilities to attain our objectives in Vietnam.

Cutting 7 of the 15 tactical air squadrons would so reduce USAF support to the RLG as to risk opening Laos to a complete takeover by Communist

*Secretary Laird had on 19 February, directed planning for U.S. reductions in Thailand by 30 June 1970.

⁺This is an almost verbatim quote of President Nixon's oft repeated threat to NVN.

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forces...as in the past, it is air power that had retained a balance of power or at least retarded a downward trend in the RLG's capability to withstand the NVA onslaughts...In our judgment, U.S. air power is [also] a critical, coercive factor in both the Laos and Vietnam negotiations, weakening of which 22 would considerably reduce our leverage on the enemy.

(18) Along with CINCPAC, the JCS had also solicited comments from the services on their reduction/trade-off proposals for meeting Secretary Laird's requirements. General Dougherty sent the Air Force reply on 10 April. He said the first of the JCS suggestions--"Stand-down-and-try with air support and naval gunfire support forces,"*--would retain an immediate capability to return to higher sortie levels and permit a reduction in munitions expenditures. But at a 10,000-a-month tac air sortie level, a 33-squadron force would have to fly more training sorties to maintain proficiency. The added costs of maintaining a rotational base to support this need, plus hardship and morale problems, advised against this option. General Dougherty felt the second JCS proposal--a plan similar to the first one but stipulating that forces not required to maintain the reduced effort would be redeployed--was preferable, assuming that CINCPAC's requirements for Arc Light and tactical air support were reduced. 23

(19) The JCS, taking account of all these views, forwarded their revised plan to Secretary Laird on 30 April. They were more pessimistic than ever, noting President Nixon's 20 April announcement of a further 150,000 U.S. withdrawal by the spring of 1971. After considering and rejecting other more drastic worldwide trade-offs, they recommended, among other things, a reduction of U.S. air activity in SEA to 1,000 B-52, 10,000 USAF tactical fighter, and 2,700 Navy tactical air strike sorties a month in fiscal year 1971. They said this substantial reduction in sortie levels would incur unacceptable military risks, and asked for supplemental funds in order to retain options for surges in activity levels. 24

*That is, air and naval elements would stand down for a period of time to achieve reduced air sorties and/or naval gunfire missions. The primary saving would occur in reduced munitions expenditures.

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(S) The Joint Chiefs also cited the uncertain Cambodian situation as justification for delaying U.S. cutbacks. But on 15 May (two weeks after the Cambodian campaign began) Secretary Laird told them to intensify efforts towards Vietnamization, including cutting back to a possible 240,000 manpower ceiling in SEA by May or June 1971. In the same memo, significantly, he authorized intensified air operations in Cambodia --offering expanded operating authorities if necessary (see p 9). Even he admitted, "The plans requested in this memo constitute a tall order. I do not have to tell you how much rides in the balance."²⁵

(S) The JCS responded with an air interdiction plan for Cambodia (see p 10) and with two redeployment alternatives: A, in two increments, retaining currently authorized sorties rates; B, in three increments, reducing sortie rates to those recommended in their revised Phase III plan. In weighing these alternatives, the views of CINCPAC had been especially persuasive on the matter of maintaining sortie rates:

...Alternative A provides the flexibility necessary to fully exploit the Cambodian operation...The most significant danger of B is that it not only reduces sortie rates below required levels, it also reduces tac fighter squadrons...The proposed reduction of sorties could jeopardize an effective interdiction program and facilitate an enemy return to their sanctuaries. Of even more importance, reduction of tac fighter squadrons in SVN and the further drawdowns in Thailand would mean that the means to emend the situation would not be available if needed. Removal of our resources is irreversible, whereas ceilings could be lifted. The concept of reducing air sorties and units does not take into account the nature of the realities of the air war in SEA. The deteriorating situation in Laos, expanded interdiction missions in Cambodia and the in-country requirement are all one and the same air war. Alternative B proposes reducing the air effort in the face of expanded requirements....²⁶

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The Chiefs recommended to Secretary Laird that Alternative A be approved and that supplemental funding for it be provided. 27

(TS) On 5 June Secretary Laird advised the JCS that interim events--Cambodia and serious budget deficits--had "altered in a major way" our approach to the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization (I&M) program. "It is abundantly clear now," he said, "that on completion of our Cambodian operations, we must accelerate the I&M program in every possible way." As for requesting additional funds, the political and economic climate militated against it--hence "at this time" he disapproved it. But as to the Joint Chiefs' proposed out-of-country/offshore air efforts, he was--in line with his request for increased air operations in Cambodia--more forthcoming:

Continue the presently authorized air sortie levels of 1,400 B-52, 14,000 USAF tac fighter and 3,500 USN tac fighter sorties per month till 15 July 70. Assume that after 15 July rates will not be more than in the approved FY 71 budget of 1,200 B-52, 10,000 USAF tac fighter and 3,600 USN tac fighter sorties:... lower activity levels should be used when the enemy is inactive if possible... This would provide some added operational surge capability when needed... and allow us to signal more readily to the enemy through a marked operational sortie rate increase...*28

*On this same date, 5 June, Secretary Laird had also asked for a new SEA strategy assessment - emphasizing the decline in both U.S. and enemy troop strength and combat activity, the "substantial" growth and improvement in South Vietnamese forces, the "major modification" in MACV's mission statement (see Elizabeth H. Hartsook, The Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1969, [Off/AF Hist, Nov 1971], pp 60-62), and continuing U.S. and SVN economic constraints. The JCS reply, on 24 July, proposed three "strategies," one much like the present one, the other two proposing incursions--either covert or overt--into southern Laos to interdict and harass enemy logistic operations there. Indigenous allied ground forces, supported by U.S. air, would be the basis of these operations [JCS 2339/321-1, 24 Jul 70].

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Replying on 24 July, the JCS again stressed the importance of air power in limiting enemy initiative. They pointed to the expanded out-of-country interdiction programs (Cambodia and southern Laos) and the loss of ground combat capabilities. Since reductions in SVN would necessarily reduce air elements there, it was essential to retain USAF elements in Thailand, including nine fighter attack squadrons and Arc Light forces. For fiscal year 1972 the JCS repeated the recommendations in their revised Phase III plan except for reducing USAF tactical air sorties to 9,500 instead of 10,000.²⁹

(S) The Air Force itself continued to be concerned with how it could fulfill all its tasks in the face of further reduced budget projections. Secretary Seamans pointed out to Secretary Laird in July that, while Vietnamization was making sound progress, the United States would for some time have to perform certain required tasks. The most essential of these was interdiction--South Vietnam would never be able to counter a well supplied enemy. But how the Air Force could maintain essential forces for current operations and still initiate research and development and procurement for the future, confronted it with a dilemma. Its capability to handle combat assignments was declining and some adjustment in tasks or resources would soon be required. Secretary Seamans appended an outline detailing short and long term impacts on the Air Force of budget changes since fiscal year 1969, which he said he would be prepared to discuss with the President.³⁰

New Decisions on Sortie Rates

(S) A watershed of sorts in the sortie debate came on 23 July when Secretary Laird, in a memo to Henry Kissinger, indicated his decision on sortie rates for the coming fiscal year, and factors influencing his decision. He said:

Based in part on findings of the VSSG study*
and on other recent changes in our requirements for
air power and our ability to provide it--reduced

*The Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) had been directed on 15 June by Henry Kissinger to prepare an evaluation of U.S. current air activities in SEA and alternative FY 71 programs, for submission to the President. (See p 72.)

combat levels in SVN, our plan to double the AC-130 gunship fleet, and the development of improved ordnance--I believe we can safely fly fewer sorties in FY 71 than we planned last December. During periods of low combat intensity and the monsoon period, tac air sorties should be held to about 10,000 a month. Higher levels would be flown as combat intensifies or as the NVN resupply effort through Laos builds up. Therefore, I recommend the President approve a variable rate, with 14,000 sorties the ceiling and actual numbers flown varying between 10,000 and 14,000 ... We would budget and buy ordnance to support the higher levels...but would eventually save since actual sorties would be below budgeted levels... The decision on levels should rest with MACV.

I believe a B-52 rate of 1,000 a month should be planned for FY 71. This was the rate proposed by the JCS as optimum (JCSM-202-70), assuming supplemental funds were not available. ³¹

In actual practice, the January-June 1970 rates stayed in effect until 12 August, when a National Security Defense Memorandum (NSDM 77) directed the variable sortie rate with funding to 14,000 sorties, but authorizing a lower level than funded depending on circumstances as determined by MACV. On 15 September, the JCS amplified this decision in a message to CINCPAC, stating the intent of the decision was to fly at an average level as close to 10,000 sorties a month as the military decision would permit but not to exceed 14,000 in any month, with the year's end total averaging less than the 14,000 a month funded level.

Allied vs. USAF Sortie Rates

(15) In October, there was a new development in the effort to cut U.S. air sorties. Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard told Secretary Seaman he was considering further reductions--based partly on increasing allied sortie rates--in his planning for the fiscal year 1972 budget:

One option I am considering: an average FY 72 tacair sortie rate of 8,000 a month. These, plus 10,000 VNAF/RLAF sorties a month will support an effort only about 10% below the 20-21,000 sorties this year... Decisions to expand the VNAF/RLAF will increase their capabilities to nearly 10,000 a month - including 800 gunship sorties. This level is being considered for FY 72 budget planning, but it is currently uncertain if this level can be reached and/or sustained....*

Mr. Packard also thought it might be desirable--in view of the enemy shift to 'protracted war' and the resulting target decline--to reduce Arc Light sorties to 600 a month. MACV might be willing to accept this if savings could provide a higher tacair sortie level.³²

~~(S)~~ Secretary Laird agreed with his deputy's approach on increased allied sorties. He told Admiral Moorer that "our tactical air planning must reflect the major effort we have been making to expand and improve the capabilities of our SEA allies."³³ He said that he and Mr. Packard had in particular asked Secretary Seamans (who was on an inspection trip to SEA) to "ensure that our allies will be able to meet the higher sortie levels we are considering for FY 72 and identify any problems that may interfere with their doing so." It was important to view the U.S. tactical air effort in the context of the total allied effort. While U.S. sorties had been decreasing, allied capabilities had been expanding, which in part offset the U.S. reductions. In fiscal year 1972, U.S. sortie levels might be reduced about 30 percent from fiscal year 1971 but the overall effort would decline less than 15 percent. Secretary Laird ended his memo with a commendation:

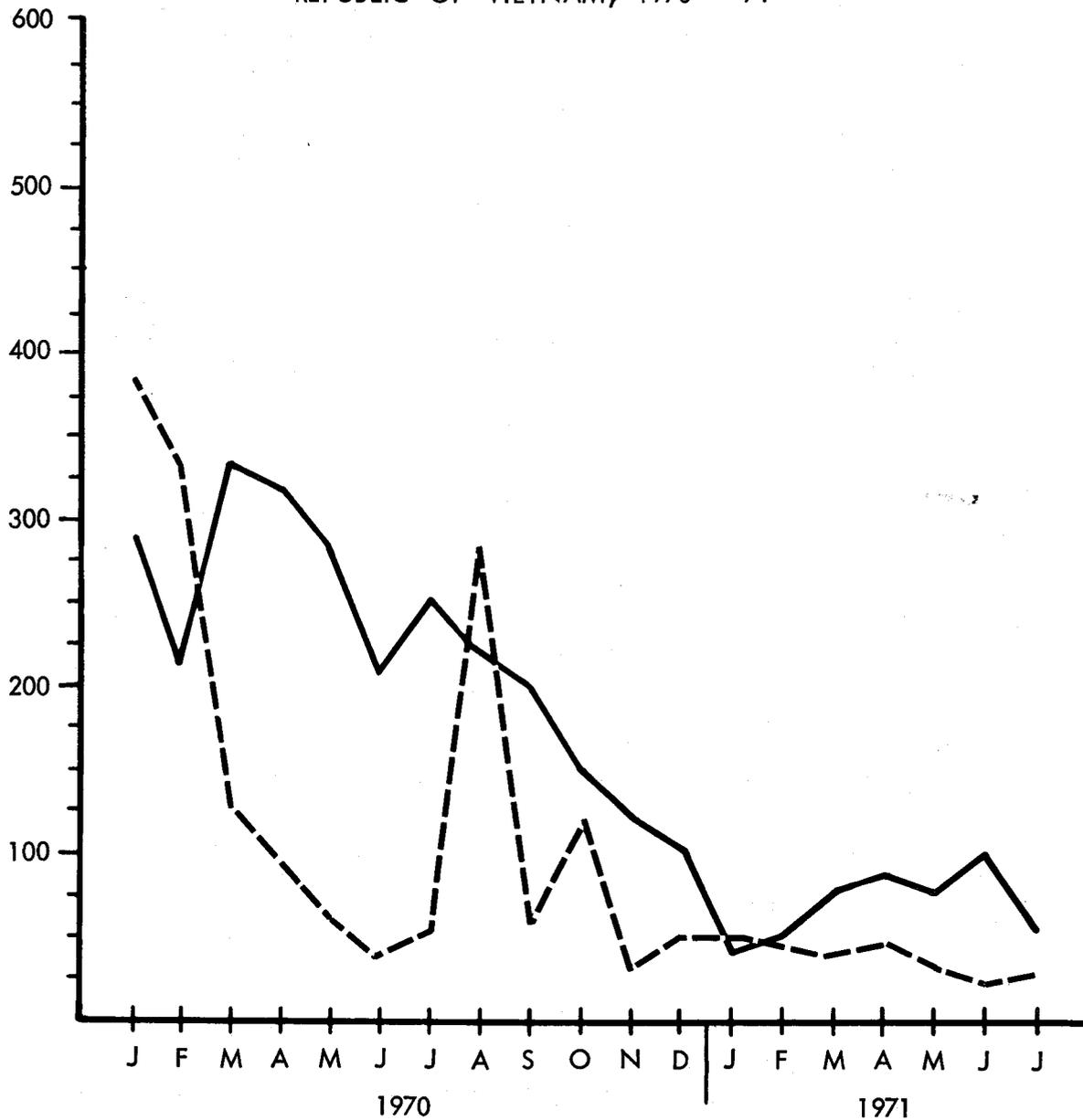
I believe this is a clear demonstration of the great progress you and our commanders in the field have made in Vietnamization. I would appreciate it if you would ensure that these more realistic levels are used in our tactical air planning for next year....³⁴

*For the number of gunship sorties flown by USAF and VNAF, see Fig. 9.

