

## SUMMARY

The "Nixonization" of Vietnam does not mean an end to the Indochinese people's suffering. The U.S. will never again control all of South Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos, but the Air War does keep the urban areas under American control. And while the U.S. destroys the Indochinese countryside, it buys contracts for the war industry and time for an empire-building foreign policy.

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*Prepared for the Pacific Studies Center by Helen Chauncey, Walter Cohen, Lenny Siegel, and Judy Strasser, March, 1972. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the Pacific Studies Center.*

"The Air War in Indochina: Summary" 8 pp. November 8, 1971. Cornell Center for International Studies, Available for 20¢ from Indochina Resource Center, 1322 18th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

American Report, Weekly newspaper of Clergy and Laymen Concerned, regularly carries articles on the Air War. (35¢ each, \$7.00/year). 637 W. 125th St., New York, N.Y. 10027.

"The Destruction of Indochina" 9 pp. 1970. Stanford Biology Study Group, Box 3724, Stanford, California 94305. 25¢.

"The Impact of the Vietnam War" 36 pp. June 30, 1971. Report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"Vietnam's Electronic Battlefield," Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram, September-October, 1971. 8 pp./24. by Lenny Siegel. Available for 50¢ from PSC.

Materials on the Air War, Indochina, and U.S. foreign policy in general are available at the Pacific Studies Center, which is a non-profit research center and library.

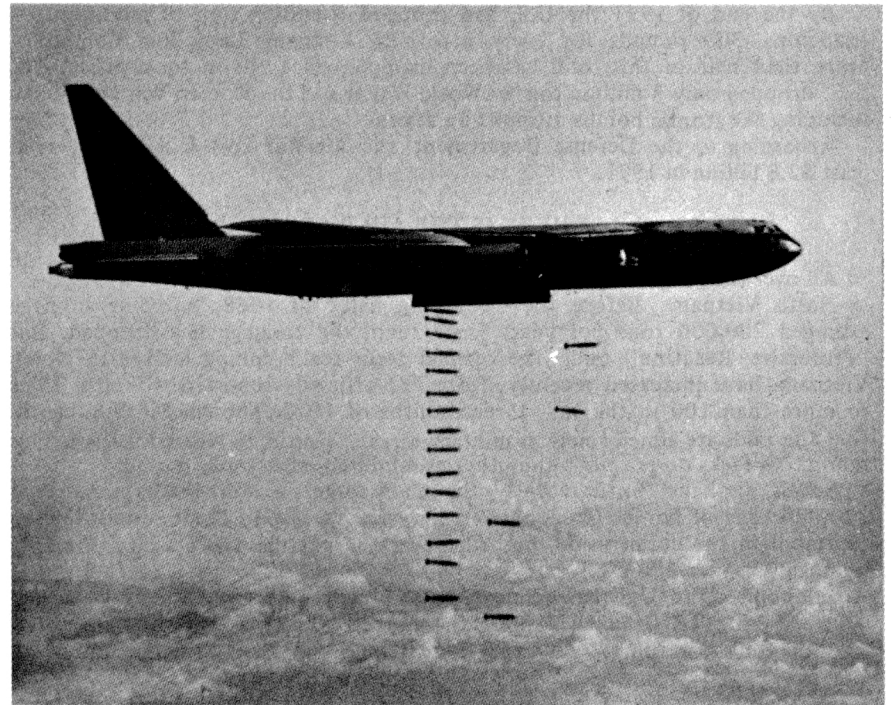
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Pacific Studies Center  
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# AIR WAR



## Pacific Studies Center

The President says that the war is winding down. But for millions of Indo-chinese in Laos, Cambodia, and the Vietnams, the war drags on. President Nixon talks of Vietnamization, but the key to Nixon's policy is the *Air War*.

### WHAT IS THE AIR WAR?

The U.S. now has 300 bombers and fighter-bombers operating in the Indochina theater. The U.S. maintains 80 airplanes armed with heavy machine-guns and rockets and 2000 helicopters, many of which serve as armored gunships. The Vietnamese Air Force (Saigon) maintains a smaller, less sophisticated air fleet.

Half the bombers, including approximately 50 B-52's, fly out of U.S. Air Force bases in Thailand. The Navy dispatches the rest from aircraft carriers like the *Coral Sea* in the South China Sea. Most of the helicopters are based in South Vietnam.

These aircraft deliver explosive bombs (up to 15,000 pounds each), pellet bombs, firebombs, and chemicals for killing vegetation. They fire powerful machine guns and missiles.

