

1972

Information published below is in most cases raw data excerpted from primary sources. In a few cases it has been refined into a draft story. It is presented here for critical review. Are the facts correct? Are names spelled correctly? Do you have information on missions missing from this rough outline? Do you have a photo or primary source material related to something provided in the outline. E-mail me with information to update this information. Rest assured that your inputs will be seriously considered. I am striving for accuracy above all else.

Hanoi's goal of unifying Vietnam under a Communist government and thereby dominating all of Indochina has not changed. NVN wanted complete domination of the Republic of Vietnam and establishment of a sphere of influence throughout Indochina. The US goal also remained the same: thwart North Vietnam's ambitions and help the South Vietnamese become self-sufficient. The failure of the North to subdue the South despite committing its entire ground combat force stands as testimony to the effectiveness of Allied efforts to make South Vietnam self-reliant militarily and politically. Throughout the year North Vietnamese Government and Communist Party officials continually reaffirmed Hanoi's intention to fight on to total victory and reiterated that any settlement of the war must include both military and political issues. Hanoi's basic goals in the war remained the domination of the Republic of Vietnam, the unification of Vietnam under a Communist government and the establishment of a sphere of influence throughout Indochina.¹

As 1972 began, all indicators pointed to a pending North Vietnamese (NVN) offensive in SVN. Throughout the dry season the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) had made preparatory moves that indicated its major thrusts would be in SVN's Military Regions (MRs) I and II. Specifically, these moves pointed to attacks in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces and in the Central Highlands Provinces of Pleiku and Kontum.

Early in 1972, it was believed that the enemy had developed a master plan which designated 1972 as the year of decision. The NVA strategy was designed to overwhelm the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) before the U.S. found the will or capability to reenter the war. The awaited offensive began on 30 March in Quang Tri Province. A large, well-coordinated attacking force, estimated to be three divisions plus supporting units, launched heavy attacks in MR I. On 31 March, total US strength in SVN was 95,000.

To overcome the allied air power advantage, the enemy apparently planned the start of the offensive to coincide with the adverse weather of the northwest monsoon season. This bad weather severely restricted the application of CAS by both the USAF and VNAF during the opening days of the offensive.

Source = K717.601-8 CHECO USAF CAS in SVN 1Jan72-31Jan73

Intelligence estimates of the enemy's strategy indicated that Communist China continued to aspire for leadership of Southeast Asia and that Hanoi had objectives for the unification of Vietnam, domination of Laos, Cambodia and Southeast Asia, and rejection of a negotiated settlement. In the Republic of Vietnam, Hanoi planned to attain its aims through a protracted war, resulting in eventual dominance. In Cambodia, Hanoi planned to extend its lines of Communication (LOC's) and to topple the government. In Laos, Hanoi planned a program of accomodation. The key to the planning was that Hanoi was on the offensive.

Source = History 7th AF 1Jan-31Dec71

When North Vietnam appeared ready to talk peace in October, yet another bombing halt was directed. North Vietnam then balked for two months over some of the cease-fire provisions, so President Nixon ordered on December 18, 1972 the heaviest bombing of the war against Hanoi and Haiphong. For 11 days, the USAF pounded every possible military and transportation target with B-52s and tactical fighters. This brought a North Vietnamese agreement on December 29 to return to the peace table.

In northern Laos, the Communists made additional gains during the year but failed to overwhelm government forces. In November, the Pathet Lao agreed to meet with Laotian Government representatives to discuss a cease-fire. During the year, Cambodian forces were able to win localized victories but could not drive out the Communists. On the other hand, the Communists were unable to capture their primary target, the capital, Phnom Penh. During these ground operations, U.S. airpower, including B-52s, continued to hammer the enemy, but there was a limit to what air power could accomplish when the enemy showed little regard for the lives of its own troops.

JANUARY

Approaching Offensive: Military Operations, January–March 1972

There had been indications of enemy plans for an attack during the latter half of 1971, and these signs increased significantly during January 1972. Growing enemy troop movements and improvements of his logistics network in western Quang Tri Province, in the DMZ, and in North Vietnam just above the DMZ, all portended an approaching ground attack. In addition, during the first two months of 1972, the enemy became increasingly bold in his air defense activities, stepping up attacks against US interdiction operations in Laos, and carrying out troop and supply movements in support of the impending offensive. He continued to employ MiGs for this purpose and introduced SA–2 missile batteries into heretofore lightly defended areas of Laos, the lower part of North Vietnam, and even into the DMZ. Moreover, US reconnaissance indicated construction work on the airfields in the NVN panhandle to enable MiGs to use them as well as a marked increase in conventional anti-aircraft artillery forces in the same area.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 120-121

2 Jan 72

In an interview on CBS President Nixon said that the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam was contingent only on PW releases in Southeast Asia.

Source MACV Command History, January 1972-March 1973, volume 2, chronology, p. N1

3 Jan 72

A group of 7 guerillas attempted an attack, with 3 killed and 1 captured. One Thai security guard was killed. Source *The New York Times*. 4 October 1972, p.2

5 Jan 72

Following *Proud Deep*, Lavelle returned to the problem of the Moc Chau radar. On January 5, 1972, he successfully attacked the facility, sending two ARM-equipped F-105s that flew formations resembling F-4s to deceive the North Vietnamese and cause them to leave their radar on, enabling the F-105s to bomb it. The raid put the facility off the air for 18 days.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Lavelle oral history interview, 588, 625.

9 Jan 72

Communist guerrillas damaged three multi-million dollar U.S. B-52 aircraft in a predawn raid at U-Tapao Air Base, Thailand. Source *The New York Times*. 4 October 1972, p.2



13 Jan 72

President Nixon announced 70,000 troops were to leave Vietnam during Increment XI, reducing U.S. strength by May to 69,000, the lowest in seven years.

20 Jan 72

First HH-53 draw down. 37th and 40th each send one HH-53 to RAF Woodbridge. While rescue forces are drawing down, MACV intel is aware that the NVA is planning a major invasion using conventional combined forces attack. We air rescue personnel at DaNang were completely unaware of this threat.

20 Jan 72

Excerpts of Message From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Abrams) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain) Source is: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT, 1969–1976 VOLUME VIII, VIETNAM, JANUARY– OCTOBER 1972, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, June 2010, p. 1-8

Exclusive for Adm McCain. Deliver during waking hours. References: A. COMUSMACV 041237Z Jan 72. B. COMUSMACV 070812Z Jan 72. C. COMUSMACV 170425Z Jan 72.2

1. (TS) The purpose of this message is to describe in the clearest possible manner the impending enemy offensive against RVN; the impact of ongoing operations on the Commando Hunt interdiction campaign and the additional authorities that will be needed for the conduct of an effective defense in the coming period.

2. (TS) As pointed out in my assessment of the enemy situation submitted in Ref A and B, along with additional intelligence in para 3 below, the enemy is preparing and positioning his forces for a major offensive. It is apparent that the high level decisions and planning for such an effort have already been made by the enemy. Although we cannot be sure at this time of his precise plan of attack it is apparent that he is going to attempt to face us with the most difficult situations of which he is capable. There is no doubt that this is to be a major campaign. We estimate that the main effort will be against the B3 front in RVN MR 2 and northern RVN MR 1, but this will be accompanied by a general increase in enemy activity in other areas of RVN. The enemy will use MiG's, SAM's and AAA to complicate our operations. We expect his recently intensified MiG activity to continue and to be directed against our air operations. He is expected to position SAM's and AAA just north of the DMZ and has already moved these weapons into the Laotian panhandle to counter our operations in these areas. These measures will accompany intensive armor and artillery supported ground operations against which we must be able to concentrate U.S. and VNAF air power regardless of the hostile air environment. The enemy will undoubtedly continue operations in Laos or Cambodia against sensitive targets for the purpose of diverting U.S. air power to areas of secondary strategic importance. Difficult strategic decisions will be required on our part to prevent the fragmentation of our air effort. We foresee a hard battle involving sophisticated weaponry and as much ground combat power as the enemy can generate.

3. (S) Since the dispatch of our intelligence assessments of Southeast Asia in References A and B, the enemy has continued to provide clear and positive evidence of his intentions during the next six months.

A. In NVN on 18 December 1971, General Giap, in an official address to high level civilian and military authorities, emphasized that all young men must fight. The theme of Giap's address stressed "we must fight with determination to win." *The official party organ Nhan Dan, has announced that all youths must go into military service to defend the homeland regardless of past exemptions.* Additionally, Hanoi daily newspapers have published photographs of soldiers in combat uniforms and equipment with the caption "Following in the footsteps of their fathers, units on the way to fight in the South."

B. The southward movement of major tactical units continues. The headquarters of the 320th Division and its three regiments continue their movement toward the VC B-3 front, with the Division headquarters most recently located southeast of Sarvane. The 271st Independent Regiment, heretofore utilized as a coastal defense and border defense unit in NVN is also moving south. In addition, 122mm guns and other artillery are enroute to the B-3 front. The enemy has also extended and improved his air defense capability to the south. Two SA-2 missile firings have occurred from positions in the vicinity of Tchepone, and one from a site 25 nautical miles further south in the panhandle. There has been an increase in the sighting of SAM associated equipment (missiles, launchers, radars, and fire control vans) in the vicinity of the entry gates and along the LOCs in the Laos panhandle. Additionally, intercept of Fan Song radar signals in the vicinity of Vinh Ling just north of the eastern edge of the DMZ indicated a SAM capability in extreme southern NVN. Recently the enemy has increased his conventional

antiaircraft capability in the Laos panhandle to 52 battalions vice 44 held there in the latter part of 1971. These most recent developments, General Giap's statements, unit moves, increased infiltration, build up of SAM and anti-aircraft threat and the continuing increase in truck activity in Laos all indicate the enemy's intention to make *an all-out effort*. We believe the enemy will be prepared to mount main force warfare in the B-3 front, northern MR1 and to a lesser extent in MR5 by late January or early February.

4. (TS) The enemy build up has been hurt by the Commando Hunt VII interdiction campaign, but the campaign has been degraded by the diversion of air effort to other missions.

5. (TS) As noted above the forthcoming battle will probably include MiG and SAM activity in close proximity to the North Vietnam border in the vicinity of the DMZ. Effective protection of our forces will require new operating authorities which must be in hand from the outset of the battle. I therefore request that the following standby authorities be approved now for use as needed throughout the battle. These authorities will be invoked as appropriate when the battle for northern RVN begins.

A. Authority: *Fighter aircraft may strike enemy MiG aircraft on the ground at Dong Hoi, Vinh and Quan Lang.*

Rationale: MiGs based at these fields pose an unacceptable risk to U.S. and Allied aircraft operating in the DMZ area. MiGs operating from Dong Hoi, the southern most of the three fields, are only four minutes from northern RVN, even with extensive air defense/MIG cap augmentation, it cannot be assumed that detection and acquisition of NVN aircraft can be achieved in time to prevent MiG attacks against friendly forces. TACAIR strikes near the border, Arc Light, gunships, ABCCC, tankers, and relay aircraft are particularly vulnerable to NVN fighter/interceptor attack. Once MiG's are positioned at Dong Hoi, Vinh or Quan Lang they must be considered to have entered the battle and must be attacked.

B. Authority: *Fighter aircraft, including Iron Hand may strike active GCI radars in NVN below 20 degrees north.*

Rationale: For several years NVN has had the resources and ability to integrate the GCI/fighter combination with AAA and SAMs, and thereby establish a highly effective air defense system. During a MiG engagement, GCI radars perform the same function for the MiG as do guidance radars for SAMs. Each time the MiGs have been active, the NVN radar/GCI system begins to radiate just as is the case in preparation for firing surface-to-air missiles. With operative GCI radar the MiG pilots are provided with positive radar control and warning which places them in a *vastly superior* position to complete their mission. *The enemy is using GCI radars as an integral part of the SA-2 missile fire control system.* The SA-2 missiles are aimed and launched using early warning or GCI radar derived azimuth and range information. At a pre-determined time, the Fansong radar is turned on for very short periods to provide terminal guidance information. This tactic effectively negates the protection afforded by our radar homing and warning equipment since there is little time to evade the missile. Whether paired with missiles or MiGs, the EW/GCI radars are being utilized like any other fire control radar; therefore, the authority to strike EW/GCI radars controlling fighter and missile attacks on U.S. and Allied aircraft is necessary to effectively counter the NVN air offense capability in southern Laos and northern RVN.

C. Authority: *Fighter aircraft, including Iron Hand, may strike any occupied*

SAM site and associated equipment in NVN that is located within 19 nautical miles (SAM range) of the DMZ and within 19 nautical miles of the North Vietnam-Laotian border as far north as 19 nautical miles above Mu Gia Pass.

Rationale: Immediate protective reaction strikes against SAM/AAA and associated equipment as presently authorized leave to the enemy the initiative to contest this critical air space. We must not allow enemy interference with our use of air power which may be the decisive element in the battle.

D. Authority: *Fighter aircraft may strike enemy logistic support facilities below 18 degrees north.*

Rationale: The enemy logistics facilities below 18 degrees north will provide direct support to the offensive against RVN. These facilities will be essential to the enemy to sustain his offensive and are considered an integral part of the campaign. *Elimination of these facilities will have a direct bearing upon the duration of the battle.*

E. Authority: *Sensors may be implanted throughout the DMZ. This authority will be executed to the extent required to provide the intelligence deemed necessary for safety of forces.*

Rationale: Current authorities permit implanting sensors within parts of the DMZ. Expansion of this authority to include the entire DMZ will greatly enhance the ability to monitor resupply and infiltration activity, and permit U.S. and Allied forces south of the DMZ to conduct timely counteractions.

F. Authority: *Fixed and rotary wing aircraft may be employed for logistic support, troop lift and medevac in support of RVNAF limited cross border operations in Laos or the KHR when requirements exceed VNAF capabilities. Rotary wing gunships may be employed when necessary to provide security of these operations.*

Rationale: The RVNAF are being encouraged to conduct raids against known or suspected enemy base areas along and near the RVN/Laos and KHR borders. *Without the assurance of U.S. backup support, the RVNAF are reluctant to engage in such operations, thereby permitting the enemy to establish and maintain supply and base areas from which to launch offensive operations.*

6. (TS) The seriousness of the developing situation and the need for prior preparation demand the most urgent consideration. The stakes in this battle will be great. If it is skillfully fought by RVN, supported by all available U.S. air, the outcome will be a major defeat for the enemy, leaving him in a weakened condition and gaining decisive time for the consolidation of the Vietnamization effort. *I view the probable main battle zone as that area north and south of the DMZ in which we can expect to find the main enemy maneuver and combat support forces capable of directly influencing the course of the battle within SVN.* I must have the necessary authority to deal with those forces from the outset. There will not be time for reassessment of the need for additional authorities as in the past. For this reason, I am requesting the removal of those current constraints in our operating authorities which would deny necessary application of force and freedom of action within the battle zone. In the final analysis, when this is all over, *specific targets hit in the southern part of North Vietnam will not be a major issue.* The issue will be whether Vietnamization has been a success or a failure.

7. Ambassador Bunker has seen this message and concurs.

23 Jan 72

Relying on his expanded definition of "radar activation," Lavelle ordered a protective reaction strike against the airfield at Dong Hoi. The impetus for the raid stemmed from actions that Lavelle had taken after the MiG firing on B-52s in November 1971. That attack caused Lavelle

to develop a "counterplan" in case a MiG again flew to Dong Hoi in preparation to attack a bomber. Dubbed "Quick Check Recce," Lavelle's plan placed an RF-4 and two escorts on alert at Da Nang, the closest South Vietnamese air base to Dong Hoi.