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USAF AND VNAF GUNSHIP SORTIES

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 1970 - 71



SOURCE: 7AF COMMAND STATUS BOOK
DEC 1970 AND JUN 1971

USAF ———
 VNAF - - - -

Fig 9

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A week later, Secretary Laird issued a Program Budget Decision (PBD) paper adjusting the Air Force 1972 budget to support 5,900 VNAF tactical air and 800 gunship monthly sortie rates and 2,900 RLAFF tactical air and 200 gunship monthly sortie rates.³⁵

(S) The Air Force was not as optimistic on allied air capabilities. General Ryan did not think Secretary Packard's rationale took sufficient account of the integral relationship of air actions in South Vietnam, north and south Laos, and Cambodia-- field commanders had to be able to shift priorities to wherever enemy initiatives occurred. In a letter to Secretary Seamans on 18 November, he noted that Packard's implied equating of U.S. Air Force and allied tactical air sorties on a 1-to-1 basis failed to acknowledge "the range, ordnance, survivability, and response limitations" in much of the allied aircraft inventory. The combined U.S.-allied sortie rate might appear substantial, but a significant loss in military potential would occur. He also shared Mr. Packard's doubt on the allies' ability to contribute 10,000 sorties a month. True, the USAF budget would support 9,300 VNAF/RLAF sorties a month, but actual attack sorties would average only 7,400 due to training and related VNAF Improvement and Modernization (I&M) requirements.³⁶

(S) Secretary Seamans forwarded General Ryan's comments along with a seven page memo of his own, to Deputy Secretary Packard on 3 December. He said it was important to note that the total U.S. and allied tactical air combat sortie capability would decrease some 22 percent in fiscal year 1972, mainly because the USAF sortie capability would decrease by half. But actual reductions, he pointed out, were not the same as planning ones. "As we all realize," he said, "if the enemy reacts differently than expected, we will have to alter our military programs or our SEA objectives, or both." Thus, although the 1972 budget had Arc Light sorties declining lineally from some 1,000 a month starting in July 1971 to 400 one year later, this represented planning for budgetary purposes and would be reviewed in light of developments. If enemy activity should temporarily require all U.S. sorties for Laos interdiction, up to 13,800 sorties could be flown at the beginning, and 8,650 at the end, of fiscal year 1972. Similarly, if such a surge capability were required in Cambodia or South Vietnam, there could be a total

of 15,400* U.S. and allied sorties provided in early fiscal year 1972 and 10,950+ a year later.

(TS) Secretary Seamans disagreed with Packard's statement that B-52 targets were declining. Ample targets were available to date, in light of the continuing infiltration and the rebuilding of enemy storage areas. Given the present high threat environment on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, neither the RLAf nor the VNAF could be expected--with their current aircraft--to take over the southern Laos interdiction campaign. At the same time, it was entirely feasible, and Gen. Lucius D. Clay, Jr., ‡ agreed with him, that the RLAf could meet the 2,900 tactical air and 200 gunship sortie level specified for fiscal year 1972. The Secretary concluded with a comment on Secretary Packard's statement that projected phasedowns in sorties and decreased flexibility should not result in any significant reduction in effectiveness. "I am certain," he said, "you can appreciate that the Air Force challenges this judgment."37

(TS) The Chairman of the JCS, Admiral Moorer, made no bones about his disapproval of the trend that sortie level decisions were taking. He wrote Secretary Laird on 8 December, referring to the latter's 7 November memo:

I am seriously concerned with indications that decisions are being reached which would reduce U.S. sortie rates on the basis of fiscal trade-offs to accommodate increases in allied capability. It is important that such decisions be made within the context of the total effort required in Southeast Asia, taking into consideration both U.S. and allied forces as well as activity levels... .

He cited earlier 1970 cutbacks which had increased SEA risks above what the JCS had thought prudent, and urged that "similar piecemeal decisions" on fiscal year 1972 force and activity levels be avoided. VNAF capabilities had increased, but not to the point where they compensated for the loss of U.S. air

*4,300 VNAF, 11,000 U.S.

+5,400 VNAF, 5,550 U.S.

‡Commander, Seventh Air Force.

capability. Their planes did not have the ordnance capacity, air refueling capacity, nor the flexibility of U.S. aircraft. None of the SEA allied air forces could accomplish missions in a high and sophisticated threat area; political considerations hampered their use outside their own borders. With allied air forces having to fly continually at maximum capacity, the only surge capability was in U.S. air elements. Further U.S. air reductions would reduce this capability to meet contingencies such as unexpected pressure on southern Laos, northeast Cambodia, or RVN; a requirement to increase interdiction on LOC's in northern Laos; or a re-initiation of North Vietnam bombing. With further U.S. ground reductions, the forces that were left would become increasingly vulnerable and an air capability would be the principal remaining means for dealing with the enemy. Finally, retention of a "credible capability for a significant U.S. air effort" might help move the enemy to negotiate. Admiral Moore concluded:

I recommend that decisions on U.S. air sortie levels not be made in isolation on the basis of budget factors, and that they be made only after considering the total military requirements as established by recommendations of field commanders and judgments of JCS... CINCPAC and MACV have fully supported expansion of allied capabilities and responsibilities as desirable and in keeping with current U.S. objectives in SEA. CINCPAC, however, has identified an average monthly U.S. tactical air sortie level of 10,000 as the absolute minimum essential level. In my view, the field commander is in the best position to assess this requirement. *38

New Air Requirements

(S) Something of Admiral Moorer's caution over possible future contingencies had also come through in a Kissinger memo of early November to Secretary Laird. The President had been

*The USAF tactical air sortie rates in SEA for 1970 are presented in Fig. 10.

USAF TACTICAL AIR SORTIE RATES FOR
SOUTHEAST ASIA 1970

	<u>USAF</u>	<u>USN</u>	<u>USMC</u>	<u>Gunship</u>	<u>B-52</u>
Jan	14,190	3,993	3,795	682	1,445
Feb	12,783	3,568	2,865	643	1,300
Mar	13,924	3,537	2,698	724	1,443
Apr	12,671	3,221	3,214	741	1,407
May	14,291	3,907	3,628	617	1,443
Jun	10,557	2,013	2,733	382	1,413
Jul	9,035	2,456	2,629	315	1,445
Aug	8,951	2,201	1,946	347	1,231
Sep	7,176	1,781	1,194	327	986
Oct	5,752	1,466	741	304	1,012
Nov	7,034	1,772	1,018	390	974
Dec	<u>8,447</u>	<u>2,700</u>	<u>1,276</u>	<u>640</u>	<u>1,016</u>
Total:	124,811	32,615	27,737	6,112	15,115

SOURCE: CINCPAC Command History 1970, vol II, p 142.

Fig 10

(This page is ~~SECRET~~)

reviewing indicators of enemy activity in the coming dry season and as a result was directing State, Defense, and CIA officials to study the areas where major enemy attacks could be anticipated, the capacity of local forces to respond, and the availability of U.S. air, ground, and naval forces to assist in the defense. Secretary Laird's response discussed the various options open to the enemy, emphasizing that as a matter of first priority, he would have to insure the flow of supplies along his one major logistics corridor through the Laotian Panhandle, and that he would probably undertake military actions to protect and expand these vital LOC's. Enemy forces there had been substantially strengthened during the past 6 months, up to 70,000-90,000 troops, which could rapidly be reinforced. On the availability of U.S. forces to assist for air, Secretary Laird reported:

...maximum authorized FY 71 attack sorties will provide 10,000 USAF, 2,700 USN, 1,300 USMC, 1,000 B-52, and 1,000 gunship, each month in SEA with a surge capability of 20% for 30 days. The total U.S. tacair and B-52 capability, operating from various locations in SEA and managed by MACV, as well as carrier forces, can be applied against the enemy as required to meet the military situation. 39

(U) Thus, the great "Vietnamization" push went on, including more efforts to cut back the U.S. air role, especially in the interests of economy. But when things got tight, or any new threat--or opportunity--appeared on the horizon, the tendency of all hands, including the President, was to look to U.S. air power.

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IV. AIR EFFECTIVENESS

(S) Trying to reconcile the continuing high JCS requirements for air operations in Southeast Asia with Secretary Laird's insistence on budgetary cutbacks confronted the Air Force with a real dilemma. When Secretary Seamans wrote the Chief of Staff in early February saying the Air Force might have to reprogram a billion dollars in order to cope with the problem, he also sounded the keynote of what was to become the Air Force solution to it:

...I believe we must undertake an examination of possible ways to increase the effectiveness of our sorties. We must also eliminate sorties of marginal effectiveness. In short, if we cannot do more with less, [italics added] we will have to accept increased risks in certain areas.¹

The Air Force approached the problem of trying to "do more with less" from every angle: re-examination of missions and functions, operational effectiveness, and strategy.

Missions and Functions

(TS) Evaluation of air missions and functions in Southeast Asia came under intensive Air Force scrutiny early in 1970 in conjunction with discussions of the JCS Phase III sortie recommendations. On 26 January Secretary Seamans' executive assistant, Col. Stuart H. Sherman, Jr., had asked the Vice Chief's office for information on sorties and aircraft in South Vietnam, and which were most effective.² On 5 February Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard, at a meeting with Secretary Seamans, raised questions about the JCS Phase III sortie requirements. In response to his queries, the Chief of Staff directed a study to examine SEA mission effectiveness and priorities.³

(TS) The Air Staff report, dated 13 March 1970, said that in South Vietnam strike sorties and bombing missions flown in support of troops-in-contact were the most effective. In-country air strikes against known enemy supply areas were less so, and

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those against suspected enemy locations and infiltration routes were the least effective. In southern Laos (Steel Tiger), the most important missions were those flown in the interdiction role, and in this the gunships had the most effective truck killing record. Sorties emplacing special road cutting ordnance and mines were most effective in disrupting enemy LOC's: armed reconnaissance and attacks against roads and storage areas were less measurably effective.

(15) Methods of measuring effectiveness were by bomb damage assessments (BDA), by mathematical computations, or by the field commanders' assessments of overall impact of air operations. The Air Staff felt that, although not quantifiable, only the latter method could give a full measure of effectiveness.⁴ As to the question of mission priorities, these shifted, depending on the activities of the enemy. Protecting U.S. forces came first. Support for troops in contact had continuing priority, as did interdiction of trucks and LOC's in southern Laos, with priority to flak suppression when needed. Aerial reconnaissance and airlift support missions generally were assigned lesser priority.*⁵

(16) During March, Under Secretary of the Air Force John L. McLucas, after reviewing statistics on Rolling Thunder strike sorties, told Secretary Seamans he thought there were still too many of them, especially in the support category. He also questioned the "real productivity" of RF-101 and RF-4 sorties. Suggesting a reassessment

*There were also some fairly strong opinions outside the Air Force on effectiveness and priorities. For example, there had long been differing opinions over the merits of the close air support and the interdiction functions. The JCS and CINCPAC always gave highest priority to the latter; Systems Analysis and CIA gave it to the former. And even within the Air Force there appeared to be some variation on priorities. General Ryan, testifying before the House Committee on Appropriations in late February, said "the interdiction effort is our most significant current activity in Southeast Asia." Secretary Seamans, testifying about a week later before the Senate Armed Services Committee, said "Vietnamization is our most important program in Southeast Asia."

of the whole effort, he said that as this was primarily a JCS and DOD responsibility, Secretary Packard was the one who should ask the questions.⁶ The Chief of Staff, asked to comment on this, pointed out it was MACV and JCS and CINCPAC who determined these matters, and said the present sortie levels were needed to counter the enemy's ability to move his SAM's, AAA, and other defensive systems around with relative impunity. As to support sorties, General Ryan pointed out that the National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and CIA were also consumers of intelligence gathered by reconnaissance sorties.⁷ On 27 April Secretary Seamans forwarded the McLucas memo to Mr. Packard. For some time the Deputy Secretary became the focus of the effectiveness discussions which increasingly centered on debate of the interdiction strategy.

Operational Effectiveness

(U) The Air Force also sought to "do more with less" by improving its operational tactics, its ordnance, and its aircraft -- and how these were used. Such improvement had been an ongoing effort already, but it was pressed with greater urgency in 1970.^{*}

Tactics

(S) In 1969 certain refinements had been introduced in B-52 operations: Drift Angle Station Keeping (DASK)* and tandem tactics.⁺ On 18 March the Vice Chief of Staff told Secretary Seamans that these innovations were currently being used 50 percent of the time. If they were adopted for all Arc Light strikes, the proposed 1,200 sorties would provide effective attacks against 33 percent more targets than were attacked during the 1,800 a month sortie rate.⁸ Standardization of B-52 bomb-loads was another such

*An increase in the lateral separation between aircraft in the cell, which reduces lateral, bomb overlap.

