



~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~  
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

*Henry*  
[TS-HK-AA137a 2]  
CM-3957-69  
20 February 1969

REFER TO OSD

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: B-52 Strikes

JCS REVIEWED 14-Jul-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

1. You will recall that during our conference with Secretary Laird on Tuesday morning that you asked me to prepare two or three cover stories for B-52 strikes resulting from error. Attached is a map and two copies of three possible cover stories.

2. Please note that all three cover stories are based upon B-52 strikes scheduled to take place against three target areas contiguous to the Cambodian border. As the map shows, the scheme would be to direct 18 sorties against three target boxes along the border with South Vietnam. The remaining 42 sorties would be directed against the target area.

3. Secretary Laird and I have reviewed these cover stories and the scheme and believe that they are in consonance with the paper prepared by you which Colonel Haig showed us yesterday afternoon. However, we agree that no one of the stories will stand up, at least at this time, in view of Ambassador Bunker's message to State. Therefore, any one of the stories could be used only at a later time and probably in conjunction with an actual attack by enemy forces across the border in substantial force.

EARLE G. WHEELER  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

OSD REVIEWED 02-Dec-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

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CJCS

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COVER SCENARIO CASE ONE - DENIAL

PREPARATORY MEASURES REQUIRED

1. Authority provided to CINCSAC, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV.
2. Allow for lead time of at least 72 hours to gear the production line schedule for compressed attacks.
3. Brief CG II FFV to nominate and provide required clearances for appropriate cover targets.
4. Minimum personnel who must be knowledgeable:
  - a. CJCS and minimum essential staff.
  - b. CINCPAC and minimum essential staff.
  - c. CINCSAC and minimum essential staff.
    - (1) Commander, 3 ADIV, and minimum essential staff.
    - (2) Commander, U-Tapao/Kadena, and minimum essential staff.
    - (3) Bombing team members of 42 crews (Est. 168 officers).
    - (4) SAC ADVON minimum essential staff (Est. 6 persons).
    - (5) Radar sites (2) (Est. 8 persons).
  - d. COMUSMACV and minimum essential staff.
5. Provide appropriate cover scenario to COMUSMACV.

COVER SCENARIO CASE ONE - DENIAL

1. No special announcement will be made concerning these strikes.
2. If press inquiries are generated by any source other than a Cambodian complaint, they will be handled in accordance with current public affairs guidance.
3. Should the Cambodians register a complaint which generates queries from the press, indicate surprise and state that the matter will be investigated.
4. After 48 to 72 hours, if the queries persist, COMUSMACV will notify the Joint Chiefs of Staff by prearranged means and use the following cover scenario.

On \_\_\_\_ February 1969, B-52 strikes were scheduled to take place against three target areas containing elements of massed communist forces located approximately 60 miles northwest of Saigon in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border. Intelligence indicated that this enemy force was staging in these three areas for the purpose of conducting offensive operations against friendly forces.

The attacks were carried out between the hours of \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_ February 1969, Saigon time, with the bomber force relying on ground based radar system for navigational control and bomb release direction.

Information available from analysis of radar plots from the controlling radar, and airborne aircraft observing the air strikes, indicate that the attacks were conducted as planned with all bombs striking the three assigned target areas within South Vietnam.

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COVER SCENARIO CASE TWO - GROUND DIRECTED BOMBING ERRORPREPARATORY MEASURES REQUIRED

1. Authority provided to CINCSAC, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV.
2. Allow for lead time of at least 72 hours to gear the production line schedule for compressed attacks.
3. Brief CG II FFV to nominate and provide required clearances for appropriate cover targets.
4. Minimum personnel who must be knowledgeable:
  - a. CJCS and minimum essential staff.
  - b. CINCPAC and minimum essential staff.
  - c. CINCSAC and minimum essential staff.
    - (1) Commander, 3 ADIV, and minimum essential staff.
    - (2) Commander, U-Tapao/Kadena, and minimum essential staff.
    - (3) Bombing team members of 42 crews (Est. 168 officers).
    - (4) SAC ADVON minimum essential staff (Est. 6 persons).
    - (5) Radar sites (2) (Est. 8 persons).
  - d. COMUSMACV and minimum essential staff.
5. Provide appropriate cover scenario to COMUSMACV.

