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19 March 1966

No. 0795/66

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**INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM**

**AN APPRAISAL OF THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM**

**DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE**

DIA review(s) completed.

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No. 0795/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
19 March 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

An Appraisal of the Bombing  
of North Vietnam\*

SUMMARY

Since the resumption of air strikes on 31 January, US efforts have been restricted primarily to armed reconnaissance missions against the transportation and logistic networks in the southern half of North Vietnam. It is estimated that the strikes thus far have had little appreciable effect in reducing either the capacity of roads leading to Laos or South Vietnam or the high volume of goods moving into and through southern North Vietnam. Hanoi has been forced, however, to expend large quantities of manpower and materiel to keep lines of communication open. It has also been forced to revert to nighttime operations in areas under attack.

There are still no political indications that Hanoi has given up its determination fully to support the insurgents in South Vietnam with men and materiel. There are signs, however, that the cumulative effects of the bombings probably have contributed to difficulties in implementing and interpreting party and government directives. Popular morale has not deteriorated to an extent which would cause the regime to change its policies.

On the economic side, the renewal of air strikes has had little adverse effect on the economy as a whole, primarily because attacks against economically important targets have been limited and other Communist countries have greatly increased their assistance to North Vietnam.

\*This memorandum is CIA's issuance of a joint CIA-DIA study prepared monthly.

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have reverted to night operations and employment of small convoys in contrast to the full-time operations and large convoys during the pause. Work groups are being hindered by bombing and strafing, and are reluctant to work in areas where delayed-action bombs have been dropped.

4. Rail lines from Hanoi to Thai Nguyen, Dong Dang and Haiphong continue to be operational. The Hanoi-Lao Cai line was attacked beginning 3 March and reports indicate that several bridges were damaged or destroyed. The Hanoi-Vinh line is probably operational as far south as Thanh Hoa with segments south of Thanh Hoa being used by shuttling and transshipping operations around interdictions. The 45-mile section between Duc Tho and Tan Ap near Mu Gia Pass remains in use by shuttling and transshipping around interdictions. Construction is continuing on a new rail line between the Thai Nguyen iron and steel complex and Kep, which will serve as an alternate route to Thai Nguyen and the Hanoi area in the event that the Hanoi-Dong Dang line were interdicted south of Kep.

5. Strikes against waterways have been concentrated generally on routes near the coast and south of Vinh. Although no JCS inland waterway targets have been struck since the resumption of the strikes, attacks on waterway craft are estimated to have caused minor reductions in the efficiency of inland waterway transport operations. Although the port of Ben Thuy was struck twice during this period, no new significant damage has been noted. A considerable volume of coastal traffic between Haiphong (and possibly China) and Ben Thuy and other southern ports has been observed since the beginning of the year, with the port of Ben Thuy apparently working at a high level of activity. New orders for barges, a high level of domestic construction of barges, and numerous sightings of coastal traffic along the southern coast of the NVN all tend to indicate that an effective water supply route links Haiphong with Military Region IV.

6. Although the strikes have achieved some reduction in the capacities of the LOC system and are making operations more difficult and costly, the ability of NVN to support activities in Laos and SVN

-3-

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with men and materiel at current levels has not been significantly affected. They have, however, reduced the capability of North Vietnam to support a sustained overt attack against South Vietnam. To date the air strikes do not appear to have significantly affected the morale of the armed forces or to have reduced their capabilities for operations in North Vietnam, including air operations.

#### Political and Public Reactions

7. Political indications from North Vietnam since the renewal of the bombings on 31 January point to a continuing determination to support fully the insurgents in South Vietnam with men and materiel. On 15 February, for example, Hanoi Radio broadcast a congratulatory message to the Viet Cong armed forces on their fifth anniversary which pledged that the North Vietnamese will continue to "give wholehearted and all-out support to the revolution in South Vietnam in all fields and will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Viet Cong in fighting against allied forces."

8. The renewal of the US air strikes against the NVN does not appear to have appreciably disrupted the NVN leadership's ability to control and command the war effort either at home or in the South, or to have raised new issues. There are signs, however, that the cumulative effects of the bombings probably have contributed to difficulties in implementing and interpreting party and government directives related to the war effort. An example of these difficulties appeared in an unusually candid article by Politburo member Le Duc Tho in the party daily of 3 and 4 February. In reviewing the difficulties encountered by the North Vietnamese party leadership during the past year, Tho leveled some serious charges against a "number of comrades" for failing to follow the Central Committee's policies on the war and for failing "to realize clearly the deceptive peace negotiations plot of the enemy." Tho failed to threaten any drastic retaliation against these elements--suggesting that they do not currently pose a threat to the regime. It is probable that the party members under attack are in the middle-level bureaucracy. Such individuals have been one main target of similar rebukes in the past by Le Duc Tho and other NVN Politburo members.