+The splitting of a six-ship mission into cells of 3 at the initial point to attack two different target complexes.

improvement. SAC had proposed this in late December 1969, contending it would reduce fuel and manpower requirements and cut bomb costs without any loss in weapons effectiveness. CINCPAC had resisted the suggestion until assured there would be no degradation in overall sorties and firepower. In early January 1970, SAC reiterated its assurance of no degradation, and added a new justification:

... Since the initial proposal was made another consideration has developed. The NVN have recently moved heavy AAA into Laos, comprising a threat to the B-52. Going higher was determined to be the best answer if B-52s are to continue relatively safe in these target areas. Since we are presently operating at optimum altitudes a reduction in operating weights is necessary (particularly for U-Tapao). The proposed bomb load for U-Tapao results in reducing operating weights by 17,000 pounds, with no loss in effectiveness.⁹

CINCPAC approved the change and it became effective starting in early April 1970. After 20 September, all B-52's were launched in three-ship cells with a standard 43,500-lb bombload consisting of 24 500-lb MK-82's carried externally and 42 750-lb MK-17's carried internally.¹⁰

~~(S)~~ In the same pursuit of economy and operational efficiency, CINCSAC had proposed moving all B-52's to U-Tapao after the sortie reductions were announced in August. He estimated there would be a direct operating cost savings of some \$5 million annually and that the overall SAC mission in support of SEA could be performed with fewer people and aircraft. CINCPAC had initially had some questions on the political advisability of withdrawing all B-52's from Okinawa, but the economic and operational factors overrode the political.¹¹ The last B-52 flight from Kadena was on 16 August, that from Anderson on 19 September,¹² and after 20 September all of the B-52's were located at U-Tapao.

~~(S)~~ To help maintain interdiction effectiveness in the face of reduced sortie rates, Seventh Air Force added a new concentrated "entry interdiction" program to its 1970 dry season interdiction

campaign* in the Steel Tiger area. The aim was to pre-empt the expected massive enemy resupply through this area of southern Laos which, after the closing of the port of Sihanoukville, was his only remaining infiltration channel. The program featured introduction of the "interdiction box strategy," a sustained saturation bombing of the main routes and passes leading into Laos, concentrating on constricted areas where the terrain made by-pass construction difficult. Twenty-seven Arc Light sorties a day were allocated to destroy the roads, followed up by 125 tactical air sorties a day to prevent repair activity and maintain a presence to deter movement through the boxes. This tactic greatly aided the success of Commando Hunt V by upsetting the enemy's timetable, forcing him to expend considerable extra effort on by-pass construction, and gaining time for buildup of the B-57G and AC-130 force.¹³

(S) When sortie rates were reduced in the Barrel Roll area, the response there too was that with the threat undiminished, each sortie flown would have to be more effective. One measure taken was to save sorties by focusing on more certain targets via establishment of a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) of F-4's. This force stood by each day to respond to Forward Air Controllers (FAC's) who discovered lucrative targets or to ground support requests.¹⁴ Six aircraft were initially put on alert, but the number soon rose to 12. Selections of bombs, fuses, and special ordnance were fragged to give the force a degree of flexibility. The QRF was on alert at 0600 each day and available over a Barrel Roll target within one hour. There were some problems, but the advantages outweighed them. For example, on 30 July, a Forward Air Controller, finding a truck park and storage area in the Banana Karst section of Route 7, secured the assistance of two diverted flights and three QRF flights, with the following results: 12 trucks destroyed and two damaged, two POL dumps destroyed, 16 large secondary explosions, two 37mm guns damaged, 12 medium secondary explosions, and four sustained fires.¹⁵

*"Commando Hunt V," begun 10 October 1970, ended 30 April 1971.

(S) When cutbacks of the A-1's prompted efforts to achieve highly accurate delivery of bombs from fast-moving jets, this was done by putting Snakeye high-drag fins on MK-82 500-lb bombs. This permitted pin-point delivery by jet on targets some 300 feet from friendly troops. Because target areas in Laos were usually well-protected by anti-aircraft defenses (unlike in Vietnam where Snakeyes were commonly used), considerable risks were incurred and it was only after repeated requests by the Raven FAC's and considerable discussion that Seventh Air Force approved the tactic. Its first highly effective use took place in September and it continued throughout Laos until the end of the wet season.¹⁶ Barrel Roll operations also sought to increase gunship effectiveness by pairing the Army's OV-1 "Hunter" with the Air Force AC-119 "Killer" as a truck-killing team. The OV-1's side-looking airborne radar sought out the truck targets and passed these on to the AC-119, permitting the latter's limited time over target areas to be used much more productively. In the one month of extensive operation before the wet season, the truck-kill rate of the team more than doubled the rate of a gunship operating alone.¹⁷

Ordnance

(S) Improving air ordnance was an important Air Force measure for achieving more with less. The Vice Chief of Staff, in his 18 March recommendations to the Secretary of the Air Force on this subject, emphasized that quality of munitions was more effective than quantity. He pointed specifically to the highly accurate Paveway bomb, which usually required only two F-4 sorties for road-cutting operations as opposed to as many as 22 used by general purpose bombs. The current Paveway inventory was 207 a month, but this was to increase to 300 a month in March and 620 by June. He cited the Air Force's use of CBU*-24's and its reintroduction of M-36 incendiary bombs. As a way of saving ammunition, he reported that -- rather than reducing ordnance loads on tac fighters -- unused munitions were now being returned to base, within safety parameters.¹⁸ Later in the year, the newer CBU-38 was introduced into Thai-based fighter operations during the 1970 wet season in Laos. Each aircraft carrying three CBU-38's could

*Cluster Bomb Unit

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cover an area 800 by 100 feet with 120 explosions in a level bomb run at 450 knots, 1300 feet. Using a 45-degree dive delivery with release at 600 feet, coverage was about 150 by 300 feet.¹⁹

(TS) Two other types of munitions were described by Admiral Moorer in mid-June as among those promising to increase interdiction effectiveness. The first was the AGM-83A, a new air-to-ground missile with a 250-lb warhead, 5-mile range, and launchable in level flight or in dives up to 60°. The other was an incendiary bomblet (BLU-61) releasing large 30-grain fragments at over 5,000 feet per second. Production had begun in the summer of 1970 and it was tentatively due for combat evaluation in Southeast Asia in December of that year.²⁰

(S) The most significant move in 1970 for getting greater ordnance effectiveness was the Air Force's \$100-million reprogramming action in March (see pages 38-40), whereby production of M-117 750-lb bombs was increased from 30,000 to 45,000 a month; that of MK-82 500-lb bombs was increased by 180,000 in fiscal year 1970 and provisions were made to insure similar production in fiscal year 1971.²¹

Aircraft

(TS) Aircraft effectiveness also came under scrutiny, particularly in regard to special missions and functions. For example, there had long been a debate over the merits of jets versus gunships in the interdiction role, and this debate accelerated in 1970. When Secretary Laird in December 1969 requested allied SEA gunship requirements, the JCS replied that neither the VNAF nor the RLAFF could maintain and operate more gunships than they currently had. The JCS believed USAF fixed wing gunship requirements should be based on overall SEA requirements, not on separate requirements for Laos and RVN. The current 68 gunship force was considered adequate for theater requirements.²² The Air Staff agreed.²³

(S) Secretary Seamans, as he told Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard in February, had always "carefully monitored and encouraged" current gunship programs. On a Southeast Asia trip in January he had particularly looked into the Surprise Package

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gunships. Because of their extraordinary effectiveness, he had directed similar modification of the other AC-130's in SEA in the near future.* He wanted to acquire more of them -- preferably the AC-130E, although this aircraft also was desired for the air-lift mission. Further, he favored having the Surprise Package aircraft included in the permanent USAF force structure.²⁴ On 28 April the Chief of Staff approved the Surprise Package follow-on program, and Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Research and Development, Grant L. Hansen, asked the Director of Defense Research and Engineering (DDR&E) to release \$2.5 million in emergency funds to pay for immediate development and test of the AC-130E.²⁵

~~(S)~~ On 1 May Presidential Science Advisor Lee A. DuBridge recommended to Secretary Seamans that the number of AC-130 Surprise Package gunships in SEA be increased to about 20,⁺ and that measures be taken to reduce their vulnerability to ground fire. He conceded these things "could probably not be done without the wholehearted support of top government and DOD officials, because it confronted the Air Force with serious questions as to budget problems, the mixing of Vietnam-related decisions with those of longer range interest, and competition with other aircraft such as F-4's for a place in the force structure."²⁶ Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Kruzel, Deputy Director of Operations, replying for the Air Staff on 11 May, advised Dr. DuBridge that the small number of Surprise Package gunships acquired earlier had been affected by the airlift shortage which had taken precedence. He acknowledged the effectiveness of the Surprise Package aircraft and reported on current measures to up-grade them, including the C-130's. But further expansion of the AC-130 gunship force was not planned, pending combat evaluation of the two prototypes.²⁷

*On 20 January General Brown, Seventh Air Force Commander, had requested expeditious action on retro-fitting 6 AC-130's to the Surprise Package configuration. (AFIN 2069, 20 Jan 70).

⁺He noted that in 1967 the Secretary of the Air Force had approved 20 such aircraft, but only seven had been acquired, and they had been doing all the work in SEA and were old and worn. He deplored the fact that the Air Force had "felt it necessary to withdraw its A-26 squadron from the Laotian campaign even though the A-26 is one of the best truck killers."

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(15) Shortly after this, the gunship question took on new significance when Secretary Laird asked the JCS for a new interdiction strategy, specifically suggesting gunships as a way to increase interdiction effectiveness.²⁸ Admiral Moorer replied on 15 June strongly defending current interdiction programs and stressing the new munitions and systems being planned, including the Surprise Package modifications. As to the gunships generally, he referred to them as "the highly effective gunship-fighter team," but qualified his endorsement:

... Enthusiasm for the gunship, however, must be tempered with an awareness of its vulnerability to enemy defenses. It is precluded, even with fighter escort, from operation along certain defended LOCs. Two of the limited fleet of AC-130s have been lost to hostile force in the past 13 months....²⁹

The Air Staff, commenting on this question, noted that the "gunship-fighter team" would get laser target designators in November which would help reduce their AAA vulnerability. Currently, however, gunships were not employed in high threat areas or in moderate threat areas with greater than 50 percent moon illumination. They operated as a team with fighter escorts for flak suppression, and their success was in no small part due to daylight fighter sorties restricting enemy movement to the hours of darkness.³⁰

(16) The gunship proponents continued to press their case, however. On 2 July Secretary Seamans replied to Mr. Packard's "recent question as to what would have to be done in order to increase the number of gunships available at year-end by a significant amount." He said a sole source contract could, with a triple-shift 7-day-week production schedule, put three AC-130A's in SEA by 1 January, and an additional three by February 1971. An option to increase the buy to nine aircraft could be exercised later if determined necessary.* A maximum effort would be required, but all funding and an Air Force precedence of 1-3 would be made immediately available, and all major commands would assist as required.

*This option was exercised on 1 October 1970 [Memo (S) for Dep SECDEF Packard from SAF, 1 Oct 70.]

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He also reported that the current fleet of six AC-130's was being updated and refurbished and that 12 B-57G's were to be deployed in early October 1970, significantly increasing the Air Force truck interdiction capability. Further, in regard to the Air Force's long-range gunship plans, Secretary Seamans said he had directed that two inventory C-130E's be modified with the Surprise Package configuration, which would form the basis for a gunship capability in the decade 1970-1980. ³¹

(S) The Office of the Secretary of Defense concurred immediately in Secretary Seamans' proposal to acquire the six additional AC-130A's. ³² The next day Mr. Packard, in recommendations to the JCS and service secretaries for improving interdiction operations, specifically referred to Secretary Seamans' 2 July memo. He described it as "an aggressive program to increase gunship capabilities, which I approve," and, among other things, he asked the Air Force to consider greater use of AC-119K's in Laos. ³³ In a reply on 29 July, General Ryan noted that two AC-119K's had been lost, and while consideration had been given to replacing them from the CONUS-based aircrew training unit, this had proved impractical since the unit trained both AC-119K and AC-130 crews. Also, he noted that enemy AAA in Laos had substantially increased so that aircraft had to operate at 7,000 feet, causing Seventh Air Force to submit a combat required operational capability (ROC) on 13 July, with suggested remedies, which was still being evaluated. ³⁴

(S) Secretary Laird, who had encouraged the increased use of gunships, put a definitive seal of approval on them in a memo to Dr. Kissinger on 23 July. He cited the doubling of the AC-130 gunship fleet as one of the factors supporting his decision to recommend lower sortie rates to the President. ³⁵ Admiral Moorer, however, remained lukewarm on gunships. In a 29 July memo to Dr. Kissinger's Vietnam Special Studies Group, he said:

The primary limitation of the gunship is vulnerability due to their slow speed and low operating altitude. They normally operate well within the lethal range of enemy guns and can be tracked readily. For this reason, their use is restricted to the hours of darkness. This does not prevent their successful employment in Laos,

however, since daylight attacks by fighter aircraft force the enemy to move supplies almost exclusively at night. Even at night, over Laos, gunships must be escorted by strike aircraft armed with flak suppression ordnance....

Next dry season's campaign is not likely to be a repeat of the past. The enemy will probably take all possible countermeasures to prevent a recurrence of the effective truck kill campaign of 69-70. Because gunships made a significant contribution to the overall truck campaign, they would seem to be likely candidates for enemy response. He has found he can offset gunship effectiveness and even in some instances deny them an area of operations by increasing the density of his defenses. With a high level of AAA reaction, the gunship is forced to spend more time in evasive action than in searching for and attacking trucks. Particularly dense AAA environments such as in Mu Gia and Ban Karai Pass and around Tchepone were prohibitive to gunship operations. The enemy must be aware that moonlight (50% illumination or more) forced gunships off the heavily travelled and heavily defended eastern routes onto the less lucrative western and southern routes... [In the] 70-71 dry season [the enemy] may attempt more daytime movement and movement under cover of weather to avoid gunships, especially if daytime jet fighter coverage is reduced....³⁶

(S) Admiral Moorer repeated these arguments in a memo to Secretary Laird the next day. He defended current interdiction practices and saw its effectiveness enhanced primarily by the production of improved air munitions that increased destruction of enemy supplies.³⁷ The vulnerability of the gunships was also noted by Gen. William A. Momyer, the Commander, Tactical Air Command, and former head of Seventh Air Force. He noted that "in a typical mission, the enemy makes a concentrated effort to shoot down the AC-130s because of the high truck-kill rate achieved....