In the meantime, the weather deteriorated. Lavelle determined that his crews could fly under the clouds and bomb the airfield, which they did, compelling the MiG to return to Hanoi. The escorts had cut the runway and departed the target.

Only one of the missions took place. That was at Dong Hoi on the 23rd of January."⁹⁸ The immediate reaction of the Joint Chiefs to the Dong Hoi attack—the third of Lavelle's "unauthorized" raids—was to praise it. Admiral Moorer even lauded the strike to President Nixon.⁹⁹ The January 26, 1972, message from Moorer, notifying Admiral McCain and General Abrams of the ROE change permitting strikes on GCI radars when hostile MiGs were airborne, contained a congratulatory note for the Dong Hoi raid.

⁹⁹ "Meeting of President Nixon and the National Security Council," *The Nixon Tapes*, 367.

Lavelle attacked only a selected number of North Vietnamese air defense targets that he believed could endanger American aircrews. Those targets included SAMs, radars, MiGs, AAA, and their support equipment. When a reconnaissance mission discovered about 60 North Vietnamese tanks in the open, roughly 8 miles north of the DMZ, Lavelle refused to attack them even though Slay and other officers recommended it. "However liberally I wanted to interpret those rules, I could not interpret them to hit those tanks. I had to hold my men back,"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 43–44. See also "Nomination of Lavelle, Abrams, and McCain," September 11, 1972, 21, 49.

23 Jan 72

A U.S. helicopter gunship reported firing on two enemy PT-76 amphibious tanks in Military Region 3. This was the first report of enemy tanks in the Republic of Vietnam since May 1971. Source MACV Command History, January 1972-March 1973, volume 2, chronology, p. N1

24 Jan 72

COMUSMACV and CINCPAC had requested a temporary augmentation of US tactical air assets for operations in Vietnam and Laos.

25 Jan 72

Reconnaissance flight, fired on by a SAM. The escort aircraft expended their ordnance on the missile site."

30 Jan 72

Charlie Horse 36 SAR. JG 65 from 37th ARRS rescued four Army helo crewmembers assigned to D Troop, 35th Cav

JG crew was Colgrove pilot, Scott copilot, Minshew FE, Pickelsimer & Pearson PJs and Goodwin AP

Charley Horse 36 had gone down in dense jungle southwest of Hue. The Jollies orbited at 5000 feet three miles south of the crash site while Sandy 7 checked the security of the area and an Army team of three men cut the two survivors from the wreckage of the Cobra gunship. When the survivors were free, Sandy 7 led Jolly Green 65 to the crash site and the ground team popped a smoke grenade to further mark their position. Capt Colgrove hovered for 26 minutes in high hover over the 135 foot trees while TSgt Pickelsimer was lowered with the stokes litter and then

he and the two survivors and the three man ground team were hoisted aboard. The Jolly crew exited the area and rushed the two injured men to the 95th Medical Evacuation Hospital.
37ARRSQ History, 1 January -31 March 1972, p. 10

31 Jan 72

Det.1, 3rd ARRGp Phan Rang AB. HH-43 LBR unit deactivated. One aircraft flown to NKP Thailand. Second HH-43 disassembled and shipped to McCord AFB, Washington.

31 Jan 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 136,503, as Increment X withdrawals were completed.

FEBRUARY

Electronic Location Finder (ELF) system evaluated in Panama

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p.27

ECM & RHAW gear requested for 39th ARRS HC-130's at Cam Rhan Bay

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p.29

2 Feb 72

Admiral Moorer requested that the Secretary of Defense authorize implementation of a CINCPACAF plan, COMMANDO FLASH, to deploy up to three cells of six F-4 aircraft from the Philippines to Udorn and Ubon Air Bases in Thailand and to Da Nang.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971-1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 124

4 Feb 72

The Secretary of Defense authorized the execution of COMMANDO FLASH for a period of 30 days to begin on the date the first increment of aircraft arrived in Southeast Asia.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971-1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 124

4 Feb 72

The last Thai combat troops left South Vietnam as the final elements of the Black Leopard Division departed.

National Security Decision Memorandum 149

National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-230, National Security Council Decision Memoranda, NSDM 149. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only

Washington, February 4, 1972

To

The Secretary of Defense

Subject

Additional Authorities for Southeast Asia

1. Add, as soon as possible, one additional carrier to the three currently available for operations in Southeast Asia.
2. Deploy additional B-52s to permit a sustained sortie rate of about 1500 per month.
3. Deploy additional fighter bomber squadrons to Southeast Asian bases. These deployments will be maintained in Southeast Asia until the enemy offensive terminates. You are authorized to exceed the current Thai manpower ceiling during this temporary deployment period.
4. Remove all existing sortie restrictions for both B-52 and tactical air missions during the current dry season in South Vietnam.

The President has again reviewed the operating authorities requested by General Abrams, and those which you authorized on January 26, 1972. He wishes to give the field commander freedom of action in dealing with the growing surface-to-air missile threat, and therefore has decided that you should authorize fighter aircraft, including

Iron Hand, to strike any occupied SAM site and associated equipment in North Vietnam that is located within 19 nautical miles of the PMDL, and within 19 nautical miles of the North Vietnam/Laotian border as far north as 19 nautical miles above the Mu Gia Pass.

This authority should become effective as soon as the enemy offensive commences but not prior to March 1, 1972 and only after final clearance with the President. Further, to insure that the enemy is not permitted to build up his logistical or military posture in the DMZ north of the PMDL, you should authorize air strikes into the northern portion of the DMZ whenever the field commander determines that the enemy is using the area in preparation for attack in the south.

The President has asked that you provide him with an updated report of the specific actions taken or underway in response to this decision memorandum. In addition, the President requests that you provide him with a detailed report on authorities which have already been given to General Abrams and which should be subsequently considered for his approval. Finally, the President requests that you provide for his review outline plans for the conduct of air operations against North Vietnam as discussed during the February 2 meeting of the National Security Council.

Henry A. Kissinger

17 Jan 72

Two AC-130's shot down.

20 Jan 72

RF-4C shot down trying to shoot pictures of massive NVA buildup.

5 Feb 72

Secretary Laird sent Moorer a memorandum authorizing airstrikes on any target in the northern portion of the DMZ whenever General Abrams "determines the North Vietnamese are using the area in preparation for an attack southward."

Nixon authorized 2 days of large-scale airstrikes against 130mm artillery positions in southern part of North Vietnam that occurred on February 16-17 1972.

9 Feb 72

Enemy gunners fired more than 25 rockets into the big United States air base at DaNang and the surrounding city early today, killing three persons and wounding 17, the allied commands said. At least one aircraft was reported damaged and homes, buildings and equipment were reported destroyed or damaged. The attack began about 1 A.M. and the United States command said the missiles were Soviet built 122mm rockets, each weighing about 100 pounds. It was the worst attack on DaNang since July 5, when seven rockets struck the base, killing five Americans and wounding 38

(See photos taken of 37th damaged and destroyed HH-53's)

The New York Times Feb. 9 1972 p.13

Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

Source is: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT, 1969-1976 VOLUME VIII, VIETNAM, JANUARY- OCTOBER 1972, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, June 2010, p. 84-85

Washington, February 9, 1972

SUBJECT

Secretary Laird's Daily Report on Southeast Asia Situation

Attached is the first of Secretary Laird's daily reports on the situation in Southeast Asia which have been instituted to keep you abreast of actions related to stepped-up enemy activity. The report confirms the following:

Secretary Laird reports the following actions with respect to operating authorities which you have approved:

- (1) Sensors have been placed by air north of the DMZ to pick up enemy movements.
- (2) Authority has been granted to use fixed and rotary wing aircraft, logistic troop lift and medevac for ARVN operations against suspected enemy base areas along the border with Laos and Cambodia.
- (3) Authority has been granted to employ anti-radar missiles against GCI sites in North Vietnam when MiG's are airborne and indicate hostile intent.
- (4) Authority has been granted for tactical air strikes in the northern part of the DMZ whenever General Abrams determines the enemy is using the area in preparation for an attack southward. Long-range artillery and rocket sites north of the DMZ and in range of friendly forces may also be attacked within this authority.
- (5) Sortie restrictions have been lifted for all air activity.
- (6) Once the campaign begins, General Abrams has been authorized to engage MIG aircraft airborne from the three North Vietnamese airfields south of 18°.
- (7) General Abrams' air assets have been augmented by an F-4 squadron from Clark Air Force Base with 12 aircraft going to Thailand and six to DaNang.
- (8) B-52 sortie rates have been raised to 1200 a month, and an additional directive has been issued which would deploy more B-52's to raise his capability to 1500 sorties per month.
- (9) A fourth carrier has been ordered to proceed to Southeast Asia.
- (10) General Abrams will conduct a sustained all-out, forty-eight hour air effort against enemy targets in the B-3 Front commencing at 6:00 p.m. Washington time on February

General Abrams reports that all South Vietnamese and American units are on a high state of alert and that II Corps elements are in the best posture possible to meet the expected enemy attack. At my suggestion, Secretary Laird is briefing Secretary Rogers daily on the situation so that he is fully abreast of the authorities which have been given and the situation as it evolves.

8 Mar 72

An airman assigned to a Intelligence Office in Thailand mails a letter to his congressman stating that he has been ordered to file false intel reports. Specifically, reports to HQ would always state that the aircraft had taken fire during a mission even if no one was shooting at them. The congressman took the letter to the Armed Forces Committee. The committee determined that based on the letter, General Lavelle was attacking targets in NVN without authorization to do so. The allegations quickly ended on the desk of Gen. John D. Ryan, the Air Force Chief of Staff. The Air Force inspector general was on an airplane to South Vietnam the next day.

Lavelle met right away with the inspector general. He withheld nothing. "You never go over North Vietnam that that enemy air defense systems are not activated against you," said Lavelle, because the North Vietnamese radar system was totally netted. The discovery of false reports being written in Thailand surprised him. However, as the person who gave the order "not to report 'no reaction'" he assumed full responsibility for the miscommunication.

11 Feb 72

Laos. LNRS (Limited Night Recovery System) alert PJ's Sergeant Chuck Morrow and AIC Mike Vogeles of the 40th ARRS at NKP RTAFB (recently relocated from Udorn RTAFB), participate in a harrowing "first." When an F-4C is shot down in a mountainous region of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network, its crew must be recovered immediately or face captivity and/or death. The LNRS Jolly Green is scrambled to the area. Alone, without CAS or fighter support, the lone bird flies deep into enemy territory. It flies low to avoid MIGs and deadly SAMs, weaving its way cautiously through previously unflown mountain valleys and passes. When it arrives at one survivor's location, the pilot begins an automatic hovering approach. But the system malfunctions. What is supposed to be a computer-controlled descent becomes a nearly undetected, uncontrolled drop towards the jungle. Morrow and Vogeles call for an immediate "go around," saving the crew and bird from certain disaster. Another approach is made, but this time the enemy is waiting. Deadly firepower is directed by the unseen ground forces towards the sound of the hovering helicopters. Darkness is its ally, and one pickup is made amidst suppressive fire from the PJ's' mini-gun positions. Enemy fire and low fuel reserves make further lingering suicidal. The Jolly climbs out of the area and into radar-controlled AAA fire. The crew evades and air refuels, ever conscious of SAM warning indicators being received by the helicopter's RHAW package. Throughout the night additional attempts are made to recover the complete F-4C crew but to no avail. The rudimentary night-system, terrain, enemy opposition, and lack of defensive support systems terminate further efforts. Still, one survivor is brought home. The two pararescuemen are awarded Silver Stars for their pioneering action, courage, and efforts under extremely adverse combat conditions.

14 Feb 72

The New York Times on Monday, February 14, reported: "February 12-13, 1972 Maximum Effort Airstrikes SVN. One of the heaviest American bombing campaigns of the war was concentrated over the weekend on base areas and infiltration trails west of the Central Highlands city of Kontum."

16 Feb 72

Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

Source is: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT, 1969-1976 VOLUME VIII, VIETNAM, JANUARY- OCTOBER 1972, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, June 2010, p. 109

Washington, February 16, 1972

SUBJECT

Efforts in Southeast Asia

On a recent report of actions being taken to thwart the anticipated enemy offensive in South Vietnam, you asked if all of General Abrams' requests for additional authorities had been met.² With the exception of authority to strike certain areas of North Vietnam freely, General Abrams' requests are being met. Authority to strike SAM sites in an area within 19 miles of the border in southern North Vietnam will be submitted for your final clearance after March 1, 1972 if an enemy offensive develops. In addition, various plans for other air strikes against North Vietnam have been prepared, but have not yet been authorized. I believe that our preparations are sufficient and that there is no need to grant broader authorities at this time

17 Feb 72

The NVA had secretly moved several big SA-2 surface-to-air missile systems all the way down to the DMZ. On February 17th, 81 SA-2 missiles were unleashed at attacking American F-4 fighter-bombers, downing two and damaging others. These aircraft were downed during the 29-hour "limited duration" bombing of NVN. All downed pilots captured or KIA

24 Feb 72

The 5th ROK Marine Battalion and the 2nd ROK Marine Brigade Headquarters, the last Korean forces in Vietnam, redeployed to Korea.

21-28 Feb 72

President Richard M. Nixon's trip to the People's Republic of China (PRC) was the first to Mainland China by a United States President. While there, the President discussed Vietnam on several occasions with Premier of the State Council, Zhou Enlai. The United States was withdrawing from Vietnam, the President told Zhou, and had pulled out almost 500,000 troops since he had become President. However, the United States would not complete the withdrawal except on negotiated terms, the essential conditions being that American prisoners of war had to be returned and the American ally, the South Vietnamese Government, had to survive the negotiating process.

On the latter point, Nixon told Zhou, “we cannot remove the government of South Vietnam and in effect turn over the government to the North Vietnamese.”

Source: (*Foreign Relations*, 1969–1976, volume XVII, China, 1969–1972, Document 196)

29 Feb 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From John D. Negroponte of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source is: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT, 1969–1976 VOLUME VIII, VIETNAM, JANUARY– OCTOBER 1972, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, June 2010, p. 111-112

Washington, February 29, 1972

SUBJECT

The Enemy’s Dry Season Campaign

The Saigon Station Chief has sent us his appraisal of the enemy’s winter–spring campaign which is summarized below.

The current level of enemy activity is still far below what we believe the VC/NVA are capable of mounting. ARVN spoiling attacks and U.S. airstrikes may be partly responsible for slowing down the enemy timetable. In any case, his plans are flexible (unlike 1968). His offensive is proceeding in a deliberate and cautious manner and will probably unfold in stages, moving from small to larger attacks as he probes for exploitable opportunities. He will keep his options open and will try to avoid the disaster he suffered in 1968.

The next weeks should bring a noisy mix of ground attacks on lightly defended outposts and resettlement villages, terrorist activity, attacks by fire against urban areas and sapper strikes or rocket attacks on GVN and U.S. installations. Heavy action could also begin in MR-1 with little warning, probably coordinated with attacks in the B–3 Front. Major actions could, however, be spaced over a longer period to ensure maximum political impact by demonstrating that the war could drag on forever. The ARVN will pass the tests just ahead and by the end of the dry season will be in a position to move forward once again, but not so decisively as to preclude enemy efforts to create disruptions intended to influence the U.S. election in November.