-4-

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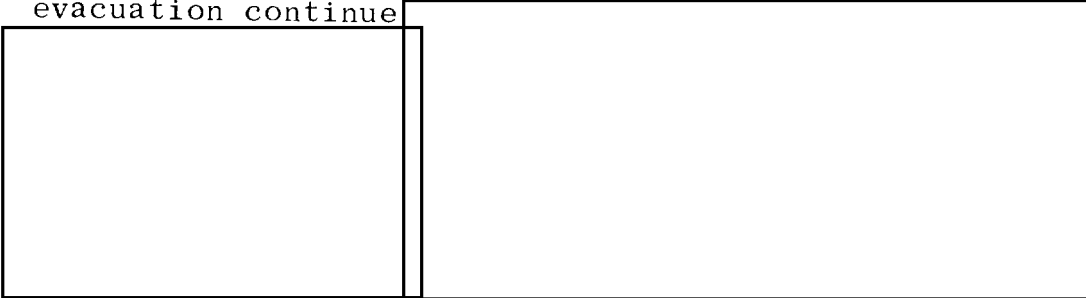
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9. It appears that the bombing raids have not caused popular morale to deteriorate to an extent which would effect a change in the policies of the regime. Difficulties in the distribution of food and supplies, as well as problems of dislocation and evacuation continue

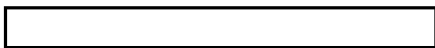


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Effects on the NVN Economy

10. The renewed air attacks against North Vietnam have had little adverse effect on the economy as a whole. The cumulative economic effects of the air strikes have not been crippling because (1) bombing of economically important targets has been limited and only a few have been put out of operation for critical lengths of time, (2) the predominance of a largely self-sufficient subsistence sector which limits the impact of air attacks, and (3) increasing assistance from other Communist countries has relieved in part the strains on economic resources. Strikes beginning on 3 March have halted through traffic on the Hanoi-Lao Cai railroad line, but the transportation system elsewhere is functioning at a relatively high level of activity, aided by repairs and construction carried out during the bombing lull. Moreover, steps taken by the NVN leadership give evidence of their resolve to maintain at least important lines of communication and a minimum supply of food and other civilian essentials at the expense of goods and services not necessary for the support of the war. Nevertheless, some strains resulting from the cumulative effects of the bombing still remain.

11. The adverse economic effects of the bombing are evidenced in some, though uneven, decline in living standards for almost every segment of the civil population, a disruption of exports, some decrease in industrial performance, and problems of management which have proliferated during the course of the bombing. About 200,000 workers probably have



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been shifted on a full-time basis into transportation activities, repair, and reconstruction efforts during 1965. Additional thousands are impressed for labor services on a part-time basis and further diversions of manpower to these functions are expected. These and other reallocations of the labor force currently under way within both industry and agriculture have caused the regime to term the labor situation as becoming "critical." Workers in both urban and rural areas are being mobilized to participate in production, repair work, and other tasks, and the labor time expected of workers in both industry and agriculture has been lengthened in order to compensate for the reallocation of manpower. The plans for dispersal of industry and the farming of marginally productive land probably will impair the efficiency of both agricultural and industrial production, and also will require large expenditures for the physical transfer of plant and personnel.

12. Direct losses caused by confirmed bomb damage to economic facilities and equipment are estimated at approximately \$28 million as indicated in the following tabulation:

	<u>Million US \$</u>
Railroad and Highway Bridges*	
Reconstruction	10.3
Temporary Repairs	0.9
Transport Equipment	6.2
Railroad Yards and Ports	0.7
Electric Power Plants	7.8**
Petroleum Storage Facilities	0.7
Manufacturing Facilities	1.2
TOTAL	<u>27.8</u>

\* The estimate of damage in this category is incomplete because of inadequate post strike photography.

\*\*The difference between the \$9.5 million previously estimated and the current figure is due to a reassessment of the costs of restoring the Uong Bi thermal power plant.

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Measurable indirect losses amount to about \$11 million, made up principally of losses of foreign exchange earnings of \$7.4 million and losses in the 1965 fall rice crop of \$3.5 million. The measurable direct costs of reconstruction, replacement, or repair of damaged facilities represent more than a quarter of total gross annual investment in industry.