Without the flak suppression done by the F-4s, it is questionable whether the AC-130s would have survived the last dry season."³⁸

(TS) A lesser aircraft effectiveness debate centered around the retention of A-1 Skyraiders versus F-4's. In accordance with plans to reduce U.S. forces in Thailand (approved by the Secretary of Defense 5 June), the Air Force was to inactivate all A-1 assets in Thailand by the end of June 1971.³⁹ In July and August, Ambassadors G. McMurtrie Godley (Laos) and Leonard Unger (Thailand) repeatedly expressed concern at the prospect of losing the USAF A-1 capability, wanting to retain their close air support (CAS) and search and rescue (SAR) resources.⁴⁰ In a strong message to the State Department, Ambassador Godley characterized the U.S. air support mission in Laos as "a firm requirement for CAS of regular and irregular Lao ground forces." He said that the F-4's, operating under the current release altitude restrictions, did not possess sufficient delivery accuracy for employment close to friendlies and that inherent jet aircraft performance factors did not permit continuous observation of a small target or long loiter capability, thus they would not satisfactorily replace the A-1's. If the substitution of an F-4 squadron or other type for redeployment was required in order to permit retention of an A-1 squadron, then he was so recommending.⁴¹ Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson and Richard Helms, Director of CIA, in memos to Packard, supported Ambassador Godley's position.

(TS) PACAF and the Air Staff, whose views were relayed to the JCS by CINCPAC on 26 October, disagreed with the Ambassador. Considering the prospect of further Thai-based reductions in fiscal year 1972 and the Skyraiders' localized and dedicated support of Laotian operations, as compared to the multi-mission capabilities of the F-4, they did not recommend retention of an A-1 squadron at the latter's expense. With the budget requiring a reduction of tactical fighter squadrons in SEA from 17 to 6 between the start and end of fiscal year 1972, they did not consider it feasible to substitute an A-1 for an F-4 squadron. Moreover, while Ambassador Godley had recommended retention of A-1's to provide CAS for Lao ground forces, the planes should, if retained, keep their present primary mission of SAR support, which had the highest mission precedence.⁴² The Air Staff reiterated these views in a 6 November memo to the Chief of Staff, recommending support for JCS efforts to convince the State Department and the Defense

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Department's International Security Affairs (ISA) they should stand behind the previously approved redeployment of the A-1's. The memo also pointed out that the Vice Chief, "after his recent SEA trip, and Maj. Gen. Kirkendall, outgoing Deputy Commander, of the Seventh Air Force, have both indicated Godley now understands the impacts of retaining an A-1 squadron and will not continue to push the issue."⁴³

(S) The JCS reply to Assistant Secretary Warren G. Nutter of ISA of 13 November was very long and emphatically opposed to sacrificing the F-4's to A-1's. It said in part:

As U.S. forces in SEA are reduced, efforts have been made to plan the most flexible and responsive force feasible within established constraints... Retention of a specialized resource, such as the A-1s, which would operate only in a localized area in support of Laotian operations, is contrary to these efforts. Conversely, the F-4 is providing CAS to U.S. and allied forces in RVN in a counterinsurgency environment and during contact between major forces. It can provide the same support to Laos. Diversified munitions capability, sophisticated systems and survivability make this a valuable weapon system to counter the overall spectrum of enemy activities and support troops in contact. Removal of the F-4 capability from Thailand to permit retention of a USAF A-1 squadron would constitute a sacrifice of flexible responsiveness, and effectiveness which cannot be justified in face of the current enemy threat and operations.⁴⁴

Secretary Laird, however, went along with Ambassador Godley:

I have decided to agree to the request of CIA and State to retain one squadron of A-1s in Thailand during FY72. The approved end FY71 personnel ceiling of 37,200 in Thailand and the approved sortie rates for FY71 are unchanged by this action. Consequently, one F-4 squadron should be redeployed to CONUS by end of FY71, or other reductions should be made to compensate for retention of an A-1

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squadron. I believe this decision is in the best overall interest of DOD even though there could be one less F-4 squadron in Thailand. It does not appear that retention of an A-1 squadron is likely to hinder significantly the Vietnamization effort and it appears that considerable savings can be realized by the earlier redeployment of an F-4 squadron to CONUS. ⁴⁵

(C) The next day, Under Secretary of the Air Force McLucas urged Secretary Laird to reconsider this decision:

... during Dr. Seamans' November visit to SEA he looked into this matter. His discussions, particularly with General Clay and Ambassador Godley, persuaded him we should not retain the A-1s, particularly at the expense of giving up an F-4 squadron. . . As you have so often stressed, the air war in SEA must be viewed as one single overall operation. Therefore, as we reduce our capability in that area, we must retain those forces that are most flexible. We must be able to apply our airpower wherever it is needed. . . we should not unnecessarily dedicate a force to one particular facet of the task at the expense of our ability to perform the overall mission.

As you may recall from Dr. Seamans' trip report to you, in the November conversation Ambassador Godley accepted the fact that A-1s would not be available to him. One reason for this was, as General Clay reported, he had provided his assurance the F-4s would be made available as required to meet urgent needs in Laos after the A-1s are withdrawn. Ambassador Godley's major concern was thus the acquisition of additional T-28s. As you know, action to this end is now underway. Accordingly, we believe that discussions with military commanders during your forthcoming visit to SEA will confirm the validity of this view, which is shared by JCS. ⁴⁶

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Nevertheless, Secretary Laird's decision was sustained. On 7 January 1971, Mr. Packard advised Director Helms and Under Secretary Johnson that the Department of Defense had reviewed all factors in the case and had decided "to agree to the CIA and State request to retain one A-1 squadron," but had not determined whether this action would make it necessary to reduce other types of aircraft based in Thailand.⁴⁷

(S) In summary, the Air Force devoted great efforts to improving effectiveness by moves to streamline and re-evaluate its functions and operations. At the same time, because air power remained the principal weapon being used in the war, its effectiveness also inevitably engaged the opinions of other government agencies concerned. The usual involvement of the CIA and State Department in the A-1 discussions reflected their role in the war in Laos, where the U.S. Ambassador had final approval authority for air strikes, and the CIA supported ground forces loyal to the RLG. CIA had always considered close air support the main air mission in the war, and in their insistence on the superior effectiveness of the A-1s, they were primarily concerned with protecting their guerrilla warfare strategy in northern Laos. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (including Systems Analysis), very concerned with cutting sorties and costs and much impressed with the brilliant performance of the gunships in the truck-killing role, thought top priority should go to this tactic and its successful new weapon which was so much cheaper and--to them--more effective than jet interdiction. The JCS, CINCPAC and MACV, responsible for the overall outcome in Southeast Asia, looked beyond specialized roles and effectiveness, and gave their priority to retaining a strong U.S. jet force in SEA for both political and military purposes.

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V. INTERDICTION

Strategy Effectiveness: Interdiction

~~(S)~~ The same interagency differences of opinion noted in the previous chapter were reflected and argued out even more strongly in the discussions of the air interdiction strategy which went on concurrently: how effective the bombing had been in intercepting and destroying enemy forces and supplies infiltrating into South Vietnam via Laos. This debate had gone on for some time, intensifying during 1969 interagency discussions of National Security Study Memorandums (NSSM's) #1 and #36.* It was carried into 1970 by a late 1969 directive from Secretary Packard to "undertake a coordinated study of the effectiveness of our present air operations in Laos, particularly those in southern Laos...with JCS, CIA, and ISA providing input and comments."¹ The JCS, after reviewing a first draft of this study in January 1970, recommended that it be revised. Air Staff views were reflected in the JCS response, which said:

...the study is biased, purports to reach no conclusions while weaving a number of influential conclusions into the text that were not supported by factual data; includes errors in judgment involving military operations.²

~~(S)~~ The 96-page second draft, written primarily by OSD's Systems Analysis (SA), but coordinated throughout with CIA, was forwarded on 25 March.³ One of its major findings was that enemy supply needs were small--about 319 tons a day--of which some 10 percent was captured or lost to air attack, the rest consumed. Some 99 tons of it had to come from outside and DIA estimated that about half of this came via the Laotian Panhandle. Hence, the bombing had been directed against some 50 tons (10 truckloads) a day, or 15 percent of the enemy's total supply requirements. The Air Force thought the enemy's "adequate" throughput was being achieved only by greatly depleting his Laotian stockpiles; CIA thought he was probably stockpiling supplies in Laos for future use and in general had plenty available.⁴ North Vietnam could increase these supply efforts

*See Elizabeth H. Hartsook, The Air Force in Southeast Asia 1969 ~~(S)~~ [Off/AF Hist, 1970] pp 10-26.

substantially--as demonstrated by the 6-11 months' supplies it shipped during January and February 1970. Their supply system was not limited by the road network, which operated at less than 10-15 percent capacity. Air strikes against LOC's hadn't successfully blocked traffic because the enemy quickly repaired the roads or built by-passes. While interdiction bombing harassed him and made him use other channels, it had had very little effect on his activity levels in South Vietnam.* This was determined more by manpower (including casualty) considerations and the strategy the enemy elected to use, than by bomb damage. Supply losses were not too costly for North Vietnam, since everything was replaced by outside Communist countries. According to CIA, most enemy supply shortages stemmed from preemptive allied spoiling operations by ground forces, inadequate numbers of transport laborers, natural disasters such as floods and drought, poorly disciplined troops, and improper battlefield preparations.⁵

(S) The SA study strongly emphasized the effectiveness of gunships in truck-killing and the ineffectiveness of attacking roads and storage area targets with jets. It said large sortie rate cuts could be made, and current, or only slightly less, destruction maintained if the emphasis were put on truck targets, with

*The CIA also said interdiction was not as useful in northern Laos as close air support to the guerrillas--according to a senior CIA (CAS) official in Vientiane:

...Interdiction by air is not effective. You can only interdict a road for a very short period of time and its only effective during the rainy season. The anti-personnel mines and the MK-36 can be neutralized by the enemy, using electrical techniques, or vehicles, or cattle, or even rolling barrels down a road with a bamboo stick between them. They have many ways to get through. [Interview (S), Senior CAS Official, Vientiane, 14 Mar 70, by Kenneth Sams and Lt Col Schlight for Project CHECO].

Some sources however, saw this particular discussion over interdiction vs. close air support as stemming from 7AF/13AF questions about the reliability of CAS intelligence for USAF targeting. CAS had admitted that during the Vang Pao offensive in 1969, its Forward Air Guides (FAGs) had grossly inflated their reports of enemy killed by air in the mistaken belief that even greater air support would result. [CHECO rpt (S), Air Operations in Northern Laos 1 Nov 1969-1 Apr 1970, 5 May 70, p 10.]

storage area targets deemphasized and road attacks discontinued altogether. If bombing of the Panhandle were halted, other interdiction methods could be used in South Vietnam. It suggested: air strikes against stockpiles and movements in SVN; coastal patrolling and border surveillance; ground combat operations against enemy rear base camps (to destroy caches) or against enemy supply trails between the battlefield and rear base areas. The study cited sharp disagreement between Air Force and CIA statistics on bomb damage assessment, the former saying about 60 percent--CIA, 20-25 percent--of shipments into Laos from North Vietnam were destroyed. It said the method by which Air Force obtained its estimates was "certainly subject to considerable error," but this could not be verified. Nor could CIA's lower estimates be verified. The study said the bombing in Southern Laos was currently costing the Department of Defense about \$1.1 billion a year.⁶

(S) General Meyer, commenting on the study, listed some of the "basic Air Staff disagreements:"

Systems Analysis evaluated the air campaign in Laos, using objectives which differ from those established for the campaign, i. e., they measured air effectiveness against criteria other than that under which the campaign was fought.

The study repeatedly emphasizes that various estimates are highly uncertain, yet proceeds through assertion and manipulation of these estimates to arrive at implied factual conclusions.

The study's conclusion that the enemy was essentially unconstrained by the air interdiction campaign, is not consistent with views of U. S. officials in a position to observe the impact of interdiction on the enemy--for example, the U. S. Ambassador in Vientiane and his statements in January 1969 on the value of air interdiction.⁷

The Air Staff concluded that the second draft contained the same limitations as the first and recommended it be treated as a

working document and disseminated only within the Defense Department.*

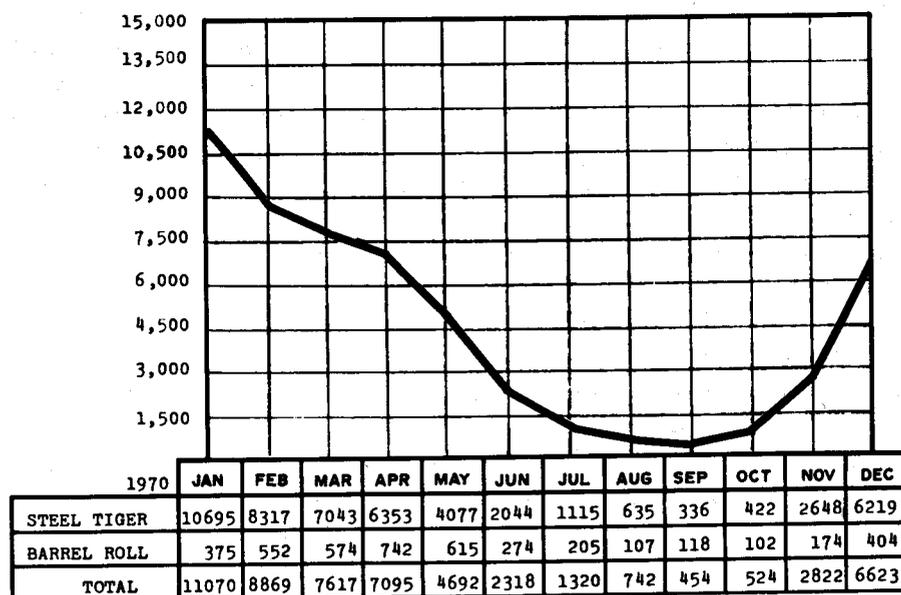
(S) In a very detailed reply on 8 May,⁸ the JCS said the study was not a "credible analysis" of the Laotian interdiction campaign and repeated the USAF charge that it had arrived at a number of important conclusions, based on assertions or controversial analytical methods not supported by confirmed data. If, as the study suggested, the enemy had large amounts of excess logistics capacity, why did he constantly try to expand his logistics system and his supply efforts? Why didn't he simply use this supposed LOC capacity in his build-up efforts? Why was he undertaking extraordinary and costly measures to get some 33 percent of his input through to South Vietnam, deploying large logistics and AAA forces, floating supplies down waterways, and constructing pipelines instead of using roads, building routes around the DMZ and SAM sites in border areas to avoid or counter air attack?