29 Feb 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 119,606.

MARCH

2 Mar 72

Admiral Moorer told Secretary Laird that the SAM threat in the pass areas of Laos and the area of South Vietnam below the DMZ continued to interfere with air interdiction operations. There were now 28 SAM battalions currently stationed in North Vietnam below 20° north, and eight US aircraft had been lost to SAMs since the beginning of the current dry season. It was apparent, Admiral Moorer stated, that the enemy was determined to cover his intensive logistic effort to support an impending offensive with the most extensive possible defense. To deny the enemy the benefit of sanctuary, and to reduce the effectiveness of his air defenses, the Chairman supported recent proposals by COMUSMACV and CINCPAC for tactical air strikes against both logistic support facilities in the NVN panhandle and SAM sites located within 19 nautical miles of the PMDL or the Laos/ NVN border to a point 19 nautical miles north of Mu Gia Pass.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 125

6 Mar 72

Pilot reports indicate two missiles were fired from within the DMZ against allied aircraft over northern MR1. Source MACV Command History, January 1972-March 1973, volume 2, chronology, p. N1

7 Mar72

The 1st Australian Task Force stood down, ending the combat role of Australia in Vietnam.

8 Mar 72

SAR for USN A-4 call sign Tarfish 502 downed in the jungle 15 miles NW of DaNang
JG crew included Johnson pilot, Mullenix copilot, Minshew FE, and Avery & Steed PJs

Our last save this quarter was made by Capt "Bo" Johnson's crew on 8 March 72. Queen launched the alpha crews for a Navy A-4 with an emergency fuel condition northwest of DaNang. LCDR Jay Crowe in Jolly Green 64 had a hydraulic problem and the alpha high aircraft was launched ahead of him and proceeded in the direction of the emergency aircraft. Approximately 15 miles northwest of DaNang, the pilot bailed out and made a tree landing sustaining minor injuries to his legs. Jolly Green 64 arrived on scene shortly after Jolly Green 21, but LCDR Crowe decided to assume the high aircraft responsibilities because he was uncertain about the nature of his hydraulic problem. An Army Huey was on scene but couldn't make the pick up because of the 180 foot trees and a 60° slope of the mountain side where the survivor had landed. Jolly Green 21 made an autorotative decent to the area and the survivor popped his smoke grenade for positive identification when the Jolly was one mile out. Capt Johnson hovered his aircraft in very difficult conditions against the steep slope with almost no visual references. TSgt Avery was lowered to check the survivor's condition. The two men were hoisted separately because of the Navy pilots leg injuries. Jolly Green 21 made an uneventful return to DaNang where the survivor was turned over to personnel from the 366th USAF Dispensary.

37ARRSQ History, 1 January -31 March 1972, p. 11

Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon

Source is: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT, 1969–1976 VOLUME VIII, VIETNAM, JANUARY– OCTOBER 1972, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, June 2010, p. 116-118

Washington, March 8, 1972

SUBJECT

Actions Relative to the North Vietnamese Dry Season Offensive

The situation in Southeast Asia has reflected for the past few weeks and continues to reflect a North Vietnamese capability to launch an offensive against friendly forces in South Vietnam. Enemy forces in the western portion of Military Region (MR) 1, in the Central Highlands, and in Cambodia along the Republic of Vietnam border have been concentrated and are capable of launching major attacks. In addition, there has been a buildup of North Vietnamese air defenses in the North Vietnamese panhandle and in Laos.

In January 1972, and later in response to the direction you outlined in NSDM 149, a range of measures were taken to blunt the expected enemy offensive. These are summarized as follows:

- Employment of antiradar missiles, both air and ship launched, against primary GCI radar control sites outside the Hanoi–Haiphong area when MiGs are airborne and indicate hostile intent.

- A fourth carrier to support Southeast Asia operations arrived on 3 March.

- Eight B-52s were deployed to Thailand on 7 February and 29 B-52s to Guam on 11 February, providing a 1500 sortie per month capability.

- Eighteen additional F-4s were deployed to bases in South Vietnam and Thailand on 8 February. Five additional F-105 aircraft equipped to launch anti-radiation missiles were deployed to Thailand. Plans to move three additional squadrons of F-4s from Korea to Southeast Asia have been prepared.

- Authority for higher sortie rates for B-52s and TACAIR was passed to field commanders.

- Authority was granted to strike 130mm guns in the northern DMZ area during the period 16–17 February.

The measures outlined above have disrupted the enemy's offensive plans to an indefinite but considerable degree. To repeat, however, the North Vietnamese retain a major offensive capability in South Vietnam. Their accelerated air defense efforts likewise constitute a continuing threat to our attack aircraft over South Vietnam, Laos, and to our unarmed reconnaissance aircraft over North Vietnam.

In NSDM 149 you indicated the desire to give our field commanders additional freedom of action in dealing with the surface-to-air (SAM) threat. You specified that as soon as the enemy offensive commences, but not prior to March 1, I should authorize tactical aircraft strikes against occupied SAM sites and associated equipment in a North Vietnamese area encompassing:

- 19 nautical miles north of the PMDL,
- 19 nautical miles of the NVN/Laotian border,
- as far north as 19 nautical miles above Mu Gia Pass.

While the enemy has not been able to launch the predicted major offensive moves in South Vietnam, General Abrams believes the enemy has been trying to get such an effort underway. In a technical sense, he considers the enemy offensive to have commenced. Considering the overall SAM threat, General Abrams, CINCPAC, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, believe exercise of the NSDM 149 indicated authority to be prudent now. SAM installations are mobile and therefore constitute transient targets. Limited duration strikes can, at best, achieve limited benefits. Extensive strikes over an indefinite period involve, in my judgment, even higher risks and costs. I therefore concur in our military commanders' judgment that selective and limited duration strikes should be authorized now against occupied SAM sites in the lower NVN panhandle.

I should add that standing authorities to deal with the air defense threat from NVN include authority for:

- Friendly aircraft and SAMs to engage enemy aircraft over NVN, which by their intentions indicate hostile intent against U.S. or allied aircraft operating outside the borders of NVN.

—Fighter aircraft, including Iron Hand, to strike any SAM/AAA site in NVN below 20°N which fires at or is activated against U.S. or allied aircraft. In conjunction with the impending offensive, additional authorities were granted to permit engagement of MiGs airborne below 18°N and strikes against active GCI radar sites when MiGs are airborne and indicate hostile intent. The latter authority has been exercised on several occasions. In summary, I believe our extensive air operations are taking a substantial, though indefinite, enemy toll. Our air efforts have probably contributed to the disruption of Hanoi's offensive timetable. The North Vietnamese air defense capability and tactics constitute a major and growing threat to our air operations. I recommend we continue to exercise the air operating authorities now in existence.

Melvin R. Laird

Excerpts from Message From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Abrams) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) and the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 62, COMUSMACV General Service Messages, March 1972. Top Secret; Flash; Specat; Exclusive

Saigon, March 8, 1972

1. (TS) In view of the growing intelligence picture, I am today submitting my personal appraisal of the overall situation as it now stands and the requirements necessary to effectively meet this situation. There are five distinctly identifiable and interrelated threats which must be considered and countered. The five threats are:

(1) the enemy forces in the northwestern portion of MR1 and near the DMZ which for ease of reference will be called the DMZ area

(2) the enemy forces in the Pleiku/Kontum area which will be referred to hereafter as the B-3 Front,

(3) the enemy forces in the Chup/Mimot/Snoul area of Cambodia opposite MR3 which will be referred to as COSVN (Central Office of South Vietnam, Communist political and military headquarters for the southern half of South Vietnam)

(4) the enemy forces in the PDJ/Long Tieng area which will be referred to as the Long Tieng area

(5) the enemy logistics offensive moving down the Laotian panhandle which will be referred to as the logistics offensive.

I will first summarize the intelligence pertaining to each of the five threats, discuss their interrelationship, present my concept for the employment of US air power against the threat, and finally present the authorities needed to counter the threat.

2. (S) DMZ and Northern MR1. The enemy continues to make a deliberate effort to improve his capability in the DMZ area and northern MR1. All indications suggest that the 324B NVA Division is en route to traditional areas of operation in MR1. Major elements of the 304th NVA Division are already located in Laos west of Khe Sanh and destined for commitment to western Quang Tri Province. The enemy continues to improve his air defense capability in the DMZ area. Dong Hoi airfield is now operational, and Khe Phat air strip should be operational by 15 April. SAM battalions have recently deployed to the Tchepone/Muong Phine area while sites in the vicinity of Bat Lake and the DMZ have been occupied. Two SAM support facilities have been constructed

approximately 7 ½ miles north of the central DMZ to support these sites. On 6 March pilot reports indicate two missiles were fired from within the DMZ against allied aircraft over northern MR1. At least eight 130mm guns and five 122mm guns have been confirmed north of the DMZ indicating their anticipated use against northern MR1 in the near future. There is an increasing flow of enemy truck traffic into western Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. The enemy continues to expend considerable effort to upgrade his route structure throughout western MR1. AAA defenses are also being upgraded significantly, and MiG activity in the southern part of North Vietnam and the Laos panhandle has recently increased markedly.

3. (S) B-3 Front. Force structure augmentation, concentration of main-force units, and increased rear service and support activities point to enemy intentions to mount large-scale operations. The 320th NVA Division, the 141st Regiment, 2nd NVA Division, and the 83rd NVA Engineer Regiment recently arrived in the B-3 Front area. Movement of 122mm field guns and howitzers and 160mm mortars to the front has also been observed. T54/55 tanks have been sighted south of Chavane in the Laotian panhandle. Troop infiltration destined for the B-3 Front now approximates 32,000. Infiltration, including main-force units, has doubled the number of regiments in the area. Enemy main-force units can launch attacks within the B-3 Front with little warning.

4. (S) Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) which is the Communist political and military headquarters for the southern half of South Vietnam. Since mid-February, major relocations of VC/NVA units have markedly increased the enemy threat to the Tay Ninh area of MR-3. The movement of a second regiment of the 9th VC Division, the 95C NVA Regiment, from west of the Mekong River to an area east of Mimot raised to eight the number of infantry regiments operating in this area. The Division's 272D VC Regiment continues to be located in the Chup plantation. In addition, the 165th and the 209th NVA Regiments, 7th NVA Division moved from the Chup-Dambe area to positions west of Mimot. It is also possible that the 7th Division's 141st NVA Regiment has relocated from the Chup-Dambe area toward the east. The relocation of the 6th VC Regiment, 5th VC Division from the Snuol area further augmented the force concentration in the vicinity of Mimot. The 5th Division's 174th NVA Regiment remains north of Mimot. Additionally the 271st NVA Independent Regiment is now located in northern Base Area 354. There are now at least six enemy regiments located within 20 kilometers of the RVN/Cambodia border.

5. (S) Long Tieng Area. It appears that the enemy forces, which earlier had reacted to Vang Pao's operation southeast of the Plaine des Jarres, are once again being positioned for attacks in the Long Tieng area. The construction of a road from the Plaine toward Long Tieng and the movement of supplies and emplacement of AAA weapons along the road have continued unabated.

6. (S) Logistics Offensive. During the past week the general directorate of rear service element in the Lao panhandle initiated a general logistics offensive. It is designed to move more supplies and materiel to enemy units in RVN, southern Laos and Cambodia. This offensive began on 1 March and reportedly will continue, at least in some areas, until July. This plan emphasizes greater efforts by engineer units to repair roads and fords; an increase in the number of round trips performed by vehicles drivers; prepositioning of rations along roads for drivers; and increased alertness by AAA units in Base Area 604.

7. (TS) Interrelationship of the Five Threats. Early in the enemy buildup, we had expected that the enemy offensive against the B-3 Front would precede action against the DMZ area. This has not materialized and it now appears that the enemy is capable of concurrent offensive action in all five threat areas. The most salient interrelationship among concurrent offensives in the five threat areas would be the sudden demand for air power needed to support each. In fact, the competing demands for air power already exist as we attempt to counter the enemy preparations in each threat area.

8. (TS) My basic concept for countering the enemy buildup is to continue concentration of US TACAIR primarily against the enemy logistic offensive and the B-52's primarily against targets in the DMZ, B-3 Front, COSVN and Long Tieng areas and their related support bases. After the enemy offensive begins, the South Vietnamese will have to be encouraged to shift their air resources to the high threat areas. The distribution of air power will have to be judged in the light of all elements of the situation. The situation in the DMZ area requires special discussion and is covered in the following paragraph.

9. (TS) It is important to understand what the enemy has put together in southern Quang Binh, the DMZ and western Quang Tri. It is a system integrating MiG's, SAM's, heavy anti-aircraft artillery, long range artillery, tanks and other ground forces. The enemy has put into position a SAM umbrella that extends as much as 16 miles into northern MR1 and to an even greater depth into the Laotian panhandle. In the [Mu Gia] pass areas, he has perhaps the best integrated, most closely coordinated MiG/SAM operating environment that has yet been developed and actively exercised under combat conditions. He has driven our highly vulnerable gunships out of the [Mu Gia] pass areas and northern MR1. He has made operation of fighter aircraft extremely difficult in these areas. He has kept the B-52 out of these areas although CINCSAC has stated his willingness to fly into the SAM rings when the targets justify the risk. He has developed a sustaining logistics base beneath this air defense umbrella. He has positioned long range artillery just north of DMZ in range of friendly positions. Tank and infantry units have been positioned in the area. If he initiates his offensive at the outset of a protracted period of bad weather, we risk serious losses in northern MR1. Our response to this critical situation must deal with all of the major elements of the integrated system described above. We must have authority to hit the MiG's, GCI, SAM sites, long range artillery, tanks and logistics facilities. We must have clear weather to operate effectively against this integrated system. I urgently request approval of authority to strike the enemy system above the DMZ. A one-time strike authority is temporarily useful but is of only limited value due to the enemy recuperative capability.

Furthermore, the weather conditions change so rapidly as to make one-time authority difficult to exploit. What is needed is standing authority to strike the SAM's, artillery, GCI, tanks, anti-aircraft artillery and logistics. As a minimum I need the standby authority to strike this system of targets as quickly as weather will permit after the enemy begins to fire his artillery against friendly forces. The existing authority to return fire is too restrictive to be fully effective and does not adequately accommodate the fact that what we are up against is an entire system of integrated power rather than a single-weapon problem.

10. (TS) Specific authorities needed at this time are as follows:

A. Authority to conduct TACAIR strikes and naval gunfire attacks against SAM sites, MiG's, GCI sites, AAA, long range artillery, tanks and logistics facilities in North Vietnam located below 18° north.

B. Authority to employ area denial munitions in the northern portion of the DMZ.

Note: Bunker sent Abrams's message to Kissinger on March 9, commenting that "General Abrams' message is comprehensive and cogent and I recommend that you read it in its entirety. I fully support his request for these additional authorities, in view of the massive enemy buildup in all of the threat areas mentioned." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 992, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Haig Chron, March 7–15, 1972). Laird forwarded the recommendation to the White House on March 10.