13. Loss of electric generating capacity in North Vietnam because of bombing amounts to 47,000 kilowatts, about 27 percent of total national generating capacity. There is a high probability that the Uong Bi power plant, the most important economic target struck to date, can be put into partial operation by mid-1966. At least one of the four boilers apparently can be salvaged readily and probably two or more of the four turbogenerators can be made serviceable in a short time. Attempts will probably be made to rebuild the Thanh Hoa plant, although it is unlikely that this plant can be put into partial operation before mid-1966. No significant progress has been noted toward restoring four other power plants south of Hanoi, put of operation by US air strikes during 1965.

14. The over-all damage to transport equipment since resumption of the bombing is lower than that in most months in the latter half of 1965. Imports and, to a much smaller extent, domestic production generally have compensated for bomb damage to equipment. There is evidence that imports of equipment--including freight cars which have been received in only small numbers in the past--will continue to be an important source of supply. Moreover, China may be permitting the NVN to counterbalance the loss of North Vietnamese rolling stock by the use of Chinese meter-gauge freight cars from Yunnan Province.

15. Seaborne exports from North Vietnam continue to show the effects of air strikes. No shipments of apatite have been detected since early last August. Shipments of cement in February were the first detected since December, with the decline attributed primarily to increased North Vietnamese requirements for repairing bomb damage and for military construction. The volume of seaborne imports continues at a high level.

-7-

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16. There is no evidence that the resumption of air strikes against North Vietnam has inflicted any direct damage to the current winter/spring agricultural crops. Preliminary indications are that the acreage for the spring rice crop--normally about one third of the annual harvest--may be down. A NVN official has stated that only 700,000 hectares of a total of about 900,000 had been transplanted and that nearly half of the 700,000 had been too hastily transplanted. This poor showing is at least partly attributable to shortages of manpower and other management problems caused by the air war.



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ANNEXRESULTS OF STRIKES ON NVN TARGETS a/ THRU 13 MARCH 1966

<u>FIXED TARGETS</u>	<u>TARGETS STRUCK</u>		No. AT-TACKS	c/ STRIKE SORTIES	<u>% of NAT'L CAPACITY</u>	
	No.	% b/			DE-STROYED	IN-ACTIVE
BARRACKS	44	23.0	184	2412	13.65	15.12
AMMO DEPOTS	13	75.7	51	1143	32.84	71.20
POL STORAGE	4	19.0	9	128	17.20	00.00
SUPPLY DEPOTS	18	19.0	45	585	9.96	6.25
POWER PLANTS	6	27.5	22	231	27.50	
MARITIME PORTS	4	12.0	15	193	5.70	
RR YARDS	1	7.0	4	33	7.50	
EXPLOSIVE PLANT	1	100	3	28	70.00	
AIRFIELDS	4		12	359		
NAVAL BASES	2		13	176	17.1	
BRIDGES	42		105 <sup>d/</sup>	1955		
COMMO INSTALL	2		2	15		
RADAR SITES	13		54	371		
SAM SITES	24		29	233		
LOCKS & DAMS	1		2	10		
FERRIES	11		7	44		
<u>TOTAL SORTIES</u>				<u>Results e/</u>		
AGAINST FIXED TARGETS: 7,916				Vessels	535	981
ARMED RECCE SORTIES : 19,747				Vehicles	520	610
TOTAL OF ALL SORTIES				RR Stock	251	660
EXCEPT SUPPORT : 27,663						

- a/ Assessments are based on best information received, will be refined as more accurate information becomes available.
- b/ Percentages of national capacity where appropriate.
- c/ Strike plus flak suppression sorties.
- d/ Also numerous attacks during armed recce and other missions.
- e/ Also numerous installations, AA sites, bridges, etc, attacked and road and rail cuts made.

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No. 25-66

SUBJECT

: In Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam

REQUESTED BY

: CIA's issuance of a joint CIA-DIA study prepared monthly for the Secy of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff

PURPOSE

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DESIRED LENGTH

: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL DISSEM

: Category B (routine) GRAPHICS? \_\_\_\_\_

COORDINATION  
OUTSIDE OCI

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ASSIGNED TO

:  DUE DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

OAD REVIEW

: \_\_\_\_\_

1. O/DCI \_\_\_\_\_ 4. CS/II \_\_\_\_\_ 6. WA \_\_\_\_\_ 7. AA \_\_\_\_\_ 8. SSBA \_\_\_\_\_

2. O/DDI \_\_\_\_\_ 5. DAY/SIDO \_\_\_\_\_ P/A \_\_\_\_\_ P/A \_\_\_\_\_ P/A \_\_\_\_\_

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