

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

December 14, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: AL HAIG

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Secretary Rush
and Admiral Moorer -- 6:30 p. m.

At today's meeting, you will want to outline the background leading up to the President's decision to take military actions and you will want to obtain from Admiral Moorer a full briefing on the scope of the planned actions. There have been a number of changes in target selection since the plan was presented to the President so it is important that Admiral Moorer give you a detailed review of each of the 25 or so targets on which they intend to concentrate.

With regard to the mining you will want to ask the following questions:

-- You have been told there are no weather restrictions on this operation, but you want to be sure that it will go off on schedule.

-- Will we be able to place mines in the area along the route through which two or three merchant ships have managed to escape from Haiphong Harbor, probably under high-tide conditions?

-- What air defense suppression attacks, if any, are planned in connection with the mining operation?

With regard to the reconnaissance scheduled to begin on Saturday:

-- Considering the fixed targets involved, is it necessary to do prior reconnaissance or will the prior reconnaissance tip off the enemy and therefore contribute to losses during our initial attacks?

With regard to the full bombing plan:

-- During the attacks on Haiphong Harbor, is there any danger to third-country shipping? Are the ships there currently manned?

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Section 3.5
PER HR. 2/13/2015
By WJH/ NARA, Date 3/10/2015
NIP 06-A-65/2691 [p. 1 of 13]

-- It is assumed that buffer zone targets will not be hit. Are there overriding considerations that make it especially important to hit these targets at this time? (My preference would be to add these on at a later date if we see a need.)

-- Which particular targets are likely to cause the highest number of civilian casualties? (Estimated civilian losses from the Hanoi railroad yard and shops target are 55 to 75.)

-- What is the specific weather forecast for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday and for the rest of December? Under the worst weather conditions, what sortie rates are planned? (Consider whether initiation of the strikes should be delayed until there is a break in the weather.)

-- What sortie rate is planned for the first three days? For the follow-on period? (The initial plan indicated 850 sorties per day.)

-- If bombing must be continued for an extended period, is there a program to rotate other carriers and ships to the Pacific to give these crews a rest?

-- What shore bombardment would be effective and is planned in connection with this operation?

-- How many B-52's will be involved during the first three days and during the follow-on period against the targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong complex?

-- Are there any other targets which will have high psychological impact which should be struck? (You note that for a three-day plan it has been decided not to strike Gia Lam Airfield in Hanoi and the Lang Chi hydroelectric power plant [which is some 80 miles northwest of Hanoi]. Is the reason for not hitting this power plant because it is still considered to be inoperative at this time?)

-- What targets in other areas of North Vietnam will be struck and after the first three-day massive concentration on the Hanoi/Haiphong complex, what will be the sortie allocation both in North and South Vietnam. Emphasize the importance of an intensive effort north of 20°.

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-- Once strikes are launched, you assume NSA and other monitoring agencies will be on the alert for any signs of Chinese or Soviet reactions.

It is also important that you review press handling concerning these military operations. Without guidance, it can be assumed that MACV will give detailed briefings on these evolutions once they have occurred.

At Tab A is the latest list of targets provided by Defense with checkmarks and X's indicating those targets which would be struck for a three-day plan.

At Tab B is the original 7-day plan that was submitted.

Attachments

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NIN 06-A65/2691 [p. 3 of 13]