(S) Inhibiting enemy combat activity was the main goal, said the JCS, and the bombing--by hampering the flow of men and supplies, together with ground and air operations in South Vietnam--greatly restricted enemy initiatives and in some cases forced him to forego planned operations. Interdiction forced him to put three units of supply into Laos for every one he got through to South Vietnam, and the normal transit time of 1 day became 7 under interdiction strikes. North Vietnam confirmed what the bombing was costing it by its constant political pressuring to get it stopped--the ground offensive in northern Laos, for example, was clearly a pressure tactic to force the RLG to withdraw its support of the interdiction campaign. According to JCS, the SA study's supply estimates were based on highly uncertain assumptions which could equally well be restated to show different enemy requirements. BDA reporting by MACV was based on a sophisticated all-source intelligence collection effort, with data inputs from FAC sightings, signal and photo intelligence, sensor readouts, roadwatch teams, and other sources. CIA had no comparable methodology or data base and apparently relied a great deal on circumstantial evidence and use of limited and often unreliable roadwatch team observations in assessing air interdiction operations.

*For a comparison of truck sightings vs. truck kills see Figures 11 and 12.

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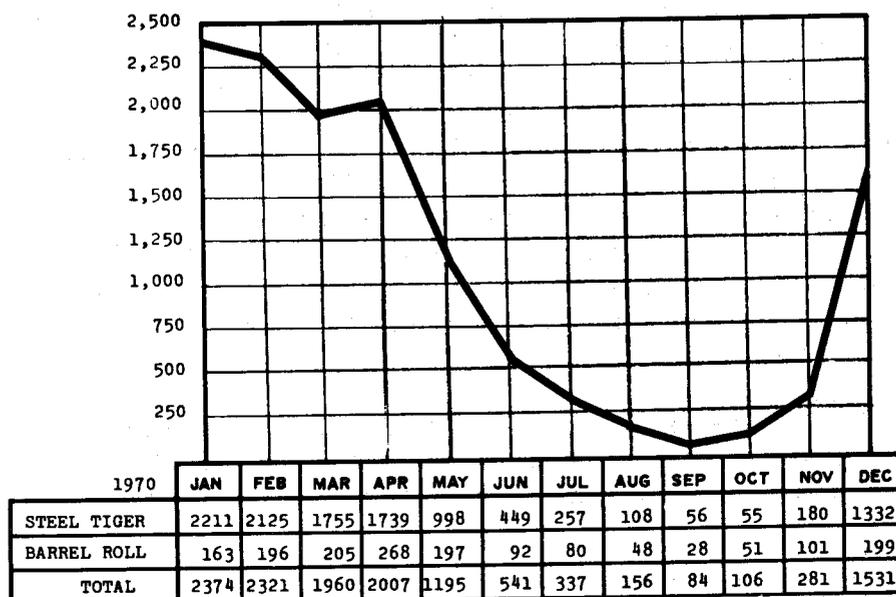
TRUCK SIGHTINGS IN LAOS



Source: USAF TIA

Fig 11

TRUCKS DAMAGED AND DESTROYED IN LAOS



Source: USAF TIA

Fig 12

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(S) As to greatly reducing sorties in favor of more gunship attacks, trucks had always had a high priority, but they were fleeting targets, frequently disappearing before the aircraft could get into strike position, and park and storage areas were often struck as an alternative. Sortie levels now were inadequate and any further reductions would decrease U.S. flexibility in responding to enemy initiatives and affect our capability to respond to contingencies. They would weaken the government in SVN, expand the enemy's freedom of action, encourage him to press for unilateral U.S. withdrawal, and remove an important source of pressure in negotiations. The alternative interdiction suggestions proposed were already being used, except for patrolling between enemy combat and rear areas which, to be effective, would require U.S. and allied forces positioned in depth in fortified positions all along the border. The JCS recommended that the study not be used for planning purposes and not sent outside the Defense Department, in view of the influence its findings might assume.

(S) Besides the Systems Analysis study, several other papers offered interdiction proposals. The President's Science Adviser Dr. DuBridge, as already noted (see pp 57-58) recommended strengthening the interdiction campaign in Laos by adding more AC-130 gunships and decreasing their vulnerability to ground fire. To achieve the latter, he wanted to provide more LORAN*-equipped F-4's and greatly increase production (in the thousands per month) and use of laser guided bombs (LGB's).⁹ In response General Kruzal advised that PACAF reports did not substantiate the views on LORAN-equipped F-4 effectiveness and, as to the LGB's, commander requirements were presently 620 kits a month. Any increase would probably not be worthwhile until the operational problems of integrating acquisition, illumination, and delivery into one vehicle could be solved. The only near-term candidate for combining all these factors was the B-57G, due to deploy in September 1970.¹⁰

(S) Two weeks later, Leonard Sullivan, Jr., Deputy Director of Defense Research and Engineering, suggested it would be "totally impractical to consider Vietnamization of our current

*Long-range navigation.

anti-infiltration air campaign" over the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. It would take years for the South Vietnamese to master the sensor detection system and the complex equipment and aircraft needed. He suggested that infiltration could "only be really curtailed through use of troops on the ground," and proposed development of an improved highway from the South China Sea to Thailand, to sever all land and river infiltration routes from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.* To build and protect this road, he proposed using 5-6 combat divisions. 11

(S) On 20 May Secretary Laird took the matter in hand and asked the JCS for a new interdiction strategy and plan by 15 June. He wanted a major effort exerted to review and modify current interdiction methods in favor of any measures that "held clear promise of improving effectiveness and/or reducing costs." He called attention to favorable reports he had heard about gunships and suggested that maybe more concentration on gunship sorties--together with "judicious choke point strikes" by B-52's or tac air--might produce "major increases" in interdiction results. Further, he wanted the JCS to investigate other new and "even essentially non-military approaches to interdiction," such as "substantial economic and/or political rewards" to indigenous personnel who led friendly units to enemy supply caches. If such methods worked, they would not only help reduce the higher cost air interdiction efforts but permit captured supplies to furnish part of what now came out of our own inventories. 12

(S) The JCS answer was essentially a fervent 5-page defense of the present program:

The JCS have reviewed the current interdiction strategy and consider the present concept sound. They are confident that the Services, MACV and CINCPAC are exploiting every opportunity to maximize results while minimizing costs...As previously pointed out, it is believed any reduction in this interdiction program will degrade its effectiveness.

*Sullivan noted that his proposal was a revival of one put forward in 1966-7 by General Westmoreland and Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson.

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However, the JCS did not stop there. They said the most effective interdiction strategy would be to attack the enemy supply system by a variety of methods from origin to user, i. e., from the ports of entry in North Vietnam to the individual enemy soldier in the field:

...a strategy emphasizing an integrated interdiction effort coordinating the capabilities of all forces-- air interdiction plus naval surveillance, search and seizure activities off the coast of RVN, and in-country ground operations attacking the NVN logistics system-- supplemented by intensified naval surveillance off the Cambodian coast, intensified cross-border intelligence-oriented operations of the Salem House/Prairie Fire type into both Cambodia and Laos, and expanding cross-border operations into previously privileged enemy logistics sanctuaries, offers prospect for further increasing the effectiveness of the present interdiction effort.¹³

The JCS backed up these views in its 24 July reassessment of U.S. strategy in Southeast Asia, recommending not only continued air interdiction operations in Laos, but "ground operations (of limited duration and minimum visibility, using GVN and Thai regular forces), supported by U.S. air in southern Laos to interdict and harass enemy logistic operations."¹⁴

(TS) In the interim, the studies and proposals on interdiction continued. On 15 June Dr. Kissinger had directed the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) to "prepare an evaluation of our current air activities in Southeast Asia and alternative FY 71 programs, for review by the VSSG and submission to the President."¹⁵ In early July, DDR&E sent Secretary Packard another 12-page proposal, "How to Improve the Effectiveness of the '71 Laotian Interdiction Campaign."¹⁶ It recommended some reductions in the F-4's and RF-4's in Thailand; elimination of

*Secretary Laird rejected these suggestions, saying "escalatory acts on our part in the past seem to have had little effect in pressuring the enemy to negotiate." [JCS 2344/321-3 (TS), 22 Aug 70.]

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the Navy carriers except as a deterrent; putting Navy and Marine A-6's and A-6C's ashore; moving the AC-119K's to Thailand; greatly reducing B-52 sorties (to 750 a month); "up-gunning" AC-130's and providing more of them; accelerating deployment of laser-finding A-4's; maintaining LGB production; expediting production of "enriched" CBU-24-29; allowing use of bulk CS* at mined road cuts. The proposal, concentrating on use of more truck-killer aircraft at the expense of jet sorties against LOC's and truck parks, conceded this would "decrease our contingency capabilities for renewed strikes against the North...cause considerable inter-Service 'anguish,' and not tend in the direction of a 'Vietnamizable' force in the future."

Secretary Seamans forwarded this proposal to the Air Staff on 10 July. Maj. Gen. James M. Keck, Deputy Director of Operations, replying for the Air Staff, noted there had been seven studies and reports on interdiction in the past several months. The Air Force had been in contact with DDR&E throughout the preparation of this particular proposal and had interposed numerous objections. It was now preparing further comments and in the interim was forwarding a recapitulation of its own interdiction effectiveness improvements, aimed at giving the Secretary of Defense a single interdiction document to slow the proliferation of memoranda on the subject. A proposed draft memo to Secretary Laird said:

...it appears propitious to review the principal point--our ability to improve air interdiction effectiveness by destroying trucks. In every dry season there has been a well-documented increase in results we have achieved, both in overall terms and more specifically in truck killing. I foresee no change in this next year, despite withdrawal of some air interdiction assets....

Although many approaches have been offered as solutions to improving air interdiction, I believe we are moving in the right direction at a speed commensurate with improving at a reasonable cost--with the fiscal constraints facing the Air Force and also force modernization requirements, we cannot fund all of the promising systems within the existing budget.¹⁷

*Tear inducing agent.

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(S) Meanwhile, on 11 July OSD again took up the interdiction question, with Deputy Secretary Packard sending the JCS and the Secretaries of Air Force and Navy detailed recommendations for an improved interdiction campaign. Packard's suggestions reflected many of the recommendations of the Systems Analysis/CIA study and the proposals of Dr. DuBridge and DDR&E. He cited the "sharp increase in effectiveness of our interdiction campaign as we have developed improved weapons systems and munitions," and wanted this to continue. He endorsed gunship effectiveness and hoped in 1970-1971 to "extract a significantly higher toll in enemy vehicular losses, while simultaneously making a marked reduction in the total sortie requirements." Such reductions, he said, were dictated both by budget constraints and "by our ultimate objective to Vietnamize the war - including the interdiction campaign." It was now necessary to develop a plan that would "outline the changes in force levels and disposition (italics added) as well as implications for aircraft and munitions production modifications necessary." Specifically, Secretary Packard asked the Air Force to consider greater use of AC-119K's in Laos; deploying more F-4 Pave Sword aircraft; assuring adequate truck-killing ordnance; improving methods to minimize the AAA threat, operate at night and in bad weather, and reduce daylight aircraft losses; and reducing B-52 sorties consistent with greater truck park dispersal.*¹⁸

(S) In his reply, General Ryan explained the current status of the AC-119K's (see p 59). As to the AAA threat, all alternatives were already being tried or used; the mobility and great numbers of the AAA guns, and expert camouflage made it infeasible to destroy them all. The Pave Sword aircraft was still being tested for suitability and there were none currently deployed. If found suitable, the first aircraft could reach Southeast Asia in January 1971, the remaining eleven before the end of the dry season.

*Secretary Packard asked the Navy to consider the possibility of removing the West Pacific carrier fleet assets from the interdiction role, to assume a deterrent posture for contingency actions against the North; also the possibility of establishing a composite Marine/Navy anti-vehicular aircraft unit to be stationed ashore to contribute to the interdiction campaign, using only A-6's, A-6C's, and A-4's as most effective against vehicles and AAA installations.