1. No special announcement will be made concerning these strikes.
2. If press inquiries are generated by any source other than a Cambodian complaint, they will be handled in accordance with current public affairs guidance.
3. Should the Cambodians register a complaint which generates queries from the press, indicate surprise and state that the matter will be investigated.
4. After 48 to 72 hours, if the queries persist, COMUSMACV will notify the Joint Chiefs of Staff by prearranged means and use the following cover scenario:

On \_\_\_\_\_ February 1969, B-52 strikes were scheduled to take place against three target areas containing elements of massed communist forces located approximately 60 miles northwest of Saigon in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border. Intelligence indicated that this enemy force was staging in these three areas for the purpose of conducting offensive operations against friendly forces.

The attacks were carried out between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ February 1969, Saigon time, with the bomber force relying on ground based radar system for navigational control and bomb release direction.

Calibration checks made on a routine basis following the strikes indicate that an error had developed in the ground radar equipment directing the attack. The magnitude of the error has not yet been determined, however, it could account for some bombs falling in Cambodia. We are not able to de-

termine at what time the equipment malfunctioned. For this

reason, it is not possible at this time to determine how many aircraft were misdirected. Our investigation is continuing.

(In answer to a query from the press: Because of the compressed times for the strikes, it was not possible to calibrate the equipment between waves of strike forces while the attack was in progress as is usually the case.)

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COVER SCENARIO CASE THREE - OFFSET AIMING POINT ERROR

PREPARATORY MEASURES REQUIRED

1. Authority provided to CINCSAC, CINCPAC and COMUSMACV.
2. Allow for lead time of at least 72 hours to gear the production line schedule for compressed attacks.
3. Brief CG II FFV to nominate and provide required clearances for appropriate cover targets.
4. Minimum personnel who must be knowledgeable:
  - a. CJCS and minimum essential staff.
  - b. CINCPAC and minimum essential staff.
  - c. CINCSAC and minimum essential staff.
    - (1) Commander, 3 ADIV, and minimum essential staff.
    - (2) Commander, U-Tapao/Kadena, and minimum essential staff.
    - (3) Bombing team members of 42 crews (Est. 168 officers).
    - (4) SAC ADVON minimum essential staff (Est. 6 persons).
    - (5) Radar sites (2) (Est. 8 persons).
  - d. COMUSMACV and minimum essential staff.
5. Provide appropriate cover scenario to COMUSMACV.

COVER SCENARIO (LATE 1969)

1. No special announcement will be made concerning these strikes.
2. If press inquiries are generated by any source other than a Cambodian complaint, they will be handled in accordance with current public affairs guidance.
3. Should the Cambodians register a complaint which generates queries from the press, indicate surprise and state that the matter will be investigated.
4. After 48 to 72 hours, if the queries persist, COMUSMACV will notify the Joint Chiefs of Staff by prearranged means and use the following cover scenario:

On \_\_\_\_\_ February 1969, B-52 strikes were scheduled to take place against three target areas containing elements of massed communist forces located approximately 60 miles northwest of Saigon in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border. Intelligence indicated that this enemy force was staging in these three areas for the purpose of conducting offensive operations against friendly forces.

The attacks were carried out between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ February 1969, Saigon time, with a portion of the force relying on ground based radar systems for navigational control. The remainder of the force bombed using airborne radar bombing equipment.

As a result of preliminary investigation, it has been determined that some bombing errors were caused by inaccurate ballistic computations, which were provided the aircrews at the final briefing. Those aircrews who used airborne radar as the primary means of bombing used the erroneous ballistics. This

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could account for some bombs falling in Cambodia. Our investigation

High  
is  
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(In answer to queries: The ballistic error was in using an east component instead of a west component for the offset aiming point. Because of fast breaking intelligence only a short time was available for planning. The computation was made by the operations staff and the aircrews did not have the information necessary to validate its accuracy.)