

Total Casualties

1. Preliminary estimates of casualties for the first four months of 1967 demonstrate the stepped-up rate of the Rolling Thunder program. The monthly casualty rate increased from an average of 2,200 during 1966 to 3,000 in the first four months of 1967. The markedly greater number of armed reconnaissance strikes in heavily populated Route Package IV (which includes the cities of Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh and Thanh Hoa) were chiefly responsible for an increase in the casualty/sortie ratio from .33 in 1966 to .41 in January-April 1967. In addition, the fixed targets selected for initial strikes during this period were situated in heavily defended areas of greater civilian population density. A breakdown of total casualties for 1965, 1966 and the first four months of 1967 is shown in the following tabulation:

Estimated Casualties, North Vietnam  
1965 - April 1967

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>Jan-April 1967</u>	<u>Total</u>
Civilians				
Fixed Targets	2,000	900	400	3,300
Armed Reconnaissance	4,000	18,100	8,700	30,800
Subtotal	6,000	19,000	9,100	34,100
Military				
Fixed Targets	4,300	400	900	5,600
Armed Reconnaissance	2,900	7,300	2,000	12,200
Subtotal	7,200	7,700	2,900	17,800
Total	<u>13,200</u>	<u>26,700</u>	<u>12,000</u>	<u>51,900</u>

2.

it is estimated that about 40 percent of the total casualties -- about 21,000 -- are killed. The total casualties have undoubtedly had some disruptive effect on North Vietnam. This number of casualties to military action is small, however, in relation to a total population of over 18 million. The impact of these casualties, particularly of the number killed, seems even smaller when compared with the annual total in North Vietnam of some 350,000 natural deaths, and the annual number of accidental deaths <sup>which</sup> exceeds the deaths resulting from Rolling Thunder program.

Composition of Casualties

3. The composition of casualties resulting from air attack underwent a radical change during 1966 as the Rolling Thunder program changed from one emphasizing attacks on fixed targets, which are predominantly military, to an armed reconnaissance program. During 1966 armed reconnaissance attacks accounted for 95 percent of total casualties, compared with 52 percent in 1965. In the first four months of 1967 armed reconnaissance accounted for 89 percent of total casualties, its decreasing share reflecting some of the renewed emphasis on attacking fixed targets in the past two months.

4. The emphasis on armed reconnaissance and the extension of the Rolling Thunder program against targets in more heavily defended and densely populated areas has increased the share of civilian casualties. During 1965, for example, civilians accounted for only

45 percent of total casualties. During 1966 they accounted for 71 percent of the total and in the first four months of 1967 they accounted for 76 percent of total casualties.

5. The preponderance of civilian casualties resulting from the acceleration of armed reconnaissance has in large measure involved those civilians working on military targets or directly engaged in the maintenance and operation of the logistics system which moves supplies and personnel into Laos and South Vietnam. Hence, it is heavily weighted with transport repair crews, truck drivers, and personnel operating logistic craft on the rivers.

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Casualty Estimates and North Vietnamese Claims

7. The estimates of casualties resulting from the bombing of North Vietnam are subject to unknown and conceivably large margins

of error. Information from Hanoi generally has been of little value in estimating casualties. Two recent reports, however, make us reasonably confident that our estimates are of the right order of magnitude. The first report, a detailed statement from Hanoi, "Report of US War Crimes in Nam Din City," released a number of statistics and allegations concerning the US bombing of Nam Dinh during 1965-1966. The information presented in this report seemed to be accurate when measured against detailed studies made on the basis of post-strike photography. The casualties claimed by the North Vietnamese were also consistent with independent casualty estimates made by this Agency and using Nam Dinh as a pilot study.

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8. The North Vietnamese government has consistently charged that the US air offensive is directly aimed at populated centers and non-military targets. The Communists have implied that civilian casualties are inordinately high, but they have never released official figures on total civilian casualties. While the validity

of propaganda claims is difficult to assess, tallies of specific claims appear to be well below total US estimates. There is a wide variety of first-hand reports on the accuracy of the bombings in the Hanoi-Haiphong area

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These reports have consistently provided evidence of the generally precise volume of the air strikes as well as information indicating that civilian casualties from these air strikes have been low.

9. Hanoi propagandists have released hundreds of specific claims of civilian casualties since the beginning of the Rolling Thunder campaign. Confirmation or refutation of these specific claims is made difficult by the vague and generalized manner in which they are expressed. In many cases, even the specific geographic area of the attack cannot be identified. Some of the propaganda claims are obvious fabrications -- an outstanding example is the Communist claim of 1,883 US aircraft downed over North Vietnam from the beginning of the US attacks thru 11 May 1967. During that period, actual US losses due to both operational malfunctions and hostile action were only 619 aircraft. Other instances have been noted of high civilian casualties reported in areas where the US has not conducted air operations.

10. Some propaganda claims appear to be quite accurate. The statistical information concerning damage to civilian areas in the North Vietnamese "Report of US War Crimes in Nam Dinh City" was remarkably close to estimates based on post-strike photography.

The Nam Dinh statement claimed that air attacks killed or wounded 494 persons from early 1965 to September 20, 1966. An application of the methodologies derived by US intelligence to the air strikes flown against targets in Nam Dinh yielded casualty estimates ranging from a minimum of 320 to a maximum of 690 with the probable number being 480 casualties.

11. The Hanoi press has reported "more than 100 capital residents killed and wounded" as a result of the 13-14 December 1966 air attacks on the nearby Yen Vien Railroad Classification Yard (JCS 19) and the Van Dien Vehicle Depot (JCS 63.11). An intensive analysis [redacted] tends

to substantiate this claim. Photography reveals approximately 250 buildings destroyed in the Phuc Than area immediately south of the Doumer bridge; the destruction appears to have been caused mainly by fire rather than multiple bomb blasts. The fires could have been caused by US rockets or even North Vietnamese air defense weapons falling back into civilian areas. Additionally, 10 buildings were destroyed or heavily damaged at the west end of the Doumer bridge on Nguyen Thiep Street. Heavy damage to the North Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions is confirmed [redacted]

Based on accepted intelligence methodologies, a maximum of 240 casualties would have been estimated as the result of the 13-14 December attacks. However, the effective civil defense procedures followed in North Vietnam, the fact that there was probably ample warning of the attack means that the actual casualties were well below 240

and probably close to the number claimed by Hanoi. Eighteen of a list of 23 other specific North Vietnamese propaganda claims concerning civilian casualties, could be checked by photographic analysis. Of these only three could be confirmed with certainty and one could be ~~xxx~~ tentatively confirmed. Three of the claims could not be supported by photography. Photography for the remaining 11 claims showed damage outside the immediate target areas, but it was not possible to identify the existence of the buildings or institutions claimed by Hanoi to have been attacked.

12. Comparison of a tally of specific casualty claims made in Hanoi news media with the total US casualty estimate suggests that these claims are not entirely unreasonable. A study of all the specific North Vietnamese propaganda claims made by the Hanoi radio and press during the first quarter of 1967 resulted in a tally of 764 civilian casualties. For the same quarter of 1967, CIA has estimated that 6,300 North Vietnamese civilians were casualties of the US air strikes -- over 8 times the number specifically claimed by Hanoi. However, Hanoi presumably does not announce all casualties and would certainly not release total numbers to the population. Many claims do not give specific numbers and speak only of "numerous" or "many" civilian casualties. They are excluded from this tally.