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Continuous efforts were under way to provide improved anti-truck ordnance; the CBU-24, -52, and -58; Rockeye II; the MK-82; and laser-guided bombs. As to extending the operational capability against trucks, every avenue was being investigated: the B-57G and A-6, up-dating the AC-130's, and the improved Sky Spot System (TSQ-96). Regarding B-52 sorties, pressure could be maintained on truck parks with reduced sorties if there was more emphasis on allowing airborne diversion of forces to targets found to be more worthwhile.¹⁹

(S) Admiral Moorer, replying for the JCS, said effectiveness of air interdiction in SEA had been the subject of continuing, intensive examination and documentation since its inception. He was confident the services, CINCPAC, and MACV were exploiting every opportunity, within political and fiscal restraints, to achieve the most effective results for the effort expended. He insisted all possible tactical and technical improvements were constantly being adopted, including, especially, improved air munitions. Stressing the enemy's ever-changing pattern of operations, he appeared to think that over-concentration on truck-killing might not only run into enemy AAA efforts all too prepared to thwart it, but also might overlook important aspects of new enemy infiltration operations elsewhere. The latter, especially, made the current interdiction campaign of critical importance. He argued passionately for "bringing air operations to bear" on crucial political developments in both Cambodia and Laos, on filling the power gap caused by U.S. redeployments, and on supporting ARVN forces as the combat burden shifted to them.²⁰

(S) On the same day, Admiral Moorer sent Dr. Kissinger his comments on the SEA air evaluation study directed by the latter. He had followed the study's development and concluded it represented a "compromise of divergent opinions," not clearly reflecting coherent military views on the impact and value of air operations in Southeast Asia. There was a tendency, through cost-effectiveness analysis, to question the value of continuing air missions not involving close air support of troops in combat. No one could quantify how interdiction constrained enemy operations and reduced friendly casualties, but many enemy reports had confirmed how their attack plans had often been preempted because B-52 and tacair strikes had practically wiped out complete units. All SEA air operations were interdependent and no one

aspect, such as interdiction, could be singled out for changes or reductions without impacting on--and jeopardizing--the overall strategy. At the present time, interdiction had the greatest relevance in dealing with the developing crisis in Cambodia. Unless an intensive interdiction campaign was mounted against new enemy LOC's and base structures in southern Laos and northeastern Cambodia, all of Cambodia might be lost to the enemy.²¹

~~(S)~~ Paradoxically, at the very time when the paper debates seemed to favor the opponents of the interdiction strategy, events brought a strong reemphasis on it. This grew out of the Cambodian incursion. In undertaking it, the President had promised that U.S. ground troops would be withdrawn by 30 June, and this was scrupulously adhered to. But the enemy had no such constraints. Rather than decreasing his activity in Cambodia, he accelerated it. As a result, in the latter half of 1970 the entire northeastern part of Cambodia was in his control and he was threatening to isolate the capital, Phnom Penh, and topple the Cambodian government. He was also using the captured territory to infiltrate supplies via new routes in southern Laos. These developments thrust two new unanticipated demands on the air interdiction role. With U.S. ground troops withdrawn after 30 June and Cambodian forces weak, U.S. air interdiction of enemy troops and supplies became almost the sole weapon for helping stave off further enemy gains and the overthrow of the Lon Nol government. At the same time, it constituted the main weapon of attack against the new enemy LOC's in southern Laos, the single key Communist infiltration artery once they were denied the port of Sihanoukville and the Cambodian sanctuaries. These developments had brought about an expansion in both the concept and the role of air interdiction in the latter half of 1970. (See Chapter II, pp 9-13).

~~(S)~~ Of even greater eventual significance were the JCS recommendations to Secretary Laird for improving the interdiction campaign by extending its methods and areas of operation. In the summer of 1970 these suggestions seemed bold and Secretary Laird disapproved them. But as events in 1971 and later were to prove, the JCS were talking the President's language when they recommended bolder cross-border attacks not only into Cambodia but into Laos and off the North Vietnamese coast as well in order to choke off enemy supplies nearer their source.

⑥ The role of air interdiction in 1970, as in 1969, generated vehement arguments between those who favored it and those who sought to discredit it. However, it was not so important as a debate of effectiveness per se as it was a vehicle for expressing differing opinions at the national level on the future course of the war. In effect, the same two sets of protagonists were carrying on the positions they had taken in replying to Kissinger's "28 questions" (NSSM 1) of January 1969. In 1970, the one group (OSD and CIA) were assuming the war would continue to wind down, through Vietnamization. In trying to show the ineffectiveness of air interdiction, they were also trying to cut back U.S. jet forces which were such a powerful and expensive war symbol and which could never be successfully Vietnamized. Thus, when Secretary Packard talked of Vietnamizing the interdiction campaign, he was thinking of gunships, not B-52's. The other group (JCS, CINCPAC, and MACV) felt, as in 1969, that the war was far from over and that it was essential to keep up pressure on North Vietnam--above all, by retaining the tools for doing so: air strike forces.

⑥ In October 1969, the JCS position had won out. But the interdiction opponents immediately reinitiated the debate, and by mid-1970 they appeared to be winning: the Systems Analysis/CIA study and other analyses had gravely attacked the validity of the entire concept, gunship forces were being doubled, and air strike forces and sorties were being cut. The JCS however, continued to defend the current interdiction strategy. Developments in the latter half of 1970 vindicated their approach and, as we have seen, brought about a strong reinstatement of the air interdiction role.

VI. VNAF IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION

Although developments in 1970 necessitated the retention of a strong U.S. air role, plans to improve the South Vietnamese Air Force went on apace. After almost doubling in 1969, the VNAF saw still further advances in 1970. This was due largely to Secretary Laird's November 1969 directive on Phase III planning,¹ which called for an end strength of 50 squadrons, 1,300 aircraft, and 52,171 personnel. The increase was designed to correct deficiencies in air defense, reconnaissance, helicopter support for ARVN forces, fixed-wing transport, close air support, and interdiction. The goal was to expand tactical functions which would contribute most toward finding and destroying the enemy's main force units in the field.²

(U) Basically, the VNAF increase was designed to permit the VNAF to progress towards self-sufficiency and to permit a decrease in U.S. air operations. As Secretary Seamans said on 28 January, the South Vietnamese Air Force was flying one out of every four allied air missions and he hoped this could be doubled by the end of 1971, leaving the United States conducting only half of the missions.³ This strengthening of the VNAF was also in line with President Nixon's emphasis on the role of air power--South Vietnamese as well as American--in protecting and advancing Vietnamization as a whole.

Organization

The USAF channel--under MACV--for providing advice and assistance on all Improvement and Modernization (I&M) matters was the USAF Advisory Group (AFGP). The Commander, Seventh Air Force, exercised operational control of the group, which was collocated with Headquarters VNAF at Tan Son Nhut AB. In January 1970, the number of advisors authorized in the group and the various advisory teams, working at seven different air bases, was 701. In June this was increased to 1,059, primarily to provide more maintenance personnel during conversion/activation of the VNAF UH-1 and CH-47 squadrons. By December, 1,148 were authorized, of which 1,011 were assigned.⁴

~~(S)~~ To absorb the very considerable increases postulated under Phase III planning, a complete restructuring of the VNAF was necessary. This was done by welding the existing and largely independent wings into five air divisions, 10 tactical wings, five maintenance and supply wings, and seven air base wings.⁵ The reorganization was accomplished by the end of 1970, with one Air Division activated in each of the four military regions and one in the Capital Military Region. The first, at Da Nang, was to emphasize air defense and special warfare and improved support of ARVN. The second, at Nha Trang, with fighters, liaison aircraft, and helicopters, was responsible for air support in the country's largest military region, MR 2.* The third was at Bien Hoa which was also the site of the VNAF's central supply and maintenance organization, the Air Logistics Command. The fourth, at Binh Thuy, was assigned responsibility for the delta region (MR 4), south of Saigon. The Fifth Air Division, at Tan Son Nhut, emphasized transport missions. Its inventory included gunships, reconnaissance aircraft, and helicopters, but no fighters.

~~(S)~~ The Air Logistics Wing at Bien Hoa was expanded into an Air Logistics Command (ALC) during this reorganization. On the same command level as the Air Divisions, it was required to provide depot level maintenance and logistics support for the entire VNAF force structure. For this it had three major operational support organizations: a Materiel Management Center, a Maintenance Engineering Wing and a Supply and Transportation Center. One of its greatest needs was more training for its supply personnel and, in late 1970, ALC acquired and occupied a new, formal training compound.⁶

Training

~~(S)~~ As always, training was the key factor in implementing the stepped-up, expanded program. The size of the problem could be seen in the fact that 17,000 of the 35,786 men authorized in January 1970 were unskilled and needed training to perform at the lowest level. Beyond this, the VNAF also had to develop a

*See Fig. 13.

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LOCATION OF VNAF AIR DIVISIONS

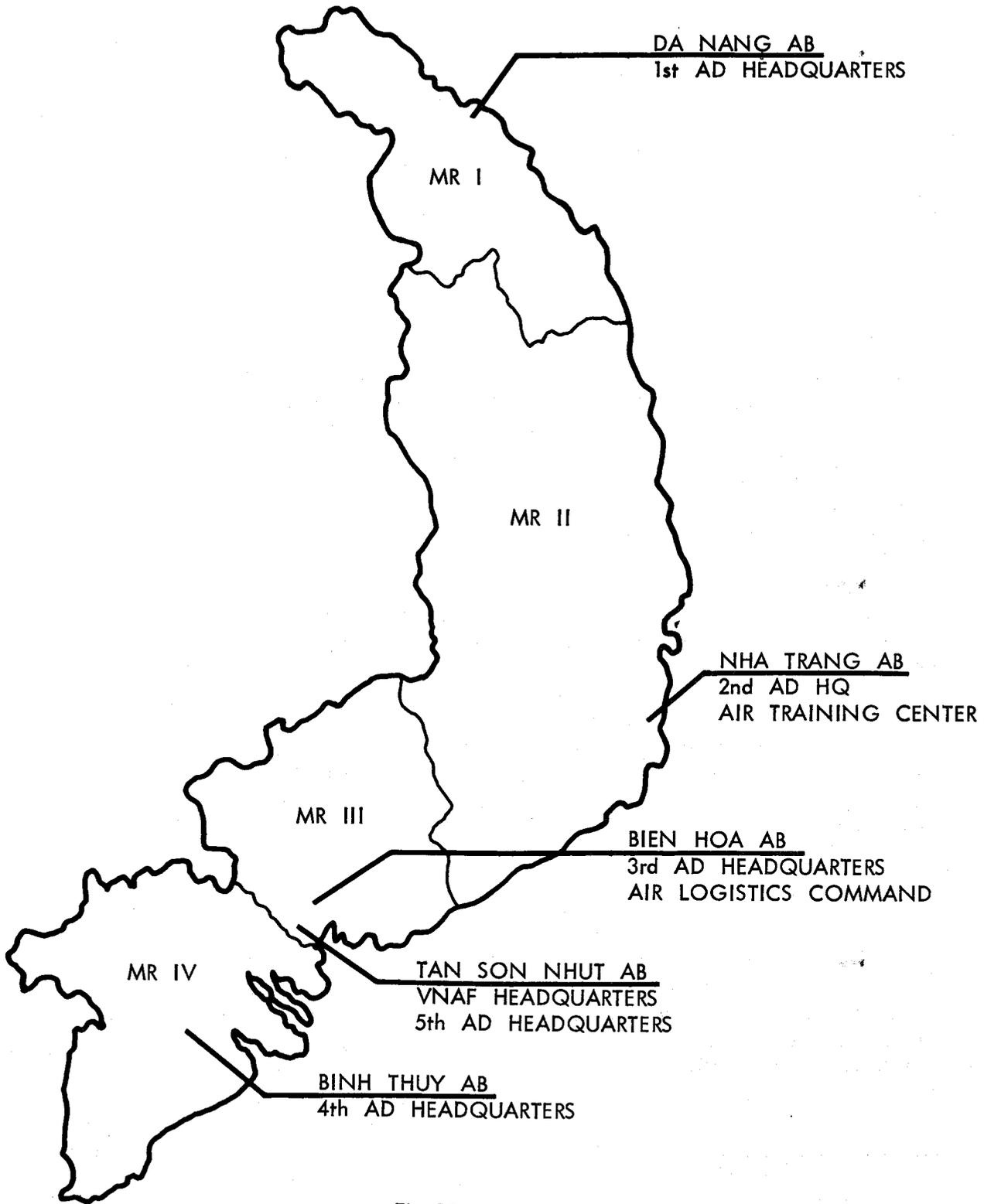


Fig 13

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capability to train replacements. To take care of the VNAF's massive training requirements, it became more and more obvious that previous training programs conducted for the Vietnamese in the United States were not the answer. Such training had always presented grave language problems as well as extra costs and time. Recognizing the significance of this problem, in January 1970 Secretary Laird had asked the services to consider conducting some of the training at U.S. Pacific bases or in third countries.⁷ Secretary Seamans did not believe the suggestion feasible or desirable, due to the time required to set up such programs. He reported, moreover, that plans were already being developed to shift a considerable amount of technical maintenance training from the CONUS to VNAF training centers in SVN.⁸

~~(S)~~ In line with these plans, every VNAF training requirement had been evaluated in late 1969 for feasibility of in-country training. As a result, 17 new hard-core aircraft maintenance courses, particularly designed to meet VNAF (as opposed to USAF) needs, were identified. To teach these courses, 243 VNAF maintenance technicians were specially trained in the United States as instructors. On their return to South Vietnam, they set up the courses at the VNAF Air Training Center at Nha Trang and schools at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa.⁹ The courses began in March 1970, and by mid-1971, 5,547 had graduated and another 1,332 were in training. To further assure effectiveness of the training courses, two USAF Mobile Training Teams (MTT) from the CONUS came to South Vietnam to help the VNAF instructors establish their new courses. Beginning in January and continuing throughout the year, elements of these MTT's were at work in South Vietnam. Their proven success in this instance, moreover, encouraged their future use in other areas. Whereas in late 1969 there were only two MTT's in South Vietnam, by the end of 1970, there were seven teaching 37 specialized skills.¹⁰ In addition, the Air Force built and delivered to South Vietnam a total of 869 training aids specifically designed for VNAF use. To overcome the problem of English language technical manuals, Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) and Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) helped develop some manuals in both English and Vietnamese, emphasizing simpler language and more pictures. By early 1971 manuals for UH-1, CH-47, and C-123 aircraft had been produced.

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Two additional methods for improving VNAF training were on-the-job training and integrated training. An integrated training program was initiated in January 1970; it involved integrating VNAF personnel into 7AF units and giving newly trained men experience on the job. By 30 June, 1,245 officers and airmen were being trained under Seventh Air Force auspices in over 30 different specialties at six bases.¹¹ The program, incidentally, replaced in-country Military Assistance Service Funded (MASF) training and reduced off-shore MASF training at a dollar savings to the U.S. government.¹² Some U.S. Army helicopter units also provided integrated training. There were two categories of such training: "familiarization," in which VNAF personnel simply gained experience, and "upgrade," in which those successfully completing the training were awarded a higher skill level by the VNAF. On-the-job training effectiveness was at first limited due to the few experienced supervisors available, and in early 1970 more students were trained in integrated training programs than in OJT. A year later, however, the ratio had been reversed.