9 Mar 72

Admiral Moorer again warned the SecDef of continuing enemy preparations for a major offensive. After giving a detailed assessment of the situation, he went on to request additional authorities to limit the enemy's options in the approaching battle and to reduce the prevailing danger to friendly air operations in the NVN border areas. These expanded authorities included: tactical air strike and naval gunfire attack of SAM sites, MIGs, GCI sites, AAA, long-range artillery, tanks, and logistic facilities in North Vietnam below 18° north; and employment of area denial munitions throughout the northern portion of the DMZ.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973*, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 125-126

9 Mar 72

My first and only R&R to NKP from DaNang. This was my first visit to NKP. Compared to my home base at DaNang, this base was like a tropical resort. The assigned troops had very nice barracks and great food, including excellent steak meals, at the NCO club. There was a tailor shop inside the club where I bought my Jolly Green party suit. There was no danger of rocket attacks so you could sleep without interruptions. But the highlight of the trip was off base parties. I had received my reenlistment bonus of \$7312.00 and I was determined to spend much of it on parties, drinking, and Thai women as I could during my sort visit.

11 Mar 72

The Chairman told the Secretary of Defense that an attack appeared "imminent." Current intelligence and field assessment indicated the movement of VC/NVA units into Hue, the B–3 Front, and MR–3, and CINCPAC wanted to take additional preparatory actions. In order to reduce the reaction time should additional reinforcement of US air forces in Southeast Asia become necessary, CINCPAC had proposed the relocation of 18 US F–4D aircraft, with associated personnel and equipment, from Korea to the Philippines. There, the crews would receive combat training and theater indoctrination and be available for rapid deployment to South Vietnam and Thailand. In order to avoid any political problems arising from the withdrawal of the planes, the F–4Ds would be replaced in Korea with F–4C aircraft from Okinawa. Admiral Moorer supported CINCPAC's proposal, telling the Secretary that the "threatening situation" made it prudent to take such preparatory measures.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973*, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p.126

14 Mar 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon

Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files: FRC 330–77–0095, 385.1, Viet. Top Secret; Sensitive

Washington, March 14, 1972

SUBJECT

Request for Operating Authorities to Counter the North Vietnamese Threat

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has forwarded a request for additional authorities to assist in countering the enemy threat in Southeast Asia. He has requested permission to conduct air and naval gunfire attacks against North Vietnam south of 18°N latitude until 1 May 1972. Recognizing the difficulties and pressures under which our field commanders and units are operating, I conclude nonetheless that, on balance, it would not be wise now to accede to the request. I prefer the course of (a) continuing the extensive operating authorities now in existence and (b) authorizing the three twenty-four (24) hour strikes requested earlier against occupied SAM sites in the limited L-shaped area closest to the DMZ and Laotian border passes.

Situation in SEA

The Chairman's assessment of the current enemy dispositions is consistent with other available intelligence. The NVA have concentrated their forces so that they are capable of launching multi-regimental assaults simultaneously in northern MR1, the Central Highlands, western MR 3, and at Long Tieng in northern Laos. It is entirely possible that the NVA may be able to achieve a short-term victory on one or more of these potential battlefields. On the other hand, I do not foresee, on the basis of information now available, the North Vietnamese being able to overwhelm friendly forces to the extent that the progress of Vietnamization is reversed.

The enemy has strengthened his air defense capability in southern North Vietnam with a buildup of MiGs, SAMs, and AAA. This air defense provides protection for his long-range artillery, tanks, and ground forces located adjacent to the DMZ, and is a threat to friendly air forces operating in northern MR 1 of South Vietnam and the Laotian panhandle. Our losses to NVA air defenses over recent weeks and months have been light, especially in relation to the large numbers of sorties flown. It is clear the enemy poses a threat to our air operations. It is equally clear we are able to continue effective air operations. The NVA air defenses also require the assignment of escort aircraft dedicated to suppression of the defenses. The freedom to execute these air operations has in no small part, I believe, accounted for Hanoi's inability to date to generate the expected major offensive operations.

Implications of the Chairman's Request for Expanded Authorities

The Chairman's 9 March memorandum emphasized that short one-time strikes, as we have used since November 1968, do not permit using our full potential to counter the enemy. The Chairman does not contend, however, there is no military value in the limited duration, limited area strikes.

The thrust of the Chairman's request for additional authorities is to reopen the bombing campaign, which was terminated by the 1968 bombing halt, against North Vietnam. A prolonged and widespread resumption of air attacks against NVN south of 18°N has serious implications for the eventual shape of events in Southeast Asia. I do not agree that we should abandon lightly the hope they hold for restraint on the war and the precedent they offer for future negotiations.

A second matter which should be weighed in your consideration of the new authority is that there has been no flagrant provocation for renewed air attacks. He has not moved major forces directly across the DMZ. The military activity in Southeast Asia is still low. Resumption

of the bombing of North Vietnam now would heighten the controversy over the war. The resultant widely publicized escalation, as contrasted with the unpublicized enemy provocation, could result in criticism for enlarging the scope of the war.

I am not convinced, moreover, that the reported enemy preparations for an offensive would be thwarted by extending our air strikes to the 18th parallel or by placing munitions in the northern half of the DMZ. The majority of threatening forces are now concentrated in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. I have described to you in earlier memoranda the measures we have taken to delay the expected enemy offensive. I have expressed the belief that our extensive air operations are inflicting a substantial, though indefinite, toll on the enemy. We should continue to direct our effort to attacking these concentrations. Should the enemy launch a major attack through the DMZ, or offer a clear provocation by massive support of an attack from immediately north of the DMZ, we could then reassess the Chairman's request.

Summary

I do not believe that executing the measures which the Chairman has recommended is warranted now. Of the measures proposed, standing authorities permit engagement of enemy aircraft airborne below 18°N; strikes against active GCI sites when enemy aircraft are airborne and indicate hostile intent; and engagement of AAA and long-range artillery when fired upon friendly forces. I have separately recommended that you authorize limited-duration strikes against occupied SAM sites in North Vietnam within 19 miles of the PMDL and the NVN/Laotian border as far north as 19 miles above Mu Gia Pass. Current measures fulfill your responsibilities to protect the lives of our servicemen. The additional authority requested for three 24-hour strikes against SAM sites would help to alleviate a specific part of the enemy threat; but that authority is not, in my judgment, critical to the outcome of the so-called dry-season activity.

I recommend we stay with existing authorities, with the exception that you allow me to authorize at a relatively early date the twenty four (24) hour anti-SAM missions requested earlier.

Melvin R. Laird

15 Mar 72

The Secretary approved the movement of the F-4Ds from Korea to the Philippines adding that "further approval" would be needed for deployment of the aircraft to Southeast Asia.

18 Mar 72

Nail 31 SAR - Nail 31 Alpha (Steve Boretsky) and Bravo (Dave Breskman) ejected from their OV-10 over Laos after being hit by antiaircraft fire. They were in an area known as the Catchers Mitt of the Steel Tiger. Both survivors landed from their parachute descent uninjured and immediately entered an evasion mode. The enemy completely surrounded the area they had landed in. During his first few hours on the ground Nail 31 Alpha was forced to shoot and kill an enemy soldier who had found him. Normally, we would have found this tale to be BS but he came home with an AK-47 to prove it. This is the only time in the war that I know of where an evading pilot with a pistol used it for its intended purpose. This pilot had "balls." We could not let him be captured. Several SAR attempts on the 18th were repulsed by an aggressive air defense. There was at least one "nine level" gunner in the area. During a last light pickup attempt the Jolly came under heavy fire from a North Vietnamese 37mm gunner. In what was no small

miracle, this NVA gunner manages to miss this slow moving, low altitude, "size of a barn" target. In short, the Jolly was a sitting duck and this gunner who likely had already shot down at least one A-1 MISSED! The HH-53 immediately egressed the area. Both Alpha and Bravo were rescued during a first light SAR the next morning. After this rescue the Jolly's had to hit the HC-130 tanker to refuel. Two Jollys went into refueling formation behind the tanker. Soon four A-1's joined this formation and it became a 7 ship. This entire SARTAF flew a celebratory 500' low pass on the NKP airfield.

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p37, p66-68

21 Mar 72

ECM & RHAW gear requested for 37th and 40th ARRS HH-53s

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p29

26 Mar 72

SAR conference at NKP. "All the rescue forces in the world cannot help a survivor on the ground if he does not understand SAR procedures and cannot assist in his rescue."

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p37

The U.S. broke off the Paris peace talks because the Communists refused to negotiate seriously.

7th AF/CC Gen. Lavelle fired for allegedly violating the ROE for bombing NVN.

27 Mar 72

HH-53 accident or shoot down (there is debate about reason for crash), 40th ARRS, 5 KIA

SERGEANT RAYMOND A. CROW and AIRMAN FIRST CLASS RAYMOND A WAGNER. Sergeant Crow and Airman Wagner are PJs crewing an HH-53 over Tonle Sap Lake. They have just completed a combat SAR orbit and are returning to base. More recently, they have just completed an aerial refueling. Suddenly, without warning, a catastrophic mechanical failure races through the complex rotor system destroying it and instantly killing all personnel aboard. Because the incident occurs over a heavily contested and dangerous area of the war zone, none of the crew remains are recovered, and to this day the tragedy remains a mystery. *Source = 50 years See Jolly 26 folder for details.*

30 Mar 72

The NVA begin a major invasion across the DMZ and across the central region of SVN. The invasion was subsequently name the Nguyen Hue Offensive but is better known as the 1972 Easter Offensive. This invasion was timed to occur with the beginning of the monsoon season. The monsoon rains and low clouds would limit air attacks on NVA forces. The tactical situation in SEA had changed overnight. This was a multi-divisional, combined Army, conventional thrust. For the first time in this war the NVA integrated armor into its invasion. Air defense units accompanied the armor. These air defense units moved SA-2 SAMs into SVN and 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm antiaircraft guns. Many of these rapid-fire antiaircraft cannons were radar controlled. For the first time in this war the NVA introduced a man-portable, heat seeking,

shoulder fired SAM It was called the SA-7 Strella. This integrated air defense would take a major toll on U.S. aircraft.

The leaders in Hanoi had been planning and preparing for this offensive since May 1971. According to their official history, their purpose was to “defeat the American ‘Vietnamization’ policy, gain a decisive victory in 1972, and force the U.S. imperialists to negotiate an end to the war from a position of defeat.” The “immediate objective” was to “launch large offensive campaigns using our main force units in important strategic theaters” simultaneously with “wide-ranging military attacks coordinated with mass popular uprisings aimed at destroying the enemy’s ‘pacification’ program in the rural lowlands.” In practice, the anti-pacification campaign had secondary priority. The North Vietnamese designated three theaters for the main force offensive: northwestern MR 3, the Central Highlands, and northern MR 1. Of these three principal attacks, the North Vietnamese considered that in northern MR 1 the most important because there “we could mass our forces, centralize command, and provide adequate logistics support for a massive, extended offensive campaign.”¹

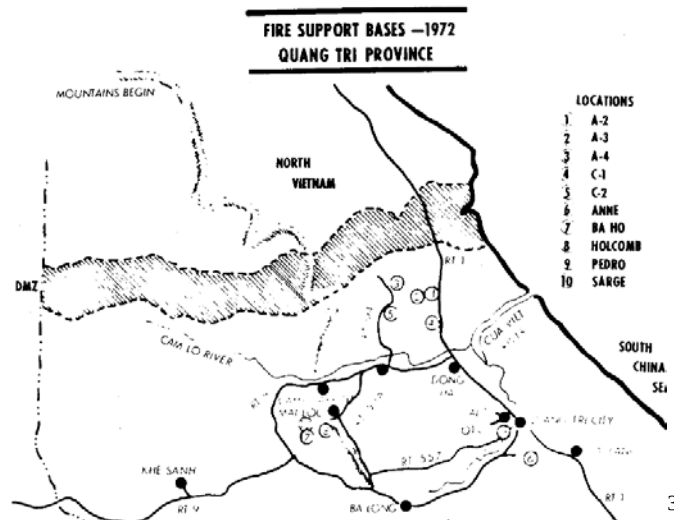
The long-predicted enemy offensive struck (the NGUYEN HUE Offensive) with fury. The NVA had launched a three-pronged invasion of South Vietnam, using tanks and mobile armored units. They were attacking using weapons never before used in South Vietnam. The seriousness with which the North regarded this invasion, and perhaps a hint of their desperation, too, was the use of all active combat divisions against the South, leaving North Vietnam uncovered except for home guard units.²

The NVA began the major invasion with 80,000 troops crossing the DMZ. They were supported by armor and heavy artillery. The invasion began with coordinated attacks by fire from newly received Soviet made 130mm artillery that had a range of 17 miles. Thousands of 122mm rockets, 130mm artillery shells, and mortar rounds were fired against Fire Support Bases located just south of the DMZ. FSB’s Sarge, Holcomb, Fuller, A-2, A-4, C-1 and C-2 were all hit hard. The preparatory fire was followed by T-34, T-54, T-59 and PT-76 tanks. While tanks were present on all three fronts of the invasion, tank activity was especially prevalent in the Quang Tri area.²

¹ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People’s Army of Vietnam, 1954–*

1975. Trans by Merle L. Pribbenow (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p. 289

² CHECO, The 1972 Invasion of Military Region 1, 15 March 1973, HQ PACAF Directorate of Operations, p. 13



They moved through the Demilitarized Zone with little opposition into Quang Tri Province. Concurrently, a third NVA Division made an easterly push toward Hue, 90 kilometers below the Demilitarized Zone. On the following day, 250 kilometers to the south, in the Central Highlands of Military Region 2, a fourth NVA Division launched its attack in Kontum Province.

This invasion was timed to occur with the beginning of the monsoon season. The monsoon rains and low clouds would limit air attacks on NVA forces. The tactical situation in SEA had changed overnight. This was a multi-divisional, combined Army, conventional thrust. For the first time in this war the NVA integrated armor, air defense and troops into an invasion. Air defense units accompanied the armor as they moved forward. These air defense units moved SA-2 SAMs into SVN and 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm antiaircraft guns. Many of these rapid-fire antiaircraft cannons were radar controlled. The NVA also introduced the Russian SA-7 Strela man portable missile on 29 April 1972. After it's first appearance in South Vietnam in Quang Tri Province the use of the missile also appeared in the vicinities of Dak To, Kontum, and An Loc. During the period 29 April through 30 June 1972 about 75 Strela missiles were launched against US and allied aircraft. Thirteen USAF and eight VNAF aircraft were lost due to Strela firings. This represented an 8.1 kill ratio as compared to about 60:1 for the SA-2 SAM.⁴



³ CHECO, The 1972 Invasion of Military Region 1, 15 March 1973, HQ PACAF Directorate of Operations, p. 9

⁴ United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam. 1972 – 1973 *Command History*

NVA troop with SA-7 antiaircraft missile launcher

The Soviet ZSU-23/4 and the ZSU-57 self propelled antiaircraft systems also saw action for the first time. The ZSU-23-4 was a four-barreled 23mm weapon with the gun dish radar providing on-board fire control.



This integrated air defense would complicate USAF attacks on the invasion forces and claim several U.S. aircraft.

In spite of this formidable antiaircraft defense, morale of USAF aircrews was extraordinarily high.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

One of the reasons for the outstanding morale of US aircrew members was that in the event they were downed, they knew that every possible effort would be made to rescue them. This confidence was a vital factor in maintaining the esprit of air units. There was a practical as well as a humanitarian concern in the rescue effort.

The Third Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group (3rd ARRGp) was charged with providing a combat search and rescue (SAR) capability in Southeast Asia and providing the tactical forces required to rescue and recover personnel engaged in combat operations in or adjacent to hostile territory. Their area of responsibility encompassed an area of more than 1.1 million square miles.