TGT #	NAME	JCS/BE #	TGT #	NAME	
<u>Hanoi (16)</u>			<u>Radcom/Command and Control (6)</u>		
1.✓	Hanoi Radio Sta	616-0163	34.✓	Hanoi Intl Radcom Xmtr	66 /0164
2.✓	Hanoi TPP 1/	81 /0016	35.✓	Hanoi Radcom Xmtr 2	616-2759
3.✓	Hanoi Transformer Sta	82.24/0545	36.✓	Lang Truoc Radcom Xmtr	616-3662
4.✓	Hanoi RR Yd/Shops 1/	21 /0031	37.	Hanoi Radcom Rcvr	66.1 /0888
5.	Hanoi/Gia Lam AF 1/	3 /8408	38.	Hanoi Intl Radcom Rcvr	67 /0165
6.✓	Hanoi/Bac Mai AF (H,J,P)	7 /8407	39.	Hanoi Radcom Sta	616-4243
7.✓	Hanoi RR Repair Shops 2/	20 /0022	<u>Air Defense (6)</u>		
8.✓	Hanoi Port (A,C,E)	73 /0014	40.✓	Phuc Yen AF	6 /8520
9.✓	Yen Vien RR Yd 2/	19 /0221	41.✓	Kep AF	9.1 /8438
10.✓	Kinh No Vehicle Repair 2/	616-3241	42.✓	Yen Bai AF	616-8592
11.✓	AI Mo Warehouse E 2/	616-0325	43.✓	Hoa Lac AF	616-8593
12.✓	Nguyen Khe Stor 2/	616-0902	44.	Quang Te AF	616DA180
13.✓	Kinh No RR Yd 2/	616-0322	45.	Dong Suong AF	616-8607
14.✓	Kinh No RR Spurs 2/	616-4557	<u>Mineable Areas/Transshipment Points (6)</u>		
15.	Hanoi RR/Hwy Br Red R	12 /0012	46.	Haiphong Approaches (Mining)	70.1 /0003
16.	Hanoi RR/Hwy Br Canal	13 /0011	47.	Hon Gai Approaches (Mining)	69.1 /0292
<u>Haiphong (13)</u>			48.	Cam Pha Approaches (Mining)	68.1 /0291
17.✓	Haiphong TPP W	80 /0007	49.✓	Bac Giang Transshipment	616-0710
18.	Haiphong Docks (E) 1/	70 /0001 <i>3rd com</i>	50.	Bac Giang Transshipment S	616-5439
19.✓	Haiphong RR Yd/Shops 1/	616-0030	51.	Viet Tri Transshipment	616-4134
20.✓	Haiphong Naval Base (D)	70 /0004	<u>BUFFER ZONE (7)</u>		
21.✓	Haiphong Shipyard 4 (C)	70 /0671	<u>Lang Dang (2)</u>		
22.	Haiphong Shipyard 3 (B)	70 /0054	52.	Lang Dang RR Yd/Shops	616-1586
23.✓	Haiphong Shipyard 1 (F)	70 /0672	53.	Lang Dang RR Br	18.58/0665
24.	Haiphong Shipyard W (H)	70 /2088	<u>Lang Son (2)</u>		
25.✓	Haiphong Warehouse Port	616-0901	54.	Lang Son RR Yd	616-0042
26.	Loi Dong Transshipment	616-3237	55.	Lang Son RR/Hwy Br	18 /0025
27.✓	Haiphong Warehouse 4	616-1033	<u>Northeast Rail Line (3)</u>		
28.	Haiphong Warehouse NE	616-0776	56.	Lang Gia1 RR Br N1	616-1389
29.✓	Haiphong/Kien An AF	9 /8433	57.	Lang Gia1 RR Br N6	616-1392
<u>Electric Power (4)</u>			58.	Lang Nac RR Br W	616-1181
30.✓	Uong Bi TPP	82 /0438			
31.✓	Thai Nguyen TPP	82.16/0382			
32.✓	Bac Giang TPP	82.26/0699			
33.	Lang Chi HPP 1/	82.25/0703			

1/ Designated for guided bombs only

2/ Designated for B-52 target

x 8 days
✓ 2 days

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

7 DEC 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: North Vietnam Contingency Plan

This memorandum forwards an outline plan in response to your request for a contingency strike plan against North Vietnam.

The plan is designed to produce a mass shock effect in a psychological context, with targets selected in priority order to provide for maximum concentration of effort by TACAIR and B-52s against essential North Vietnamese national assets. While certain targets have been designated as B-52 targets, B-52s can be used against most of the targets in the plan, providing the increased civilian casualties that would result are acceptable. Guided weapons will be employed by TACAIR whenever possible so as to minimize collateral damage to nearby civilian populated areas and facilities. In addition to the air strikes, the plan provides for the mining/reseeding of the principal NVN deepwater ports in the initial phase of the operation.

Under optimum weather conditions it is estimated that the targets listed could be completely destroyed in seven days. For example, 12 sorties using guided bombs under visual weather conditions would require two days to take out the six electric power plants in the plan. However, the time required is fully sensitive to the weather conditions prevailing at the time of execution. Since the prevailing meteorological conditions in December are among the worst for any month of the year, it is expected that the time required will be considerably greater than the estimated seven days.

I am prepared to execute the appropriate operations outlined in the enclosure within forty-eight hours of receipt of your authorization.



DEPUTY

Enclosure

Classified by DEP SEC DEF
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. EXEMPTION CATEGORY 3
DECLASSIFY ON Undetermined

Sec Def Cont Nr. X- 5808

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OPERATION PRIMING CHARGE

1. This enclosure describes an outline plan for intensive air and naval operations throughout North Vietnam.

2. Concept. The plan is designed to impose the maximum possible damage on the enemy's warmaking capability and its supporting logistic base and, at the same time, to achieve a high psychological impact. This air campaign is intended to destroy lucrative war/war support targets in the principal urban centers in the critical northeast quadrant. The operation will have a long-term effect on the enemy's ability to support external aggression and, of particular import, it will forcefully demonstrate to the Hanoi leadership that their continued intransigence at the peace table will only result in mass destruction of targets in the heartland of North Vietnam.

a. The concept of the basic plan provides for conducting coordinated tactical air and B-52 operations in two phases:

(1) An initial phase employing all available air and naval resources to strike prime military targets and key elements having high morale impact. This phase includes reseeding the minefields in the approaches to the deepwater ports of Haiphong, Hon Gai, and Cam Pha. Bottom mines set for 120 days will be selectively reseeded in designated area(s).