Pilot training and a few other highly technical skills continued to be provided in CONUS. During 1970 the majority of VNAF pilots trained in the United States, with an average of well over 100 Vietnamese beginning training each month, most of them in helicopters. More than 1,000 nonflying officers were also being trained in the United States in 1970, along with some 200 enlisted men, in selected skills such as communications, electronics, and maintenance. Nevertheless, here too the trend was toward more VNAF self-sufficiency. At the VNAF Air Training Center at Nha Trang, some 80 pilots went through flight training in 1970 in T-41, U-17, and O-1 aircraft. They spent 12 weeks in English language study, 9 weeks in ground school, and 32 weeks in flying training.¹³ An undergraduate navigation course was also set up at Tan Son Nhut AB during 1970. The last VNAF helicopter student pilots programmed for training in the United States were to depart SVN on 25 June 1971. By October 1971 only 120 fixed-wing students would remain for training in the CONUS. Since pilot attrition was expected to be about 7 percent annually, the need to provide VNAF with the capability to replace these losses was seen by the Air Force Advisory Group Director of Training as "the greatest challenge to self-sufficiency yet to be met."¹⁴

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Equipment

(C) In 1970 the highest priority was given to helicopter requirements. At the beginning of the year the VNAF had 112 helicopters and 110 operationally ready crews. By the end of the year, a total of 310 UH-1 helicopters had been transferred from U.S. Army in Vietnam (USARV) assets to the VNAF. Sixteen squadrons, with 31 aircraft each, were authorized, of which four were operationally ready and 10 activated.* Further helicopter expansion planned for 1972 was to amount to almost half the final authorized VNAF force structure of 1,300 aircraft.

(C) Because of the helicopter priority, 1970 was a period of limited expansion for the VNAF fighter force. Thus, 791 helicopter pilots were trained compared to only 42 fighter pilots. The reason was the familiar one: not enough personnel with the skills to meet the need. Similarly, helicopter maintenance priorities produced a shortage in fighter maintenance personnel. Although the planned VNAF expansion called for more fighters as well as other fixed-wing aircraft, most of these requirements could not be met in 1970. The VNAF fighter force received additional equipment and gained much experience, but they did not get the necessary additional personnel.

(C) At the beginning of 1970 the VNAF had one AC-47 gunship squadron with 18 assigned aircraft. A second gunship squadron with AC-119G's, was not to be activated until September 1971. As a preparatory step, however, plans were made for integrating VNAF air crews into the USAF 17th Special Operations Squadron at Phan Rang AB for combat training in early 1971. The VNAF fixed-wing airlift force consisted in January 1970 of one squadron of 16 C-119's and one squadron of 16 C-47's, each authorized 20 crews. No squadrons were added to the airlift force in 1970, but personnel and organizational changes were made and some training undertaken in preparation for the two C-123 squadrons and one AC-119 squadron to be activated in 1971, with others to follow in 1972.

*For a complete breakdown of all VNAF forces at the end of 1970, see Fig. 14.

~~SECRET~~**COMPOSITION OF VIETNAM AIR FORCE**

(1 Jan 1971)

<u>Type Aircraft</u>	<u>Total Authorized Sqs/Acft</u>	<u>Squadrons Currently Activated</u>	<u>Squadrons Operationally Ready</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Helicopters				Last activation June 72 Last O/R Mar 73.
UH-1	16/496	10	4	Last Activation May 72 Last O/R Feb 73.
CH-47	2/32	1	0	To convert to UH-1 Jun 72.
H-34	0/0	1	1	
Fighter Attack				
F-5	1/18	1	1	
A-1	4/96	3	2	Last activation Nov 72 Last O/R May 73.
A-37	6/144	5	3	Last activation Oct 72 Last O/R Apr 73.
Gunships				
AC-47	1/18	1	1	
AC-119	1/18	0	0	Activation Sep 71 O/R May 72.
Liaison Composite				
O-1/U-17	8/256	5	4	Last activation Dec 72 Last O/R May 73.
Recon Composite EC-47				
RC-47, U-6,				
RF-5	1/27	1	1	
EC-47	1/20	0	0	Activation Dec 72 O/R May 73.
Transport				
C-47	1/16	1	1	
C-119	1/16	1	1	
C-123	2/48	0	0	Last Activation Jul 71 Last O/R Apr 72.
C-7	2/48	0	0	Last activation Jun 72 Last O/R Mar 73.

Fig 14

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Operations

(S) The Air Force had from the start put great emphasis on air operations in the VNAF I&M program and most USAF observers acknowledged that South Vietnamese pilots and crewmen alike were very effective. The pilots were considered especially proficient at putting ordnance on target.* The VNAF still had its operational weaknesses in night and bad weather flying, helicopter operations, flying hour management, safety consciousness and air liaison, but these problems were all worked on during 1970. Since the AFGP particularly stressed improving VNAF night and all-weather capability, a night flying training program was begun. It included instrument training, flare techniques, and training in "Combat Skyspot" operations--a radar controlled method for delivering ordnance. The latter made use of SAC MSQ⁺77 radar sites, but since SAC planned to remove these from South Vietnam, the AFGP requested a substitute system that could be given to the VNAF. This was not decided on until May 1971, when the Beacon Only Bombing System (BOBS) was selected.¹⁵

(C) The VNAF made considerable progress towards taking over the Tactical Air Control system during 1970, with its Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) and Direct Air Support Centers (DASC's) increasingly assuming responsibility for the air war. By March, Military Region 4 was completely Vietnamized, with USAF personnel in an advisory capacity only. VNAF experience was built up through the rest of the year to where, by mid-1971, they would assume control of the TACC and all DASC's except that in Military Region 1. The weakest area in the system was in the Air Liaison Officer (ALO) and FAC functions. To correct the first, experienced field grade officers were assigned as ALO's for a one to two-year tour. To further the FAC training program,

*A USAF officer (unidentified) with 19 years of service said, "The Vietnamese pilots cannot be surpassed. Time and time again I've watched them drop precisely where the FAC directed. And in this kind of war, where allied and enemy troops are often separated by only a few yards, absolute precision is required." [News release #3800, Seventh Air Force, Feb 71.]

⁺MSQ: mobile special-purpose ground-based radar guidance bombing system.

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VNAF FAC's were trained to direct USAF strikes. It was anticipated that by mid-1971 the VNAF would have the capability to control all USAF and VNAF air strikes in South Vietnam.¹⁶

(S) The main proof of VNAF effectiveness, however, lay in its combat record. By the end of 1970, it was flying about 50 percent of the total strike sorties in SVN. From January 1969 to the early months of 1971, its role in air operations had quadrupled (see Figure 15). In supporting Cambodian ground operations in 1970-71, the VNAF flew more than 40 percent of the total USAF and VNAF attack sorties. Moreover, the planning for air support of battalion-sized ARVN forces deployed in Cambodia--which included interdiction, close air support and troop lift--was done almost wholly by the Vietnamese. During May and June 1970, while U.S. ground troops were committed, the VNAF flew 2,897 attack sorties compared to the USAF's 8,579, but when only ARVN troops were left in Cambodia, the VNAF's proportion of sorties rose. In December, with the enemy threatening the town of Kompong Chom, the VNAF on short notice planned and executed its part in operation "Eagle Jump" to relieve enemy pressure there. This involved a movement of troops and supplies from Tan Son Nhut AB and Thien Ngon AB to Kampong Cham airfield, with resupply for the 2-week operation. Using mainly C-47's and C-119's of Tan Son Nhut's 33d Wing, along with some helicopters from Military Regions 3 and 4, the VNAF moved 3,200 troops and 2 million pounds of cargo.¹⁷ The USAF Advisory Group reported "they did a truly professional job."¹⁸ Even the JCS agreed that VNAF operations in Cambodia "were conducted with competence and professionalism" and that "VNAF combat operations performance equals that of similar U.S. units."¹⁹

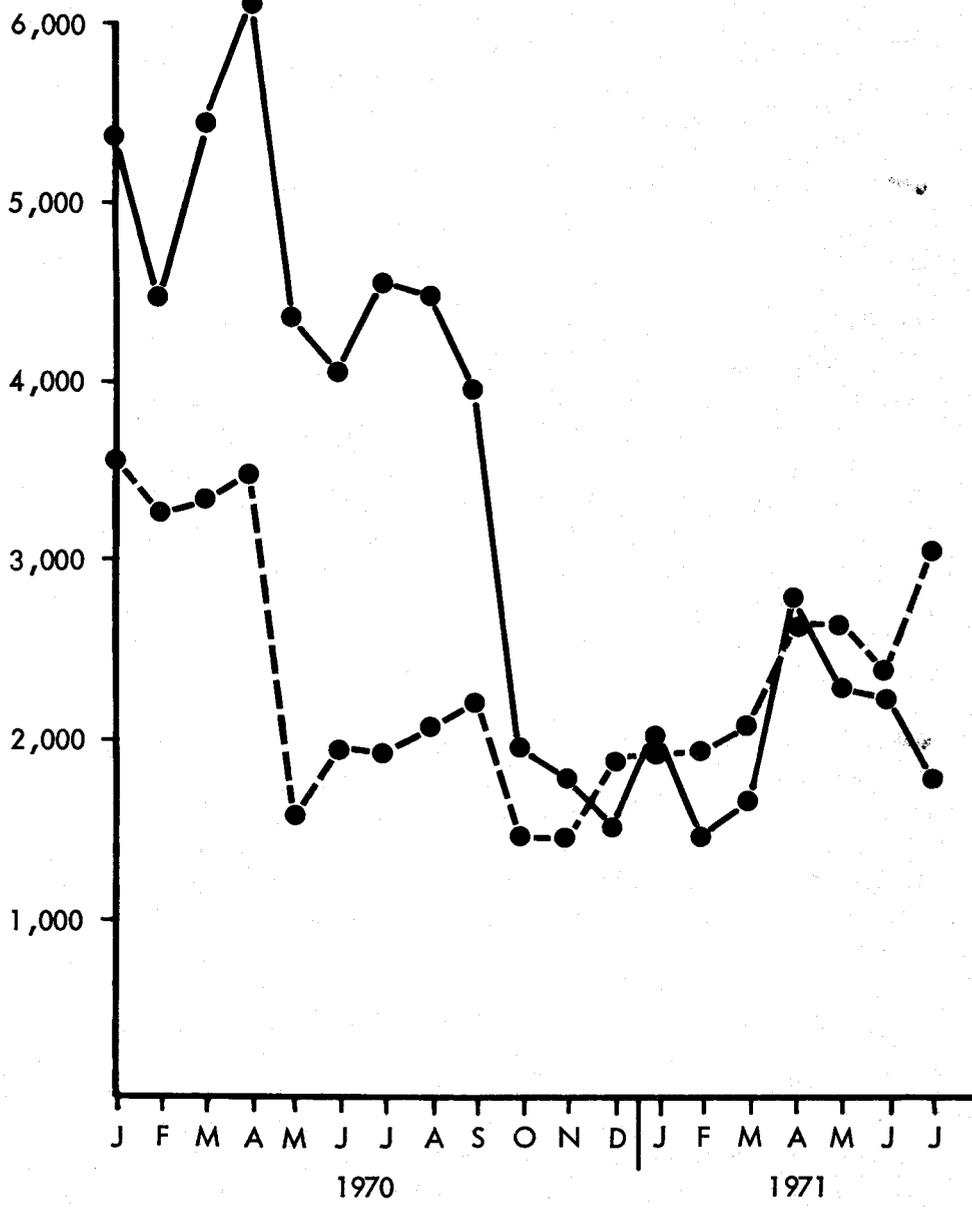
(U) On the other hand, the very fact of intensified VNAF operations in Cambodia meant some training programs and operations in South Vietnam and Laos had to slow down correspondingly. It was like robbing Peter to pay Paul. Their limited manpower and aviation skills remained a stubborn restraint.

(S) Beyond these built-in limitations was the question of what kind of a role the future VNAF could and should have. The VNAF itself, particularly under the leadership of Gen. Nguyen Cao Ky, was eager to play a stronger role. The fact that Secretaries Laird and Packard and other defense planners continued

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USAF ATTACK SORTIES AND VNAF STRIKE SORTIES

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 1970-71



SOURCE: 7AF COMMAND STATUS BOOK
DEC 1970 AND JUN 1971

USAF ———
VNAF - - - -

Fig 15

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to increase the VNAF's operational role so as to be able to diminish that of U.S. air, tended to support this view. The JCS and the Air Force were less optimistic. Mere numbers of VNAF or other allied sorties, they insisted, did not add up to the same number of U.S. sorties. Limitations in range, ordnance, survivability, and response of allied aircraft brought corresponding losses in military potential (see pp 45-47).

☛ Much of the question about the future VNAF hinged on how the war progressed, how long U.S. air power would continue to play a major role in it, and how long the latter remained in Southeast Asia, especially Thailand. While it was desirable to give South Vietnam an increasingly strong air role, it was certainly not desirable--or possible--to have them simply take over and carry on the current U.S. air mission. Certain functions the VNAF could never assume, such as B-52 operations, which had come to play such a significant role during the wind-down of U.S. ground operations. It was also unanimously agreed that the VNAF should not assume interdiction functions that would permit South Vietnam to bomb North Vietnam on its own. Thus, although their gunships had an out-of-country interdiction capability, Vietnamization plans did not provide for the VNAF taking on this responsibility.