Headquarters 3rd ARRGp was located at Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam. The unit was responsible for the command and control of all USAF rescue and recovery forces in Southeast Asia. In addition it had command and control of all other USAF, USN, USMC, and USA air resources involved in search and rescue operations. This control was exercised through the Joint Rescue Coordination Center which was collocated with the 7th Air Force Tactical Air Control Center (callsign Blue Chip) and the sub-regional Rescue Coordination Center at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. Third ARRGp was under operational control of the Commander, Seventh Air Force, and the Commander,

3rd ARRGp served on the 7th Air Force staff as Director of Air Rescue. Sub-units were located operational bases used as by the USAF in SEA.

When a situation requiring the use of rescue resources was reported to the JRCC from any source, a decision was made as to who should handle the rescue. As a rough rule the areas were divided as follows:

- The JRCC handled rescues in the Republic of Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos and the Khmer Republic south of 14 degrees north.
- The RCC at Nakhon Phanom (callsign Jack), controlled those missions in Thailand, Laos, republic of Vietnam north of 14 degrees north, and all of North Vietnam west of five miles inland from the Gulf of Tonkin.
- The USN normally handled rescues over water or up to five miles inland in North Vietnam.

In rescue operations, however, time was of the essence and these geographic divisions were not permitted to interfere with a rescue if circumstances dictated otherwise. The nearest available rescue vehicle which could safely accomplish the mission was utilized regardless of the service to which it belonged.

To accomplish the combat SAR mission the 3rd ARRGp was equipped with the following type of aircraft:

- The HH-53 Jolly Green Giant helicopter was the primary long range aircrew recovery vehicle. This helicopter was on ground alert at strategic points throughout Southeast Asia and was also placed in airborne orbit as necessary to meet specific requirements of the tactical and strategic forces operations. The HH-53 had armor protection and was equipped with three 7.62 miniguns. It was equipped with a refueling probe which mated with a drogue on the HC-130 King aircraft. It was the ability to refuel which gave the helicopter the long range required for distant rescue. The hoist in the helicopter could be used with a stokes litter or a jungle penetrator which could be lowered and recovered through the dense foliage.
- The HC-130P King aircraft performed the role of command and control by directing the rescue. The King was also the airborne refueling tanker for the helicopters. Because of its vulnerability, the HC-130P did not usually go into the high threat areas, but rather orbited nearby in a less hostile area.
- The HH-43 Pedro helicopter provided local base rescue support at all Southeast Asia bases where tactical aircraft were assigned. The Pedro's provided a vehicle for close in rescue and fire fighting crash rescue capability through the use of the rotor wash and a special fire suppression kit designed to create a foam corridor through which an approach to a burning aircraft could be made for rescue purposes.
- On rescues in hostile areas, a fourth member of the SAR task force was the accompanying tactical fighters (RESCAP). The function of the RESCAP was to protect the Jolly Green Giants, to assist in locating the survivors, to suppress hostile fire in the area of the rescue, to keep the enemy away from the downed airman, and to recommend

the safest routes of ingress and egress for the helicopters. The RESCAP function was performed up until November by the A-1E, known, when performing this duty, as the "Sandy." It was a rugged airplane, well armed with an excellent close support weapons system. Its main disadvantages were that it was slow and thus lost critical time in reaching the rescue area, and secondly, it had no aerial refueling capability. In November the alert commitment for RESCAP was assumed by the A-7D, which also retained the callsign Sandy. This change offered advantages. The A-7D could reach the scene much faster and could also search a wider area in the same period of time. The A-7D could also refuel in the air from KC-135s and could thus stay in the vicinity for a long time. It was an excellent close support tactical fighter. It also had sophisticated electronic equipment which gave it an all-weather navigation capability lacking in the A-1E.

The SAR area had to be approached cautiously, as the enemy frequently captured survival radios of downed pilots and activated the distress signal. The condition of the downed airmen was also a factor in how the rescue was conducted. If the survivor was injured a PJ from the rescue aircraft might have to go and get him.

The SAR task force normally consisted of two HH-53C Jolly Green Giants in a high / low configuration (i.e., one at treetop level and one at higher altitude), an HC-130 King, and four to six Sandy's. In addition, there was other aircraft support as FACs, MiGCAP, IRONHAND, ECM, or others as demanded by the circumstances of the missions. The King acted as airborne mission coordinator to direct the entire effort.

The SAR mission was part of the planning in any large strike. The rescue team orbited in one of several tracks which were located out of the high threat area but close enough so they could reach a downed pilot or crewman quickly. For example, on a LINEBACER special mission to North Vietnam, the SAR orbits were usually located in eastern Laos in the area known as the Gorilla's Head (eastern BARREL ROLL). The SAR mission in high threat areas was also given combat air patrol (SARCAP) to protect it from the MiG threat. As a measure of effectiveness, during the North Vietnamese offensive from 30 March to 15 August, 182 aircrew members were downed in South and North Vietnam. Of these 182 crewmen, 83 were recovered.⁵

⁵ Ibid., Annex B, 36-39.

**SEARCH AND RESCUE STATISTICS
1972**

MONTH	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN 73
COMBAT													
SAVES.....	3	3	17	10	158	11	7	6	19	6	12	22	10
NON COMBAT													
SAVES.....	6	4	6	2	10	9	10	14	2	14	17	3	7
SAR													
SORTIES*	39	75	92	247	129	306	158	90	88	115	204	198	35

* Includes all sorties chargeable to the rescue Sandys, Kings, and other aircraft as well as the helicopters.

RESCUES PERFORMED BY AIRCRAFT AND BY CATEGORY OF PERSON RESCUED

AIRCRAFT	USAF C/MC	USN C/MC	USA C/MC	FWMAF C/MC	CIV C/MC	TOTAL C/MC
HH-43.....	9/16	0/2	3/0	9/1	0/0	21/19
HH-53.....	83/21	19/9	87/4	31/3	35/9	255/46
HC-130P.....	0/33	0/0	0/2	0/0	0/5	0/40**
TOTAL.....	92/70	19/11	90/6	40/4	35/14	276/105

* C—Combat; MC—Non Combat

** MEDEVAC

Source: 3d ARRG Records

30 March 72

Spectre 22 shot down in Laos by AAA. First use of AC-130s in SAR. The crewmembers were rescued on 1 April 72. PJs on this included Morrow, McGrath and Goodlett.

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p69-71, p76

31 March 72

39th ARRS at Cam Ranh Bay deactivated. Their HC-130's moved to Det. 4, 3rd ARRGp at Korat RTAFB.

U.S. troop strength in Vietnam was reduced to 95,500.

APRIL

During the first week of April, General Ryan ordered General Lavelle, 7th AF Commander to Washington DC. Because of allegations of ordering unauthorized air strikes into North Vietnam. In spite of evidence to the contrary, General Ryan advised him to take a medical retirement that would likely include 50 percent disability, meaning that much of Lavelle's retired pay would avoid taxes because of his health issues—Lavelle had a heart murmur following a heart attack as well as emphysema and a variety of other ailments.

On the morning of April 6, as Lavelle signed his retirement papers, President Nixon met in his White House office with Lavelle's replacement as Seventh Air Force Commander, Lieutenant General John Vogt, Jr. Nixon was unaware of Lavelle's dismissal.

Throughout their ensuing April 6 meeting, Nixon referenced the North Vietnamese offensive that had finally begun on March 30—a massive, 120,000-man assault backed by large numbers of tanks and 130mm heavy artillery—and how airpower should thwart it.

Nixon further believed that the Air Force's performance thus far had been inadequate because of a failure to fly in poor weather. He declared, "If the Air Force at this point doesn't do an adequate job at this time, and screws it up, as it has been screwed up before, because of a lack of imagination, a lack of willingness to take risks . . . this is probably the last time the Air Force is going to have a combat role.

General Lavelle determined that he would receive no high-level backing and decided to retire. On April 7, Ryan announced that Lavelle had retired from the Air Force "for personal and health reasons"¹⁵⁵ and that Vogt, who was promoted to four-star general that day, would replace him as Seventh Air Force Commander.

1 Apr 72

Commander in Chief, Pacific, Admiral John S. McCain, sent a message to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer. In it he wrote:

"For the past two and one half months, General Abrams and I have consistently requested the authority to conduct those operations deemed necessary to preclude generation of the critical enemy threat which was predicted and now has developed. Many of the requests either have been denied, or approved with seriously limiting provisions. The effect of the current constraints on the field commander are clearly evidenced by the serious battlefield situation now existing in northern RVN MR-1.

"Reevaluation of Washington policies with respect to the freedom of action allowed our tactical commander on the battlefield is imperative. He has the overall mission of taking those actions necessary to help ensure success of the Vietnamization program. Forces are available which are capable of far more effective employment in support of that mission. The missing element is the authority to use those forces as required by the enemy threat, operations and the changing situation. This means the authority to take the right act at the right place at the right time."

McCain's analysis led him to this conclusion: "Failure to provide recommended authorities will place at unacceptable risk the achievement of United States' objectives in Vietnam and invite physical and eventual political occupation of a portion of South Vietnam by North Vietnamese force of arms." Therefore: "In view of the extraordinary implications of the current situation in MR-1 and MR-2 to our total national investment in Southeast Asia, I request the foregoing views be brought to the attention of highest authority." (Message from Mc-Cain to Moorer, April 1, attached to Moorer Diary, April 1; National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman)

1Apr 72

3 ARRGp consists of two squadrons; 37th ARRS at DaNang and 40th ARRS at Nakhon Phanom. As of 1 April 72, the organization of the units of the 3rd ARRGp was as follows:

CHECO SAR Operations in SEA 1Jan71-31Mar72, p3 & ARRS AOB p115

1 Apr 72

The HC-130 unit of Det. 4, 3rd ARRGp completed its move from Cam Ranh Bay, RVN to Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

2 Apr 72

By the end of April 2nd Eight ARVN fire support bases had fallen, leaving only three major bases in the northern part of Quang Tri Province in South Vietnamese hands. The North Vietnamese pushed on, threatening Quang Tri City as the South Vietnamese troops fell back.

EB-66C, s.n. 54-0466, callsign Bat 21 assigned to 42nd TEWS, Korat RTAFB shotdown by a North Vietnamese SA-2 missile on Easter Sunday, 2 April 1972, south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in the area of Cam Lo (N16.50 - E107.01) on the north side of the Mieu Giang River. Bat 21B SAR lasted from 2 April through 13 April.

P38-40#4 p117-118#7

2 Apr 72

Sporadic rocket attacks against American installations at DaNang and Marble Mountain were reported during the month. On 2 April DaNang Air Base received a 122mm rocket attack that killed 14 Vietnamese civilians and wounded 25. American losses were 11 wounded, one aircraft and three trucks destroyed, and three aircraft damaged. Rocket attacks continued almost daily at DaNang.³

2 Apr 72

The first successful SAR of the quarter for the 37th ARRS began on 2 April 1972. Jolly Green 67 flown by Captain Rodney Griffith and Jolly Green 65 flown by Major Gerald Lange were scrambled on a feet wet SAR for Nail 81. Fifteen minutes after 67 & 65 were airborne they were advised that a U.S. Navy destroyer had rescued the Nail 81 survivors. While airborne for the feetwet pickup, Bat 21 was shot down and the two Alpha birds remained airborne as a SAR was initiated for the recovery of the Bat 21 crewmembers.

While holding feet wet for a possible pick up of Bat 21 an AH-1G Huey Cobra, call sign Blue Ghost 28, reported he had been hit and was heading for the coast. As he came out of the mouth of the Cua Viet river Jolly Green 67 joined on his wing Blue Ghost 28 began to lose flight controls and landed 100 yards inland from the coast. Jolly Green 67 landed as close to Blue Ghost 28 as possible and the survivors climbed on board, Captain Griffith proceeded to Hue Phu Bai to refuel and let the survivors off. He then RTB'd DaNang.

Blueghost 28, AH-1 Cobra gunship receives major battle damage while attempting to recover Bat 21B. Blueghost made it out of the vicinity of Bat 21 and landed his heavily damaged helicopter on the beach, south of Quang Tri. Rescued by Jolly 67. The crew of 28 was Captain Rosebeary (pilot) and his gunner was Warrant Officer Gorski. After their recovery JG 67 dropped them off at their base at Hue Phu Bai. JG 67 crew included Griffith pilot, Peck copilot, Prater FE, and PJs LaPointe & Aillet

Note: Al Avery & Bill Pearson on High bird. P.36 Whitcomb

Jolly Green 67

Jolly Green 65

AC Captain Rodney S. Griffith
CP Captain Douglas A. Peck
HM TSgt Roy D. Prater
RS Sgt Robert L. LaPointe
RS A1C Michael A. Aillet

AC Major Gerald J. Lange
CP Captain Gary A. Dake
HM SSgt William A. Simm
RS TSgt Allen J. Avery
RS A1C William R. Pearson

Excerpted from 37th ARRS mission report 2Apr72 pasted below

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: 2 April 1972 DECLASSIFIED

MISSION NUMBER: A-3-028/2

MISSION OBJECTIVE: Blue Ghost 28

FLIGHT DESIGNATION: Jolly Green 67

LOCATION: Approximately 1647N 10719E

SAVES: 2 Combat Saves

1. Summary of SAR Actions: At 0730Z Jolly Green 67 and 65 were scrambled on a fast wet SAR (Mail 81, CV-10). At 0752Z JG 67 and 65 were airborne and proceeding fast wet toward Quang Tri. Weather for take off was 1000 foot overcast and visibility 4 to 6 miles and haze. No difficulty was encountered enroute. At 0745Z we were advised that a US Navy destroyer had picked up Mail 81, but we were to remain on scene for a possible extraction of US Advisers at Quang Tri. During this time Bat 21 (24-66) was reported down 11 NM Northwest of Quang Tri and a SAR was initiated. At approximately 1050Z we heard Blue Ghost 28 (A1-10) report over guard frequency that he was hit and wing man Blue Ghost 39 was going down. Blue Ghost 28 reported he had lost tail rotor control and also was losing main transmission oil. As he came out of the south of the Chu Viet river I joined in formation with him. He reported he was losing his flight controls and was going to land on the beach approximately 2 miles south of the river. He landed in a marshy area approximately 100 yards inland. I also landed in the marsh and the two survivors were on board within 15 seconds. At 1100Z I was airborne again and holding fast wet. At 1115Z I proceeded to Phu Bai to refuel and drop off the survivors. By the time refueling was complete it was dark and the Bat 21 survivor had been bedded down for the night. At approximately 1200Z Jolly Green 67 and 65 returned to DaNang.

2. Call Sign	Sorties	Hours
JG 67	1	5.5
JG 65	1	6.0

3. Unknown

4. Unknown

5. Jolly Green 67 Jolly Green 65

AC - Capt Rodney S. Griffith	AC - Major Gerald J. Lange
CP - Capt Douglas A. Peck	CP - Capt Gary A. Dake
HM - TSgt Roy D. Prater	HM - SSgt William A. Simm
RS - Sgt Robert L. LaPointe	RS - TSgt Allen J. Avery
RS - A1C Michael A. Aillet	RS - A1C William R. Pearson

Rodney S. Griffith
RODNEY S. GRIFFITH, Captain, USAF
Aircraft Commander, Jolly Green 67

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Classified by
SUBJECT TO DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS
3/10/98

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification
action is required

2-9 Apr 72

On 2 April the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directed TACAIR strikes and naval gunfire support on the North up to 25 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone to be directed against supply concentrations. On 3 April the authority was extended to 17° 30' north latitude and then to 18° on 4 April. On 5 April offensive TACAIR strikes against North Vietnam were authorized under the code name FREEDOM TRAIN. On 9 April operations were to be extended to 19° north. On 16 April the Hanoi-Haiphong areas were struck on Operation FREEDOM PORC BRAVO, a combined assault by USN and USAF TACAIR and USAF B-52s in North Vietnam. All through April authorities were broadened until operations were authorized below 20° north except for specifically forbidden targets.