(2) A follow-on phase employing the minimum essential force necessary to disrupt the enemy's attempts to accommodate to closure of the ports and to repair bomb damage.

b. For maximum destruction and greatest impact, the concept features surprise during the initial attacks and concentration of effort throughout the operation. The North Vietnamese air order of battle and active surface-to-air missile sites will be targeted initially to improve the effectiveness of subsequent attack forces and to minimize losses. Support forces will protect against the MIG threat and will suppress air defenses in the target areas.

c. Full concentration of effort will be employed against each target complex in turn until the designated objectives are completely destroyed or neutralized, that is until the targets/target areas are damaged to the extent that they can no longer contribute to the enemy warmaking capability and support of aggression in the south and that they require an extended time for repair or reconstruction. Certain prestige targets will be restruck repeatedly to demonstrate US resolve to see the campaign through to its conclusion. For example, even

though the Lang Chi Hydroelectric Power Plant and the Doumer Bridge are now unserviceable, they will be restruct using guided bombs when conditions permit visual bombing. Such attacks will be intended primarily for the psychological effect they will have on the people.

d. Unless other considerations are overriding, the initial attack should be launched when suitable visual strike weather is forecast for the target areas. Thereafter, the primary attack mode will be all-weather because of the prevailing northeast monsoon which brings generally unfavorable weather for strike operations from November through March. At such time as a weather window might open to permit visual bombing, guided bombs will be employed in attacks on close in targets such as the Haiphong Docks and the power plant and railroad yard in Hanoi. Every precaution will be taken to avoid endangering third country shipping and populated areas in carrying out these attacks.

e. A maximum effort will be directed in around-the-clock attacks on the most significant targets in the northeast quadrant using TACAIR and B-52 aircraft augmented by naval gunfire. Emphasis will be on maintaining a presence night and day to keep the populace continually aware that systematic destruction of the homeland is in progress. The strike force will comprise all resources which can be effectively utilized without detriment to the support of operations in RVN and without jeopardizing emergency and priority situations in Laos and Cambodia.

f. Risk of civilian casualties will be minimized to the extent feasible commensurate with accomplishment of the mission.

g. Naval Gunfire (NGF). NGF units will complement the air strike effort concentrating on coastal targets in the vicinity of the deep-water ports and on main supply routes and principal transshipment points. When visibility permits, naval guns will bombard specified targets within range operating under instructions to destroy land/waterborne logistic traffic, stockpiles of materiel, and air and coastal defenses. In addition, NGF units operating around-the-clock will provide harassing and interdiction fire against specified targets during hours of darkness or limited visibility.

h. B-52 Operations. ARC LIGHT operations will also complement the coordinated air campaign. B-52 delivery tactics and night/all-weather capability are uniquely suited to reinforce the tactical air effort. ARC LIGHT aircraft will be employed around-the-clock in a program of heavy strikes against the most suitable targets. For maximum psychological effect, this will include attacks on suitable targets in the vicinity of Hanoi.

3. Force Generation. Field commanders will operate under instructions to mount a maximum effort. With a minimum of 48 hours warning time prior to execution, four TF-77 CVA and 7AF/8AF forces based in Thailand and Guam can be brought to bear. Based on this 48-hour decision lead time, a minimum of 825 strike capable sorties can be generated from resources available: 384 from four CVA, and 336 TACAIR and 105 B-52 from Air Force resources.

4. Weather. Weather will be a critical factor in executing this plan. The northeast monsoon, beginning about 1 November, brings a season of generally unfavorable weather for strike operations in North Vietnam. During this season, there may be several days or even weeks before suitable visual strike weather is forecast for the target areas. Therefore, the go-no go decision for the initial launch and subsequent operations should rest with the field commander. Once the launch decision has been made, the field commander will also retain the flexibility to determine the sequence and timing of attacks.

5. Target Selection. Target information is located at Appendix A (Salient Features) and Appendix B (map showing location).

a. In addition to active air defenses, fixed targets include the following categories: radio communications, electric power, line of communication choke points, port facilities in Haiphong and Hanoi, rail/highway/waterway transshipment points, stockpiles of war/war support material, and vehicle repair facilities.

b. Target complexes and targets within complexes have been listed in priority order. The listing has been configured geographically in a manner to produce mass shock effect in a psychological context. However, if the decision is made to establish priorities by systems rather than target complexes, the list can be so adjusted. Enemy activities, as well as operational considerations are factors influencing real time priorities. Target selections are subject to continuing review and refinement and will be adjusted at the time of execution on the basis of the latest intelligence.

6. Estimated Losses. Based on empirical data, friendly loss rates are estimated at less than one-half of one percent overall. Loss rates apply primarily to strike aircraft. A lower loss rate is estimated for support aircraft because they generally experience less exposure to active enemy defenses.