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Comments on St. Louis Post Dispatch Article,
"Intelligence Agency Calls Bombing of North Vietnam a
Political (and) Military Failure," dated 23 Dec. 1966

1. This article, written by a Washington correspondent of the Dispatch, Richard Dufman, purports to be based on the latest CIA-DIA evaluation of the effects of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam. The findings of this evaluation are stated to be:

a. The bombing has failed to accomplish its major objective -- to inflict sufficient punishment on North Vietnam to persuade it to stop supporting the war in the South or ask for peace talks.

b. The air attacks have failed to impede significantly the flow of men and supplies from the North to the South; the raids are an inconvenience rather than an obstacle to infiltration.

c. While "administration officials" have emphasized that the bombing ties up hundreds of thousands of men in repair work to maintain l.o.c.'s and also suggest the raids limit the rate of infiltration, the joint survey minimizes the burden of the reconstruction effort and the impact of the bombing on the rate of infiltration.

d. Monthly rates of infiltration were 1,500 in February 1965, rose to 4,500 by the end of 1965, and averaged between 6,400 and 8,500 in the January-July 1966 period. More recently, infiltration apparently has decreased, but we are not certain of this.

2. Our comments on the Dispatch's article are as follows:

a. The periodic CIA-DIA joint evaluation of the air campaign entitled, An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam, is primarily a detailed monthly review of the effect of current strikes against targets in North Vietnam. It does not make unqualified judgments such as "The bombing has failed to accomplish its major purpose."

The U.S. air campaign has been a carefully controlled means of gradual escalation to achieve strictly

limited objectives. Consequently, the program has operated under a set of firmly defined ground rules which have limited both the choice of targets and the areas to be bombed. The latest published joint CIA-DIA evaluation (December 1966) concluded:

"The cumulative effects of the U.S. air strikes continue to limit the North Vietnamese capability for overt aggression. However, North Vietnam retains its capability to continue to support activities in South Vietnam and Laos to present or increased combat levels and force structures."

b. The judgment that the flow of men and supplies has been essentially unimpeded agrees with CIA-DIA appraisals. The Dispatch article implies that "administration officials" are in error in stating that reconstruction of bomb damage ties up several hundred thousand men. On the contrary, it is agreed by CIA and DIA that 200,000 to 300,000 workers have been diverted to repair and dispersal programs. This diversion has been characterized by CIA and DIA as a major effect of the bombing, not an "inconvenience or annoyance."

c. The article's estimate of numbers infiltrated in 1966 are somewhat lower than intelligence estimates; CIA-DIA figures range from 7,400 to 10,300 a month through July compared with the Dispatch's 6,400 to 8,800. Further, the intelligence view now generally accepts the probability of a fall-off of infiltration in the latter part of 1966. The "time lag in identifying" thesis is not considered an adequate explanation for the recent decline in NVA forces moving South.

3. Finally, the statement that the U.S. Air Force does most of the current appraisal of the effects of the air campaign against North Vietnam is not true. Within the Department of Defense, the DIA has the primary responsibility.

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