3 Apr 72

37th ARRS helicopters make two attempted pickups of Bat 21B. Jolly Green 65 and Jolly Green 66 each tried but due to intense ground fire, in which they sustained major battle damage, they were unable to rescue the downed pilot.

3 Apr 72

By Byron Hukee

As you read the below Pacific STARS & STRIPES article, keep in mind, the combat aircrews I've interviewed who were in-theater at that time WERE NOT informed by 7th Air Force Intelligence that North Vietnam had "invaded" South Vietnam ...until circa ~5 April 1972 (a week into the 1972 Easter Offensive) Chiến dịch Xuân hè 1972.

Combatant pilots, such as A-1 Skyraider Capt Don Morse (Bat 21 SAR-OSC) were surprised and caught off-guard by the density/lethality of PAVN AAA/SAM activity over Lt Col Iceal Hambleton's E&E position in northern Military Region 1, below the DMZ. This lack of aircrew G-2 briefing contributed to the shootdown on this date of OV-10A 'Nail 38' (Alpha-POW, Bravo-rescued) and nearly got Morse killed the following day (4 April 1972).

Had these aircrews had access to a copy of Pacific STARS & STRIPES, they would have more 'situational awareness' than provided from their formal 7th AF/IN professionals.



Monday, April 3, 1972

30,000 'INVADERS' HURL BACK S. VIETS

SAIGON (AP and UPI) --South Vietnam's northern quarter erupted Saturday into the bloodiest battlefield since the 1968 Tet offensive, and the commander of government forces said more than 30,000 North Vietnamese troops had invaded Quang Tri Province.

The South Vietnamese, calling it an "invasion" from North Vietnam, reeled back 10 miles from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) frontier between the two countries. They set up a makeshift defense line along the Cua Viet River, also known as the Dong Ha.

By nightfall Saturday, the South Vietnamese had abandoned 10 outposts of the DMZ defense line as well as the town of Cam Lo (population 50,000). Streams of refugees had been walking the dusty roads south from Cam Lo since the Communist artillery barrage began Thursday.

A heavy cloud cover stretching for miles on both sides of the mountainous DMZ buffer zone cut allied aerial counter-attacks down to almost zero.

Despite the setbacks, Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of the northernmost 1st Corps, claimed his forces had killed thousands of North Vietnamese troops. He said South Vietnamese infantry, Marine and armored cavalry units are now engaged in "several bloody battles."

Lam, after touring the northern quarter, said three North Vietnamese divisions, three artillery regiments, and antiaircraft units armed with surface-to-air missiles had crossed the Demilitarized Zone to invade Quang Tri Province.

He left no doubt that the offensive Allied officers had been predicting since late last year was under way. Quang Tri city has been mentioned as one of the main Communist objectives.

Lam's brief statement was released by the Saigon military command and newsmen did not have an opportunity to question him. A North Vietnamese division numbers about 10,000 men at full strength.

The cloud cover effectively grounded two squadrons of U.S. Air Force F4 Phantom jets at Da Nang, about 40 planes, and more than twice that number of Navy fighter-bombers aboard carriers in the South China Sea.

The clouds, did not, however, stop U.S. helicopters from flying support for South Vietnamese troops, trying to rescue the handful of American advisers and artillery spotters still in the DMZ area --- and getting shot up in the process. Ten copters were hit but none were shot down.

One American Marine lieutenant died while being carried by helicopter from the abandoned South Vietnamese base at which he had been an advisor, UPI correspondent Stewart Kellerman reported from Da Nang.

Three American advisers were still at the town of Cam Lo when it was overrun. Their fate was not known. Communist antiaircraft machine guns at Cam Lo fired on U.S. helicopters. The chopper crew did not return the fire for fear of hitting the civilians remaining there.

The choppers found antiaircraft fire everywhere. "It seemed as though there was a 51-caliber (antiaircraft machine gun) on every single hill," one pilot told Kellerman. "There were muzzle blazes all over the place. Every hill looked like a Christmas tree from the machine gun fire."

Other pilots said they had sighted columns of Communist troops marching south.

Gen. Frederick Weyand, deputy U.S. commander in Vietnam, flew to Da Nang Saturday and conferred with General Lam. Military sources said the few dozen Americans not already evacuated from the northernmost Quang Tri Province would be moved out within 24 hours.

Lam, after flying over Quang Tri Province by helicopter, was quoted by military sources as saying, "the North Vietnamese are crossing the demarcation line to invade Quang Tri Province."

In Saigon, the South Vietnamese command claimed its troops were still in the area of bases they had abandoned and would take the counter-offensive shortly to reoccupy them.

The big rear-area combat base of Quang Tri, three miles north of Quang Tri city, was attacked Saturday night by Communist commandos. They set up recoilless rifle positions at the edge of the base and fired over the barbed wire at the defenders.

MACV announced that American troop withdrawals were continuing despite the enemy offensive.

A powerful U.S. air and naval strike force of 200 warplanes and five Navy destroyers spearheaded an allied counterassault to drive troops of three North Vietnamese divisions back from South Vietnam's northern cities and towns.

3 Apr 72

1st Lt Mark N. Clark (Nail 38 Bravo) 23rd TASS, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB who was shotdown in his Pave Nail OV-10A s.n. 68-3789 over enemy territory on Monday, 3 April 1972, while supporting the BAT 21B SAR effort. Clark's OV-10A pilot, Capt Bill Henderson (Nail 38 Alpha) ejected successfully; however, landed with injuries on the north side of the Mieu Giang River and was captured by NVA forces. Henderson became a POW until being released by North Vietnam in 1973.

3 Apr 72

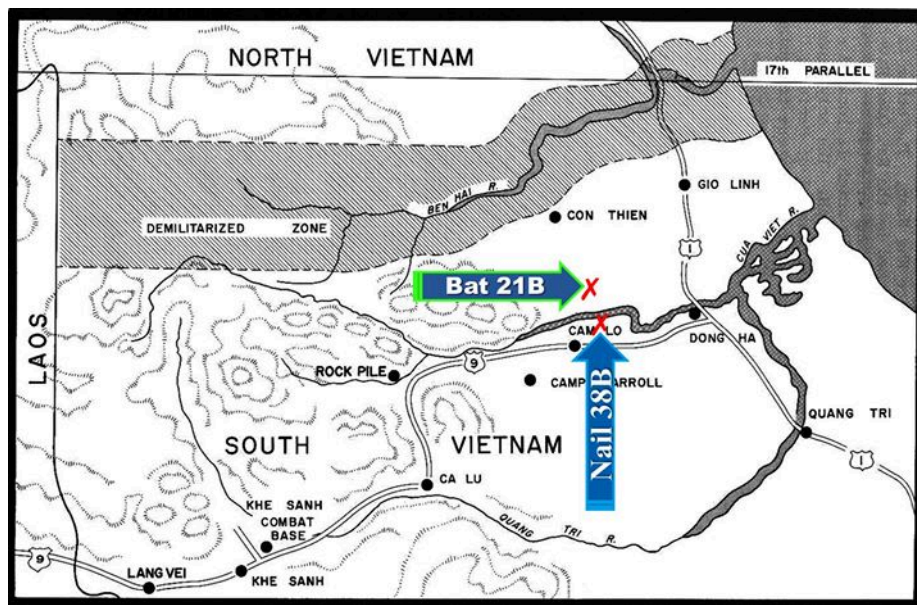
by Bob Laymon (see ms word file 3Apr72 Nail 38 for more pictures)

Monday, 3 April 1972: Nail 38 led Jolly 65 down through the clouds to attempt the rescue of Lt Col Hambleton, call sign BAT 21 Bravo. Nail 38, an OV-10A from the 23rd TASS at NKP was equipped with electronic gear enabling its crew to get a rapid "fix" on its rescue target.

However, Nail 38 was subsequently shotdown that day by a PAVN SA-2 SAM (loss coordinates: 16.5022N / 107.0455E). The crew, Capt William J. Henderson, pilot and 1st Lt Mark N. Clark, navigator both successfully ejected and parachuted down behind enemy lines.

Clark landed on the south bank of the Mieu Giang River, 2 km southeast of BAT 21B's position. Clark evaded capture for 8 days and was subsequently rescued by USN SEAL LT Tom Norris.

Henderson landed with injuries on the north side of the Mieu Giang River and was subsequently captured eight hours later by occupying NVA forces. Henderson became a POW until being released by North Vietnam on 27 March 1973.



3 Apr 72

From Bob Laymon - Capt Don Sutton, Jolly 65 Bravo -- In his own words:

It was 3 April 1972 that we made our rescue attempt. Bat-21B went down the previous day on the 2nd of April. LCDR Jay Crowe, U.S. Coast Guard and I were Alpha Low for April 3rd, which meant that we were going to be the first rescue attempt for Lt Col Hambleton. I can't remember how long we orbited before making the run in. Darrell Whitcomb's research says that it was about 9:30am, I think. There were a lot of clouds over the area, so we didn't see much until we started to descend. The Nail FAC (turns out that it was Nail 38, also shutdown later that day with Capt Bill Henderson & 1st Lt Mark Clark) led us down through the clouds. We didn't get below the clouds by much (can't remember the altitude, but probably 2,000 feet, or so) before we started taking AAA hits.

As the copilot, my responsibility was to ride the flight controls in case of injury to the AC and to monitor the cockpit instruments. I looked outside a little, but really concentrated on what was happening in the cockpit. Outside, I could see a convoy of tanks that we were flying right into. Inside, annunciator lights started going on and I called out what they were, etc. We lost one hydraulic system and then started losing instruments.

Jay was trying to stop the helicopter's descent and get going back into the clouds. His instruments were gone and he told me to take control of the aircraft, which I did. We were also losing hydraulic pressure on #1 system which was the primary for the main rotor and backup for the tail rotor (we had already lost #3 hydraulic system which was primary for tail rotor).

I noticed right away that I had to have the left rudder pedal all the way depressed to keep us flying somewhat straight. As it turned out, Jay and I both had to keep the rudder pedal depressed, because neither of us could do it alone. We had just enough hydraulic pressure on the tail rotor to keep us from spinning. We got back up in the clouds and the enemy hits stopped. When we got above the clouds, we made sure everybody was OK and did a battle damage assessment and controllability assessment. We weren't sure whether we would have to bail out or not, but prepared the crew to do so, if necessary.

We flew back to Hue-Phu Bai AAF and made a run-on landing on the Phu Bai taxiway. We could never have hovered due to the hydraulic system problems. As we touched down, we saw a crater in the taxiway (122mm rocket damage) that we were headed for and had to jerk the airplane up and over it. That was a little tough because of the hydraulic issues. When we pulled up on the collective, we couldn't keep it straight, but got it squared away on the other side of the crater. We rolled to a stop and took some very deep breaths.

I can't remember whether it was Alpha High who followed us in to Hue-Phu Bai and took us back to Da Nang, but we left the plane there for maintenance. Maintenance made some quick fixes to the hydraulic lines, and filled it with MIL-H-5606 fluid. Another crew flew it back to Da Nang later that day, I believe.

We were part of the history of the BAT-21B SAR effort, but the real heroes are the six soles who lost their lives a couple of days later during the shutdown of Jolly Green 67.

4 Apr 72

37th ARRS transferred one HH-53C (69-5788) from DaNang to the 40th ARRS at NKP

FSB Anne, SW of Quang Tri City falls to NVA.

NVA forced the ARVN to abandon its last remaining South Vietnamese defenses on the north bank of the Cua Viet River. The NVA at this time paused briefly to regroup its forces.

In a further response to Eastertide, President Nixon authorizes a massive bombing campaign targeting all NVA troops invading South Vietnam along with B-52 air strikes against North Vietnam. Nixon declares, *"Everything we do must concentrate on breaking the back of the enemy. We will use as many reinforcements as necessary. The bastards have never been bombed like they're going to be bombed this time."* JCS orders 20 more B-52's to Guam, 8 tankers to Okinawa, 2 USMC TACAIR squadrons to SVN, and 1 F-105 and 2 F-4 squadrons to Thailand. History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 172

By 4 April another NVA attack was underway in Binh Long Province, 100 kilometers north of Saigon and 600 kilometers below the Demilitarized Zone. Elements of two VC Divisions, again supported by tanks, attacked from the Khmer Republic. This posed an immediate threat to Saigon down Route 13 and the Saigon River corridor. The magnitude of the initial invasion was such that six fully equipped divisions entered South Vietnam on three separate fronts in a coordinated attack. They used conventional tactics and introduced weaponry beyond that of a guerrilla campaign.⁴

From email - I can attest to the date (April 4th) of 780 being battle damaged. I took several pictures of the Sandy when it was towed into our ramp area. Probably everybody in the area took a picture. It was amazing that Don Morse was able to nurse it back to DaNang
Don Sutton (class of 68)
Jolly pilot at DaNang during that period

From Email - the two airplane pic must definitely have been on 4 or 5 April 1972 (I left NKP on the big C-141 Freedom Bird at 1000hrs the morning of 4 April). However, the nose art of 526, "Redtag 66 Express", remains an interesting mystery!!! I actually flew my last sortie nursing a BAT 21 Sandy bird that had come over from NKP a day earlier, and had a bad prop regulator—very interesting single ship across the trail at night with a fluctuating prop, but I made it!
Randy Jayne

4 Apr 72 See ms word file 4Aor72 Sandy 05 for 27 page of details

Sandy 05 SAR - "MAYDAY – MAYDAY – MAYDAY, Sandy 05 ...I'm hit! ...I'm hit!". AAA had hit the A-1H in your right wing. He then transmitted that Sandy 05's right wing was on fire. The next call was that 20mm ammo bay was "cooking-off". Sandy 05 declared an IFE and was flying southeast from Cam Lo towards the beach on the South China Sea, then south to our location @ Da Nang AB.

A-1 pilot Randy Jayne's A-1H, s.n. 139-780 battle damaged on 4 April 1972 [subsequent gear-up landing] by Capt Don Morse. The photo also shows Hill 327, "Freedom Hill" in the background, fixing this location as the 37th ARRS



A-1H, s.n. 139-780 battle damage

This aircraft never flew again after 4 April 1972 (abandoned "Class 26" - DaNang)

Photo used with the permission of Lt Col (Ret.) Byron "Hook" Hukee
A-1 Skyraider Association



Photo credit: *Then*-Capt. Don Sutton, HH-53 pilot, 37 ARRS



Photo credit: *Then*-Capt. Don Sutton, HH-53 pilot, 37 ARRS



A-1H, s.n. 139-780 on Sandy SAR alert, OLAA, 56 SOW, DaNang

5 Apr 72

Summary of Conclusions of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting

Source is: FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT, 1969-1976 VOLUME VIII, VIETNAM, JANUARY- OCTOBER 1972, OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, June 2010, p. 215-216

Washington, April 5, 1972

SUBJECT

Vietnam

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

—General Abrams and his senior staff should try to meet daily with General Vien and the senior members of the Vietnamese General Staff.