☛ On the other hand, the VNAF should be able to defend South Vietnam from attack by North Vietnam. This was a legitimate mission. It was a question of how much. President Thieu included a request for two air defense interceptor squadrons on 12 January when he submitted to MACV his plans for improving South Vietnamese forces. He asked for either F-4's or F-5's, but argued for the latter because VNAF A-37's could not fight MIG's.²⁰ The JCS Phase III plan of 29 January said South Vietnam would not have a meaningful air defense capability by 1 July 1973 and assumed U.S. air would continue to fulfill this mission until then. However, the JCS said the matter of eventually providing the VNAF this capability was under study in conjunction with plans to develop an international fighter.²¹ Although the VNAF in effect did some air defense training in 1970, it was not until 1971 that they were authorized the F-5E interceptor squadron, to be activated in FY 74.²²

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(TS) Finally--and tied in with the duration of the U.S. air role--was the question of how much sophisticated equipment the VNAF should have. Aside from the South Vietnamese, who in general were eager for modern equipment, there were some differences of opinion. Secretary Laird told the JCS on 13 January that he was in complete agreement with Sir Robert Thompson,* who insisted that the RVNAF be equipped "in strict keeping with its needs and capabilities," i.e., with no sophisticated equipment provided unless absolutely essential. Sir Robert felt that many U.S. facilities and related equipment being turned over to the RVNAF might be too complex and sophisticated for them to use effectively. Secretary Laird said the overall goal of the I&M program continued to be "development of self-sufficient South Vietnamese forces tailored for their own environment,"²³ and he consistently reaffirmed this position. Secretary Seamans shared these views. As he wrote to Deputy Secretary Packard, "our entire philosophy for VNAF modernization is geared to the constraints imposed by limited manpower, the need to avoid sophisticated equipment, and the difficulties of English language training." He had had an Air Staff group study the air functions currently performed in Vietnam, with a view toward continuing only those absolutely essential for the VNAF. All the studies had stressed the need for weapon system simplicity, both in operational equipment and maintainability. His conversations with the Commander, Seventh Air Force, had reflected the latter's determination to follow this same concept.²⁴ Secretary of State Rogers, in his April comments on the Phase III plan, was of the same opinion. He said he assumed that full consideration would be given to "the organic limitations of SVN to assimilate and maintain complex and sophisticated equipment." He added that he was somewhat disturbed to note that "JCS feel every mission now being performed by U.S. forces would be assumed by Vietnamese forces;" and wondered if this could be a realistic assumption.²⁵

(TS) It was true that the Joint Chiefs tended to see VNAF needs as an extension of current U.S. operations in the face of continuing enemy threats. But they were only complying with Secretary Laird's own injunction on Phase III planning to address an RVNAF force structure that "would assure at least current

*British guerrilla warfare expert.

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levels of security."^{*26} This explained why the JCS always argued for maintaining a strong U.S. air role as long as possible and to some extent saw the VNAF--sometime in the future--as carrying on that role. Thus, their Phase III plan said there was "a potential requirement" to provide the VNAF modernized, versatile aircraft with both air-to-ground and air-to-air capability. When the International Fighter⁺ became available, the F-5 squadron presently in the VNAF could be converted to provide this improved capability. They also recommended that a "prime effort" be made to give them an in-country capability for the Market Time[‡] air surveillance mission if feasible - even though this meant introducing into the VNAF inventory a "relatively sophisticated aircraft such as the S-2, with its supply and logistic support problems."²⁷

~~(S)~~ Dr. John S. Foster, Jr., Director of Defense Research and Engineering, seemed to favor providing further technological refinements to the South Vietnamese forces. In his 7 March review of the Phase III plan, he noted that we must "recognize the unique obligations associated with withdrawing from a war still in progress." He intended, despite increasing budget constraints, to continue supporting R&D expenditures in all the RVNAF problem areas, including night air support capabilities, palletized gunship night attack, surveillance, and target acquisition. He cautioned against automatic acceptance of older equipment for transfer to the South Vietnamese--it was often old fashioned, had poor reliability, outmoded training manuals, and no continuing source of spare parts. His recommendations included:

Consider giving VNAF existing U-6s or U-8s for airborne radio direction finding (ARDF), and simplified EC-47s for Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) - if VNAF demonstrates adequate technical capability to handle this role.

*Secretary Rogers' comments had alluded to this, noting that it diverged from earlier planning assumptions, such as NSSM 36, which assumed a tolerable degree of degradation in security as Vietnamization proceeded.

⁺The F-5E, an advanced version of the F-5 (Freedom Fighter) aircraft, designed to give South Vietnam, South Korea, Taiwan and other allies a capability to counter the MIG-21.

[‡]Coastal surveillance of SVN.

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As partial substitute for B-52 bombing, have VNAF drop Navy CBU-55s from their A-1s or accept Bannish Beach* type incendiary operations from VNAF transport aircraft.

Try to build the current Tight Jaw⁺ program into a more effective border surveillance and infiltration control system, operable by native forces on the ground within SVN.

Consider Army's new Vulcan system to satisfy the South Vietnamese desire for some token air defense capability against dual purpose AAA guns.²⁸

(S) Within the Air Staff, too, the technological experts tended to want to provide more of their expertise to the VNAF. Brig. Gen. William J. Evans, Special Assistant for Sensor Exploitation, regretted that MACV's 25 March recommendations to CINCPAC "unequivocally relegated" VNAF sensor operations to a support role, with ARVN implanting sensors from helicopters. He felt Vietnamization efforts were too much oriented to the ground commanders' use of sensors in his area of operations, while the interdiction problem was largely neglected. There was a legitimate requirement for VNAF to have at least a modest Igloo White[‡] kind of air-supported sensor system, particularly for use in northern RVN. Hence in an upcoming visit to SEA in June he intended to pursue further with both MACV and Seventh Air Force the question of VNAF involvement in sensor seeding, airborne relay, ground assessment, and strike reaction.²⁹

(S) The dilemma of keeping the VNAF "simple" and at the same time maintaining security was pointed out in a paper forwarded to Secretary Seamans by Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force Harry Davis. He said the "current levels of

* (S) C-130 pallets of fuel oil dropped to achieve area denial; these were ignited by smoke grenades.

⁺Plan to "Vietnamize" the U.S. Army sensor program.

[‡]Surveillance system consisting of air-delivered sensors, relay aircraft, and an infiltration surveillance center.

security" referred to by Laird should be defined, and the Air Force should then compare the capabilities it was recommending for the VNAF with those its own forces now needed for this. He felt all this should be examined in order to determine what effect the lack of Igloo White sensors, LORAN, good ARDF,* the better gunship capability and guided bombs--all of which we were denying the VNAF--would have on security. He asked: Can fewer forces, with less sophisticated equipment provide the present level? He thought it might be prudent to look at "the capabilities the VNAF must have to remain a viable operating force" and how well forces and equipment could provide these. "We might discover," Davis said, "some weaknesses or identify areas where external assistance is required, either to prevent a catastrophic failure or reduce the danger thereof. We might find it necessary to warn Secretary Laird and indicate how to minimize the possibility of a setback."30

Summary

(U) In 1970 the President continued to pursue his twin aims of Vietnamization and negotiations and to use air power to help him achieve them. But as he began to perceive that Vietnamization might not be able to keep pace with the rate of U.S. withdrawals, he sought to bridge the gap by an intensive effort to intimidate the enemy and to destroy his forces and supplies before they could be brought to bear in South Vietnam. He did this by applying air strikes for political purposes and by extending the geographic area of air interdiction--into Cambodia and back into North Vietnam. Thus, the role of air power, though slated for reductions, continued to be emphasized. The fact that Vietnamization plans went on concurrently with the stepped-up enemy infiltration moves meant, however, that the Air Force almost continuously faced a dilemma. On the one hand, it had to address itself to the cutback debates and decisions, while on the other, circumstances required it--as the remaining strong U.S. weapon--to counter the new enemy efforts all over Indochina.

(U) The chief apostle of Vietnamization and budget cutting continued in 1970 to be Secretary Laird, who favored trying to Vietnamize the air war as much as possible and cutting back on

*Airborne radio direction finding.

expensive tactical air sorties. While the JCS and at times even the State Department made earnest and repeated pleas against cutting air resources, the Secretary's answer was always patient but firm; budget considerations, especially as determined by the mood of Congress and the U.S. public, dictated the cutbacks. He took a more optimistic view of the threat than did the JCS and throughout the year tried very hard to keep to plans for Vietnamization and for furthering negotiations. In mid-summer, when the JCS pointed to strong enemy action in northeastern Cambodia and southern Laos and suggested further U.S. counter-moves into Laos and Cambodia and even North Vietnam, Secretary Laird deferred decision and emphasized the need to concentrate on activities inside South Vietnam. He emphasized the importance of a negotiated settlement and didn't think "escalatory acts on our part" was the way to get it. In general, Secretary Laird received strong support from elements of OSD, CIA, and at times, the State Department, which also saw Vietnamization, not increased force, as the solution. Especially in the interdiction and gunship debates, they stressed cutting back the forces for further war potential--the U.S. air strike forces.

(U) The Air Force's dilemma was illustrated by the fact that even when he directed cutbacks, Secretary Laird always stipulated that capabilities had to be retained for emergencies--"surge" capabilities, for example. More than once he admitted to the JCS that he knew he was asking them for a tall order. But during the latter part of the year, the defense chief's "positive," optimistic positions were eroded more and more by increasingly strong enemy initiatives. Correspondingly, the JCS insistence on countering these moves, as well as possible later ones, intensified and Presidential agreement with the JCS turned the tide in favor of a greatly expanded air interdiction effort.

(U) Not surprisingly, the Air Force, was often torn in different directions by its Southeast Asia activities in 1970. The other services were cutting back their SEA commitments drastically and could devote their money and efforts to neglected future force planning. But Air Force commitments continued instead to increase, including demands for development of new technologies and equipment to address the continuing air war. There was scant possibility for concentrating on its future needs and no real corresponding appropriations increase. Told to

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"do more with less," the Air Force tried very hard to do so, while carrying an increasingly larger share of the war effort. It also was in the center of disputes over the use of the air weapon itself. The CIA, State Department, and the U.S. Ambassador to Laos insisted on one strategy and force mix for air operations in northern Laos; the JCS and the Air Force argued for another. The Air Force and the JCS agreed on the worth of the interdiction strategy; Systems Analysis and the CIA tried strenuously to prove the opposite. The Strategic Air Command, concerned with its primary strategic mission and wanting to cut back B-52 forces in Southeast Asia, won brief skirmishes for its viewpoints but was almost always overridden by the JCS and "higher authority."

(U) Despite the conflicts and differences of opinion over how to proceed, the final determining factors were two: the enemy's unyielding aggressiveness, and the Presidential decisions to use increased air to buy time and hold the enemy at bay so that Vietnamization and U.S. withdrawal programs could continue.

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GLOSSARY

AAA	Antiaircraft artillery
AFCVD	Special Assistant for Sensor Exploitation (Hq USAF)
AFGP	Air Force Advisory Group
AFLC	Air Force Logistics Command
AFSC	Air Force Systems Command
ALC	Air Logistics Command (Vietnam)
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
Arc Light	B-52 operations in Southeast Asia
ARDF	airborne radio direction finding
ASSS	Air Staff Summary Sheet
Banish Beach	C-130 pallets of fuel oil dropped to achieve area denial. Ignited by smoke grenades.
Barrel Roll	Strike area for sorties flown in northern Laos
BDA	Bomb damage assessment
BOBS	Beacon Only Bombing System
CAS	close air support
CBU	cluster bomb unit
CHECO	Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations (Hq PACAF)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific Command
CINCPACAF	Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Forces
CINCSAC	Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command
Combat Skyspot	(S) MSQ-77 and SST-181 controlled bombing missions in Steel Tiger, Route Package 1, and South Vietnam
COMUSMACV	U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONUS	Continental United States
CSAFM	Chief of Staff Air Force Memorandum
CVA	attack aircraft carrier
DASC	Direct Air Support Center
DASK	Drift Angle Station Keeping
DDR&E	Director of Defense Research and Engineering (Department of Defense)

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DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency (Department of Defense)
DITT	Directorate of Targets, Tango Division (Seventh Air Force)
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DOD	Department of Defense
FAC	Forward Air Controller
FAG	Forward Air Guide
FMFPAC	Fleet Marine Force Pacific
Freedom Deal	Interdiction campaign in Cambodia (May-Jun 1970)
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
GPO	Government Printing Office
I&M	Improvement and Modernization
Igloo White	Surveillance system consisting of air-delivered sensors, relay aircraft, and an infiltration surveillance center
ISA	International Security Affairs (Department of Defense)
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSM	Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum
LGB	laser-guided bombs
LOC	lines of communication
LORAN	long-range navigation
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MASF	Military Assistance Service Funded
MSQ	mobile special-purpose ground-based radar guidance bombing system
MTT	Mobile Training Teams
NOA	new obligating authority
NSA	National Security Agency
NSDM	National Security Defense Memorandum
NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum
NVN	North Vietnam

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Ops	operations
Pave Sword Paveway	laser-seeking pod for the F-4 F-4 aircraft using either laser, electro-optical, or infrared devices for guidance
PBD	program budget decision
PDJ	Plaine des Jarres, Laos
Proj	project
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
Raven	USAF FACs in Laos (usually with a Lao observer aboard) under the direct control of the Air Attache, Laos
RLAF	Royal Laotian Air Force
RLG	Royal Laotian Government
ROC	required operational capability
Rolling Thunder	air strikes against selected targets and LOCs in NVN (Mar 1965-Oct 1968)
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SA	Systems Analysis
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SAR	search and rescue
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence
SIOP	Strategic Integrated Operations Plan
SL	Steel Tiger operating area in Southern Laos
SMP	special munitions package
Snakeye	bomb fin structure used to provide high-drag ballistics
Surprise Package	Advanced AC-130A gunship provided with special equipment for improved offensive and survival capabilities
SVN	South Vietnam
TACC	Tactical Air Control Center
Tight Jaw	plan to "Vietnamize" the U.S. Army sensor program

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USARV

U. S. Army in Vietnam

VNAF

Vietnamese Air Force

VSSG

Vietnam Special Studies Group
(Office of the President)

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