By the end of 1971 the U.S. had dropped 6 million tons of munitions on Indochina—300 pounds for every person in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. More than half of this total has been dropped since Nixon took office. The U.S. dropped only 3 million tons in World War II and the Korean War combined, including the atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

According to the Defense Department, the Air War cost U.S. taxpayers at least \$2.8 billion in 1971.

### WHERE IS THE AIR WAR?

All over Indochina.

North Vietnam: Before the "bombing halt" of 1968, bombing tonnage averaged 200,000 tons per year. Since then, the tonnage has dropped. But "Protective Reaction" raids—the official term for bombing strikes in North Vietnam—have increased recently, from 121 officially reported strikes in 1971 to more than 100 in the first three months of 1972. Though the U.S. claims that the raids are aimed solely at military targets, visitors to North Vietnam have reported attacks on hospitals and other non-military structures.

South Vietnam: Until recently the main target, South Vietnam suffered 270,000 tons of bombs (excluding artillery fire) in 1971. The bombing is concentrated in the countryside, but whenever the guerillas seize a city, the U.S. bombs it.

Cambodia: The U.S. has acknowledged bombing Cambodia only since the coup in spring, 1970. In 1971 the U.S. dropped 90,000 tons. Before the coup, the Sihanouk government reported more than 5000 "violations of Cambodian airspace."

Northern Laos: For many years the CIA conducted its war against the Pathet Lao secretly, but now some information is available. In 1971, U.S. planes dropped 75,000 tons, down from a high of 200,000 tons in 1968.

Ho Chi Minh Trail: Bombing along this supply network in Southern Laos has risen steadily since 1965, reaching 375,000 tons in 1971. The bombing of the Trail is history's most intense, continued bombing campaign.

### WHAT DOES THE AIR WAR DO?

More than a million people have died in the Indochina War, according to

most estimates. Several hundred thousand deaths can be attributed to the air war. Millions of people have been wounded.

One third of the population of South Vietnam, or 6 million people, have been driven into refugee camps or the overpopulated urban centers by the bombing. Nearly a million Laotians—one third of the people in Laos—and 1.5 million out of 7 million Cambodians are now refugees.

The U.S. has carpeted one seventh of the land area of South Vietnam with herbicides. The chemicals have destroyed forests and killed crops on which 600,000 people depended. The chemicals endanger the health of people exposed to them, and of children yet unborn.

### ISN'T THE BOMBING WINDING DOWN?

From a peak of 1.4 million tons in 1968 and 1969, American bombing decreased to 800,000 tons in 1971. The Vietnamese Air Force has taken up some of the slack, but combined tonnage has probably gone down.

In part this reflects the effectiveness of past bombing; vast areas are already depopulated. It also reflects increased use of the "electronic battlefield"—electronic devices which detect targets and aim weapons. Although the electronic battlefield doesn't always work, it does increase accuracy and reduce the amount of bombs dropped.

While the bombing tonnage has decreased, Nixon has not indicated any plans to reduce it further or phase out the Air War. In fact, several high officials have threatened to expand it.

### DOES THE BOMBING WIN THE WAR?

Apparently not. The most sophisticated military machine in history has not defeated, or even demoralized, a primitive society. The electronic battlefield is inefficient—it's too complicated; the bombing is inaccurate, but extremely destructive. At most, the Air War may achieve a stalemate.

### THEN WHY DOES THE BOMBING CONTINUE?

A stalemate is better than defeat. The U.S. threat to bomb cities if occupied by guerilla forces has been the major military factor preventing the Communist seizure of Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Vientiane (Laos), and many major cities in South Vietnam. Furthermore, by destroying Indochina the U.S. is trying to scare insurgent movements throughout the world.

The Nixon administration hopes to outflank the anti-war movement by relying on the air war and "bringing the [ground combat] troops home." As U.S. casualties diminish, many Americans lose their concern about the war.

The Air War does not require large numbers of American GI's, who have proven reluctant and even rebellious fighters. Only a small number of pilots and civilian technicians are needed to keep the Air War going.

The Air War is part of Nixon's economic policies. Though expensive, it does not hurt the U.S. balance of payments, since the bombs and planes are made in the U.S.A.

Finally, the forced urbanization of refugees creates a huge pool of cheap labor, ready-made for U.S. "development." If peace breaks out and the U.S. is allowed to stay in the cities, the electronics and textile industries will join the oil companies now prospecting off the Vietnamese coast in reaping the economic benefits of intervention.