—The two squadrons of Marine F-4s based in Japan and three squadrons of Air Force F-4s based in the U.S. will be sent to Vietnam

Laird ordered the deployment of the five squadrons that day. However, as he pointed out in a memorandum to Nixon, one of the five was made up of F-105 Thunderchiefs rather than F-4 Phantoms. (Ibid., Box 117, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam Offensive Permanent File (2 April 72)) According to the minutes of the meeting, on the relationship between air power and policy, Kissinger said: "I cannot stress enough the President's determination to do whatever is necessary. He will not be run out of Vietnam. He wants no excuses from subordinates or commanders that he has not done enough. The North Vietnamese have committed their whole army while we still have massive air power available, and we will take advantage of it."

5 Apr 72

On 5 April GEN Creighton W. Abrams made a request for additional TACAIR deployments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff replied the same day by ordering several fighter squadrons based in the United States to immediately deploy to SEA.

CINCPAC recommends aerial mining of Haiphong Harbor

During the period from 1 April 1972 to 24 May the US had augmented its combat air fleet by nearly 500 aircraft, which permitted the very large increase in the sortie rate. The capability to bring worldwide assets to bear, to transport entire air wings with their men and equipment across the globe and have them fully operational in such a short time, was a capability that the enemy probably underestimated but which was impressed upon him in a very forceful way. Within a short time the enemy faced the largest air fleet he had yet confronted.

6 Apr 72

Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 57, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Trips, Haig, Alexander M., April 1972. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only

Washington, April 6, 1972

SUBJECT

SEA Contingency Planning

The following is a suggested program of steps needed to develop an operational plan for further actions against North Vietnam should the current enemy offensive continue unchecked.

Objectives. The objectives of this intense military effort against NVN would be:

—To force NVN to halt the current offensive and withdraw forces from territory recently occupied in MR-1.

—To force NVN to negotiate seriously on the basis of our peace proposals.

Assumptions. The primary assumptions underlying this concept are as follows:

—South Vietnam has failed to stop the current offensive in MR-1 and considerable territory has been lost. The situation in MR-2 (and possibly western MR-3) is also deteriorating.

—The conduct of U.S. air and naval actions authorized to date and under active consideration has failed to alter the situation.

—The President accepts the domestic and diplomatic price of an expanded air and naval effort against NVN, including the risk of cancellation of the Soviet summit.

—The effort should achieve objectives quickly and have a major impact well before the planned Moscow trip.

A more detailed list of assumptions is at Tab A.2

Military Concept. Following a buildup of forces to the maximum extent possible within time constraints, an intense no-holds barred air and naval campaign against the North is envisaged. This would include:

—Bombing of all areas of NVN (except a buffer zone along the PRC border), including the Haiphong port area and military targets in Hanoi. The strikes would be as intense as possible within the constraints of aircraft availability and concentrated on areas likely to produce the maximum psychological and military effect. Rules of engagement and target selection would be liberal.

—A companion naval campaign with shore bombardment all along the coast, the mining of Haiphong and other lesser ports, blockade of ports and interdiction of coastal shipping.

—A parallel psychological campaign against the NVN people and the leadership. All possible diplomatic actions would be taken to pressure NVN to stop the aggression and negotiate.

Considerations

In addition to the political and diplomatic implications of these steps, there are important military considerations. The assets available to implement the plan are likely to be about half those used in 1968 during the major bombing campaign, and there are difficult time constraints on initiating actions likely to cause heavy military and psychological damage to NVN prior the Summit. Unless we are willing to begin the operation piecemeal, nearly three weeks will be needed to plan and position forces. Thus, even if you give an early go-ahead for contingency planning, it is likely to be near the end of April before the attacks commence. This would be less than one month before the Moscow trip.

In this timeframe it is problematical whether these measures would achieve the objective of forcing the DRV to the bargaining table. There is, however, a greater likelihood that they would force the enemy to halt his offensive and facilitate an ARVN counteroffensive. In any event, these measures would enhance U.S. credibility in light of earlier warnings and the extreme provocation by the DRV.

Recommendation

Given the need to start detailed contingency planning promptly, I recommend you seek the President's approval of the draft directive to Secretary Laird at Tab D.

6 Apr 72

Bombing of North Vietnam, halted since Nov. 1, 1968, resumes

President orders the USS Midway to steam from California to Vietnam giving 7th Fleet 5 attack carriers. USS Saratoga ordered from Atlantic to WESTPAC.

6 Apr 72

37th ARRS loses one of its HH-53 (68-10365) helicopters and a crew of six when it is shot down. JG 67 was shot down on Bat 21 SAR. KIAs were Captain Peter H. Chapman II (pilot), 1Lt John H. Call III (copilot), TSgt Roy Prater (FE), TSgt Allen J. Avery (PJ), Sgt William R. Pearson (PJ) and Sgt James Alley (AP)

I was on the high bird with Major Scott as my pilot. We were orbiting nearby when the shoot down occurred.

TECHNICAL SERGEANT ALLEN J. AVERY and SERGEANT WILLIAM R. PEARSON. On 2 April 1972, three days after the North Vietnamese began a massive surge into the South, Bat 21 and Bat 22, a pair of EB-66; electronic warfare planes are escorting a flight of B-52 bombers on a mission. Surface-to-air missiles are launched at Bat 21, hitting it broadside. Lieutenant Colonel Iceal E. Hambleton is blown out of the aircraft, initiating one of the longest and most complicated recovery missions of the war. It is long and complicated because of Hambleton's location: smack in the middle of "bad guy" country on the DMZ. It is heavily fortified with every weapon in the North Vietnamese arsenal and manned by seasoned combat soldiers. On 6 April, it is decided that a recovery attempt will be made by Jolly Greens from the 37th ARRS at DaNang AB, RVN. The HH-53 comes in low and fast. The forward air control aircraft pilot tries to warn the Jolly crew of a large weapons concentration, but is too late. The Jolly is hit and catches fire. It rolls to one side and crashes, killing all on board including Sergeants Avery and Pearson. Many crewmembers and aircraft are lost before Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton is finally recovered on 13 April.

Source = Pararescue - 50 years

7 Apr 72

American forces received unrestricted authority to bomb targets in the North, and B-52s over the next month flew more than 700 missions over communist territory.

On April 7, 1972 an Air Force statement saying Lavelle was retiring for "personal and health reasons." Inevitably, however, the Lavelle matter leaked. On June 10, 1972, the New York Times reported that Lavelle was "demoted after ordering repeated and unauthorized bombing attacks of military targets in North Vietnam."

Excerpts from Diary Entry by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Moorer Diary, July 1970–July 1974.

Washington, April 7, 1972

TELECON/IN—from Dr. Kissinger—Subject: SEA SITREP

HAK is going to talk to the President and wants an update. He wondered why there were only 50 TACAIR strikes in MR-I. I said you do not have the entire day, you have from 0600 to 1600 and they are scattered around. They are having trouble in MR-I, MR-III, so they are not all in one spot.

I went over what is planned and what had been flown to date, the better two or three hour period is at the end of the day in this season. There were 71 [sorties] in

MR-III, 95 in MR-I, 84 north of the DMZ which makes 391 total. He said the President wants to wallop RP-I, that is what they did. HAK said the President wanted to know why they were only attacking SAM sites. They do not have reports on anything else. I said they are attacking POL, SAM sites, Supplies, AA, Coastal Batteries, etc. They think we are only hitting SAMs and that is not true. The President thinks the reporting is lousy and that is a point for Vogt to know.

I told him that I would see if we could get better reports.

He then asked about BDA. The report we get does not have very much BDA, it comes out in OPREP 4s and lags behind. They have to cover fields, ships and remote locations - tie it all together before it will make sense. HAK wants BDA and when Vogt gets out there he wants a more conceptual reporting and what the prospects are. I said I talked to Abrams and he has improved a little bit in the current reports. The only problem is that they lag because of the time it takes the pilots to get back to the fields and carriers and to accumulate the information. The President just has to realize that they are always going to be a little behind.

HAK asked if there was a big fight in MR-III and I said yes. In Kontum Province they had tanks and we flew 95 sorties. This included B-52s. HAK is worrying that Hue and Quang Tri could get cut off. Abe has been asked why 1st division is further south than the 3rd which is not the best division. In South Vietnam Hue is the second capitol. We agreed to put the Airborne Brigade in there to prevent them slicing in between Hue and Quang Tri.

I told him how well I thought the carriers had done, they turned out 391 strikes and soon we will have 2 squadrons of Marines in the act and 2 squadrons of Air Force F-4s from the States, the *Midway* will run it up to somewhere over 500 aircraft.

HAK said for political reasons they want the B-52s as soon as possible. SAC is looking for a good target that is worth the B-52s. The further north you go the greater the MiG threat but also the more valuable the target. HAK wondered if we were willing to risk a B-52. I said I do not have any problem with that and neither do the commanders. We do not want to go for nothing, we want a worthwhile target. I said I tried to give them that impression yesterday when I talked to the Overseas Writers. HAK was pleased with the presentation that I made. He said at the WSAG tomorrow that I should reassure the President that we are really going to work on it and not hold anything back.

HAK is counting on Vogt and I said he will be great. I told HAK that he had to overcome a little inertia. HAK said fire people. I said he will not have any problem in his own command. HAK said they are about ready to replace somebody out there and DePuy would be a good one, some tough-nutted guy. I said if things start moving fast enough then they might do it. (Lieutenant General William E. DePuy, Assistant Vice Chief of the Army)

7 Apr 72

On Friday, 7 April 1972 another Airman was shotdown by an NVA SAM and was the third survivor on the ground a few kilometers northwest of Dong Ha (~ six kilometers northeast of BAT 21B's location). 1st Lt Bruce Walker, OV-10A pilot (call-sign Covey 282 Alpha, s.n. 68-3820) 20th TASS, Da Nang AB, RVN was communicating with overhead FACs as he was E&Eing towards the northeast in hope of an eventual beach rescue, along the southern buffer zone of the DMZ, northeast of Dong Ha. However, 11 days later on Tuesday, 18 April 1972 a Viet Cong cadre tracked Walker down northeast of Dong Ha (in the sand dunes, relatively near his beach objective) and killed him. The OV-10's backseat artillery spotter, 1st Lt Larry Potts, USMC, Covey 282-B, was MIA-BNR.

8 Apr 72

31st (Clark) 38th (Osan) and 33 (Kadena) ARRS HH-3's units were ordered by 41 ARRWg to install armor plate on assigned HH-3's. This was their first indication that some of these aircraft might be deployed to Vietnam. Deployment orders for two HH-3's from Clark and two HH-3's from Kadena to TSN were soon received. On 13 Apr, the two HH-3Es arrived at Clark from Kadena. Pilots and other crew members from Osan were sent to Clark to augment the aircrews being sent to Vietnam. A mission briefing occurred on Friday 13 April at 5 a.m. On 14 April, at 6 a.m. the flight of four HH-3s departed Clark. Two 31st ARRS HC-130 tankers took off two hours later and refueled all the helicopters. The 900 mile flight took 7.6 hours flying and two air refuelings per helicopter. On Monday, 17 April two additional HH-3's from Clark departed and completed the flight to TSN without problem.

Lt Col Harrington was appointed commander of Det 14 3 ARRGp. His unit consisted of 6 HH-3s, 20 pilots, 6 Flight Engineers, 12 Pararescuemen and maintenance specialists. The HH-3s assumed SAR alert for the first time at 0800, Wednesday 19 April 72.

At the same time, 41st ARRWg ordered HC-130 augmentation to 7th AF SAR requirements. Two HC-130 tanker aircraft from Hickam AFB deployed TDY to Clark. A third HC-130 from Yokota was sent TDY to Clark. Along with the four HC-130's permanently assigned to Clark, a total of seven HC-130's were now at Clark. They were tasked each day by 7th AF to provide feetwet orbits off the coast of Vietnam to support the 37th ARRS HH-53's.

Aircrew personnel to support this emergency augmentation to Vietnam came from Clark, Kadena, Osan, Albright AFB, Woodbridge AB UK, Tyndall AFB, Hill AFB and Hickam AFB.

8 Apr 72

Excerpts from Diary Entry by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Moorer Diary, July 1970–July 1974

Washington, April 8, 1972

TELECON/IN—From Dr. Kissinger—Subj: Air Authorities

HAK said the President concurs with Freedom Train to 19 [parallel] but he does not like the way we are using the air forces. He wants to make sure we hit lucrative targets and that we do not stay away from them to hit around 19N. I said Henry that hurts me to think that you have to worry about that. He said the maximum effort will do the most good and we want to get Naval Gun Fire Support up there too. Naturally, we are going to concentrate some around the battlefield and north of the DMZ and then on up further to pick up units of the 325th [North Vietnamese Division]. The President said to watch and he will give you the authority. I said I am watching it 24 hours a day, he does not have to worry about that. He wants as many destroyers shooting as he can get also. I said there are 10 of them going out with *Midway* that will be there in a couple of weeks, in the meanwhile we will have to have the barrels replaced on the ones there because they are shooting so much.

Laird has agreed to hit any MiG south of 20 that is airborne but I want to hit any MiG south of 20. He said you have the authority Tom, the only thing we will not give you right away

is Haiphong. He said get a picture of the truck parks and you will get your authority. We are sending up 2 or 3 drones, they might get shot down, but we are working on it.

Kissinger and Moorer had talked about this authority just an hour earlier. According to Moorer's account of their telephone conversation. "I got Laird to agree to let us declare any aircraft south of 20 hostile. HAK said you can also attack airfields up to 20 degrees and he asked if I told him that. I had a discussion with SecDef on that, he wanted to leave it just airborne aircraft south of 20 and I want it on the ground or in the air."

8 Apr 72

Excerpts from Message From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain) and Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Abrams)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 68, JCS Out General Service Messages, 1-15 April 1972. Top Secret; Flash; Specat; Exclusive. A handwritten note reads: "No Dist."

Washington, April 8, 1972

1. You will shortly receive a directive to conduct:
(A) B52 bombing attack on North Vietnam south of 19 degrees north and
(B) provide Arc Light support to the Barrel Roll area with particular emphasis on the Long Tieng battle. It must be realized that both of these actions have very heavy political as well as military objectives.

2. With respect to item 1.(A) above, the President was extremely out of patience with me this morning. He said that he had indicated his desire that the B52s attack NVN on 6 April and, so far, nothing has happened. He said here is a case where the military commanders have been given authorities and been given the resources over and above those requested and that, so far, nothing other than routine operations have occurred. He fully appreciates the military rationale contained in reference (A), but he wants to give the North Vietnamese as well as the Soviets a clear message that he intends to use whatever force is necessary in light of this flagrant invasion. He does not want to hear any more rationale - he wants action.

3. With respect to item 1. (B) above, as you might imagine, the State Dept is heavily involved in this one. Through State channels considerable concern has been expressed by the Thais with respect to the extent of the air support provided the last few days. The Thais consider that the provision of air support was a quid pro quo for providing Thai irregulars for the battle in Laos. They are now suggesting that if they cannot receive adequate air support then it will be necessary to withdraw the Thai forces from Long Tieng. Consequently, the President desires that some B52 and TACAIR support be provided as indicated in separate message. He believes that the additional resources provided makes this feasible.

4. You should be aware of other actions that the President has directed in order to further build up our capability. They include expansion of the air and gunfire support ship operation from 18 degrees to 19 degrees, as well as approval to assume all MiGs in the air and on the ground south of 20 degrees north to be hostile and subject to attack by air and ship missiles at any time. Further, *Saratoga* has been ordered from the LANTFLT and should arrive in Tonkin Gulf in about 30 days. Last night we ordered SAC to deploy all available B-52D configured aircraft to Guam. This should provide about 28 aircraft in excess of those available a short time ago. We also are giving consideration to additional B-52Gs recognizing that their maximum load is 27 vice the 66 bombs carried by the B-52D aircraft. So far I have been unsuccessful in acquiring authority to operate the B-52D aircraft from Kadena.

I cannot impress upon you too strongly how intensely involved the President is in this operation, how determined he is that the enemy does not succeed in their objectives. He does expect immediate action and forceful response.

9 Apr 72

USMC F-4J squadron in Hawaii ordered to Vietnam. The next day the cruiser USS Newport News in the Atlantic and 2 destroyers in the Mediterranean ordered to sail to WESTPAC.

FSB Pedro attacked by fire and ground assaults. Heavy fighting raged for two days and the NVA took several more FSB's.

Because of the NVA offensive, 41 ARRWg set new ARRS force levels to support Vietnam operations. Seven HC-130's were slated for Clark AB Philippines, where they would conduct the "feet wet" orbit over the South China Sea; seven more HC-130's would be kept at Korat, Thailand. Five HH-53's would be retained at DaNang; seven HH-53's would be positioned at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB; four HH-53's would be placed at Ubon RTAFB, and six HH-3's would be assigned to Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. The movements which took place to support this included pilots from RAF Woodbridge England to NKP, pilots from Hamilton AFB, CA to NKP, two HH-3E's and personnel from Kadena AB Okinawa and four HH-3E's and personnel from Clark AB Philippines. One HC-130N from Yokota AB, Japan to Clark. Two HC-130H aircraft were transferred from Clark, one to Yokota and one to Hickam, to replace the P and N models obtained from those bases. All augmentation aircraft and personnel were in place by the end of April. (History of ARRS, 1 Jul 71 – 30 June 72, Volume 1)

10 Apr 72

In the first ten days of April, 13 enemy tanks were reported destroyed in the Quang Tri area.

B-52's hit targets 145 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone near Vinh, the deepest penetration of North Vietnam in over four years and the first U.S. above the Demilitarized Zone.

GEN John W. Vogt Jr. turned command of the 7th Air Force

12 Apr 72

Excerpts from Diary Entry by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Moorer Diary, July 1970–July 1974. Top Secret

Washington, April 12, 1972

TELECON/IN—From Gen Vogt (Secure)

John said the weather was improving considerably and should be good up through MR1 and workable up to Dong Hoi. I told John I had been getting caustic questions about the air strikes in the north and for him to really lay it in there.

I told him that I got the word last night that they may want a very heavy effort later this weekend well up north. I told him to have his people to do a little studying on the targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area. If the weather breaks we may get all the way up there. I want the Buffalo Hunter (USAF unmanned aircraft carried out photographic reconnaissance missions) pictures of those truck parks. Be sure you know that the President is personally involved in this. We need some good weather.

Vogt said Abrams thinks there is a critical situation in-country. He is reluctant to even release carriers to any operations north of the DMZ unless they are immediately associated with the battle front. Abe does not like us to divert much air to the targets in the north. Every time Abe calls a Corps Commander they tell him they are hanging on because of the TACAIR, send more. Abrams is not sympathetic to the strikes in the north unless he can go to real pay dirt.

The President does not think Abe understands the real problem. Abe is absolutely right from a purely military point of view but we are playing a political problem with the Russians. We spent a long time getting the message to Ho Chi Minh and now we want to get it to the Russians. We are increasing surveillance on Soviet ships; we are going to have submarines surface beside them.

HAK called last night and was concerned if we had authority north of 18° that we would spend most of our time up there. He wants to make sure there is effort to and north of the DMZ and keep that cleaned out. I am having trouble with him because he thinks all we go after is SAM sites and airfields. He wants to hit only logistics. Abrams wanted Vogt to observe the 325th division carefully, watch for armor on Highway 1 because it could be serious if they came through. I told John to go ahead after the division if you found them. You could run up and down Highway 1 and if you could not get the division you could get some supplies.

I said Abe's reports the last few days are optimistic. Vogt said he has made some trips and has reflected Corps Commander's thoughts. They all cry they need all the air they can get.

12 Apr 72

At 1:32 a.m. DaNang AB received a 122mm rocket attack which killed 14 and wounded 25 VN civilians. US losses were 1 KIA 10 WIA, one aircraft and three trucks destroyed, and 5 aircraft damaged. . Rocket attacks continued almost daily at DaNang through 17 April resulting in 16 WIA and 16 aircraft damaged. A rocket defense plan was implemented on 22 April which greatly reduced the rocket attacks on DaNang and Marble Mountain.

Between 30 March and 12 April, 131 enemy tanks were reported destroyed in the Quang Tri area.

source MACV J-3-08 C&C Branch , April 1972

It had been more than a year since the US forces had lost a fixed wing aircraft in an attack on an airfield in South Vietnam. However, on the night of 12 April enemy forces mounted an attack on DaNang during which an EC-47 was destroyed and another five aircraft damaged. One man was killed and 10 injured by the 24 rockets that were fired during the attack.

13 Apr 72

Major James C. Harding awarded the AFC for actions while flying his A-1 Skyraider during the pickup of Major Clyde Smith, call sign Bengal 505 Alpha.

NVA surround An Loc and begin a siege that would last for 8 weeks.

14 Apr 72

18 Soviet built tanks destroyed in An Loc.

15 Apr 72

SAR on USAF OV-10 callsign Covey 229 downed 10 miles north of Hue.

On 15 April Jolly Green 71 and Jolly Green 66 were airborne on a fragged orbit when an OV-10, call sign Covey 229, reported he was making a forced landing on the beach north of Hue. Jolly Green 71 and 66 proceeded to the downed aircraft. Captain Donald A. Sutton in Jolly Green 71 made a tactical approach to the beach about 50 yards from the survivors. JG 71 also had to avoid many villagers that had gathered at the downed aircraft. Both survivors entered the helicopter aft ramp and as soon as Jolly Green 21 entered the area to replace JG 71 for the fragged orbit, Captain Sutton returned to DaNang.

Jolly Green 71
AC Captain Donald A. Sutton
CP Captain David E. Mullenix
HM Sgt. John W. Drayer
RS Sgt Robert LaPointe
RS A1C Michael A. Aillet

Jolly Green 66
AC Captain Rodney S. Griffith
CP Major Christopher C. Korper
HM SSgt William A. Simm
RS SSgt Cole E. Panning
RS Sgt William J. Thompson

JG 71 from 37th ARRS DaNang made the pickup of a 20th TASS pilot and his USMC observer. JG crew included Sutton pilot, Mullenix copilot, Drayer FE, LaPointe & Aillet PJs

15 Apr 72
B-52's hit targets new Hanoi and Haiphong ending a four-year suspension of air strikes in the area

Mid-April 72
Four HH-3E's from Clark AB, RP sent TDY to Det. 14 3 ARRGp at Tan Son Nhut. Other H-3s came from several locations, Osan, Kadena, and Panama. The final unit designation was Det 14, 41 ARRWg after 3 ARRG shut down. Reinforcements required because of NVA April invasion. These HH-3's remained in theater until 15 Sept 1972.

16 Apr 72
At 1:16 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 20 rockets. 8 Airmen WIA and 1 aircraft damaged.

Three MiG-21's were shot down in dogfights over Hanoi

The U.S.S Worden and the U.S.S Buchanan were hit by enemy fire, killing two U.S. Navy men and wounding several others.

17 Apr 72
Secretary of State William P. Rogers announced that Nixon administration would commit everything short of ground troops and nuclear weapons to repel the NVA invasion of the south.
Source MACV Command History, January 1972-March 1973, volume 2, chronology, p. N1

17 Apr 72
Perhaps one of the most effective weapons of the entire war was the CBU-55, a fuel aerosol bomb introduced for VNAF use in 1972. The weapon consisted of three parachute retarded

bomblets that dispensed ethylene oxide in a cloud which penetrated into bunkers and other hiding places. Delayed ignition created high overpressure which exploded light mines, destroyed light fortifications, and eliminated personnel. Although four VNAF bases received a supply of the bombs, DaNang and Bien Hoa AB's were the first to expend the ammunition at Quang Tri when the NGUYEN HUE Offensive began in Province. By the middle of April, Seventh Air Force had provided the VNAF with 654 CBU-55 bombs. Unofficial reports of the effectiveness of the 76 CBU-55s expended by 17 April 1972 indicated outstanding results had been achieved against massed enemy troops. On one particular mission a concentration of 400 enemy personnel were killed by CBU-55s.

United States Military Assistance Command *Vietnam*. 1972 – 1973 *Command History*, Annex B, p36-39

19 Apr 72

The U.S.S Higbee was damaged by a North Vietnamese MiG attack off the coast of North Vietnam

23 Apr 72

CINCPAC again recommends the aerial mining of Haiphong Harbor. First time was on 5 April. He informed Chairman JCS that the plan was “on the shelf” and could be executed within 72 hours.

24 Apr 72

At 1:49 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 13 rockets. 9 Airmen WIA

At 1 a.m. I was sound asleep in my barracks at DaNang Air Base. At 1:49 a.m. sudden thunder clap in the night changed that to instant terror. My roommates and I rolled out of our beds screaming “rocket attack” for the unlikely occurrence that someone had slept through the sounds of incoming 122mm rockets.

A Russian made 122mm rocket weighs 102 pounds, its warhead 42 pounds, 14 pounds of TNT and 28 pounds of shrapnel. Boasting a range of six miles, with a booster 11 miles, the rockets are launched from the rice paddies and hills surrounding DaNang. The Airmen assigned here have dubbed DaNang “Rocket City” because our base was the recipient of more nocturnal visits from these Communist rockets than any other air base in Vietnam. On April 24th DaNang was hit twice, once in the early morning and again that night.

At 1 a.m. 13 rockets hit DaNang. One struck near our modular aircrew barracks. A flash of light, a tremendous boom, and shaking walls launched me from my bed. It was a hell of a way to wake up and I quickly got into my flack vest and helmet. I was already on the ground floor, so I remained on the floor waiting to see if we were going to get more incoming rounds.

By the time I hit the floor, the base siren was already wailing. “,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,”

Every night, we positioned our flack vest and helmet on the floor under or next to our bed. We also made sure that a medical kit was also nearby. Most of us also had some type of small arms that we kept with us in case infiltrators got on base with the intention of killing us. I kept a .45 pistol and half a dozen magazines of ammo under my bed. Most men on DaNang were not armed

by order of the base commander. His policy was that only the security police would be armed. He was afraid that untrained personnel would cause more friendly casualties than enemy. Fortunately for us, our job allowed us easy access to almost any type pistol or rifle. We had quite a collection of weapons given to us by survivors we picked up on rescue missions. They just told their supervisors that their weapons were lost in combat and that was all anyone wanted to hear.

When we went a few minutes without hearing additional explosions, everyone got up and checked out our area to make sure that no one was wounded or killed by the rockets. Tonight we were lucky and there were no injuries in the Jolly Green enlisted aircrew barracks. After we were sure no one was hurt, we went outside to see if anyone near our barracks needed help.

By 2 a.m. we PJs were all back asleep because we needed to get up early in the morning for PT or Jolly Alert duties. I had already been at DaNang over a year by now so I was as used to these attacks as one could become. That was also the reason for my having a room on the ground floor of the barracks. The new guys did not know any better when they arrived and were glad to take a room on the second floor. After their first rocket attack, they suddenly became acutely aware that the higher off the ground you were, the more vulnerable you were to shrapnel. The shrapnel exploded upwards in a 45° angled pattern. If you were on the ground you were relatively safe. If you were standing or above 6 feet from the ground, you were in the area the shrapnel and debris flew around in.

The 122mm rocket is a simple weapon. It is usually transported by two men. One man carried the motor, while another the fuse and warhead. It was fired electrically. The ideal launching device is a rocket launcher, but crossed sticks or a mound of sand would work. The rocket was aimed with an optical sighting device, also Russian manufactured.

The flight line was always a primary target of the rockets. If the enemy was lucky, they could hit and destroy an aircraft. If they missed the aircraft, then the rockets had a fair chance of landing on the runway or nearby barracks or support facilities. Charlie thought that would slow down aircraft operations. But the base had a “Fast Fix Team” that quickly repaired taxiways and runways.

25 Apr 72

At 11 p.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 6 rockets

26 Apr 72

The enemy's introduction into the war of modern tanks, artillery, and other weapons meant that MACV had to reconsider the RVNAF force structure and equipment, retain US air assets which were programmed to redeploy, and increase advisory efforts. During the offensive redeployments continued on schedule with eight US maneuver battalions standing down by 30 June, leaving two in-country. April and May saw over 30,000 US troops leave Vietnam. On 26 April President Nixon announced another MACV 20,000 personnel reduction to a level of 49,000, effective 1 July. The US Army and USAF retained air assets previously scheduled for redeployment.⁵

26 Apr 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon¹

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal Files, Box 75, May 8, 1972 Vietnam Speech. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

Washington, April 26, 1972.

SUBJECT

General Abrams Personal Assessment

Ambassador Bunker has sent you a copy of General Abrams personal assessment of the situation in South Vietnam which is expected to be forwarded through Defense channels. In his appraisal, General Abrams makes the following significant points:

—The clear purpose of the North Vietnamese invasion is to destroy the Armed Forces of South Vietnam, to seize, occupy and hold territory in South Vietnam, control as many South Vietnamese citizens by military force as possible, and cause the downfall of the present South Vietnamese Government.

—The decision to undertake this decision was made many, many months ago. The enemy has abandoned the tactics of the past and with modern, sophisticated equipment has elected to try to overcome South Vietnam by conventional warfare where his doctrine of protracted warfare has failed in the past. He has committed himself to a make or break campaign for 1972.

—No important citadel has been given up to the enemy. Some 200,000 South Vietnamese citizens have been forced to flee their homes in the face of the invasion.

—On the whole, heroic performances by the South Vietnamese stand out as the trademark of this battle to the death. Most units have fought bravely.

—Ten times the U.S. air power could not have done the job if the armed forces of South Vietnam had not stood and fought.

—In eleven of the 44 provinces important fighting has gone on and continues. In the remaining 33 provinces the government and population continue to function in a normal way with a quiet confidence that their government and armed forces have the strength and will to endure. The South Vietnamese Government and its armed forces and its people are holding together in this crisis.

—We can anticipate more heavy fighting and additional hardships for the people of South Vietnam, but the fabric of what the South Vietnamese have built with our assistance has survived its severest test. The qualities demonstrated by the South Vietnamese people assure that they will continue to hold.

26 Apr 72

President Richard M. Nixon delivered his second address to the nation on Vietnam since the year began, and his first since the North Vietnamese launched their offensive on March 30.

He reviewed details of the most recent United States offer to Hanoi to win the war, made first in October 1971 and then repeated in January 1972 with only slight differences. He characterized the proposals in the offer as generous. The response was negative, the President stressed:

“Now, Hanoi’s answer to this offer was a refusal to even discuss our proposals and, at the same time, a huge escalation of their military activities on the battlefield.” Subsequently, the probability of a major offensive by the North against the South increased. Nonetheless, the U.S. did not react militarily.

“Instead we patiently continued with the Paris talks, because we wanted to give the enemy every chance to reach a negotiated settlement at the bargaining table rather than to seek a military victory on the battlefield - a victory they cannot be allowed to win.

“Finally, 3 weeks ago, on Easter weekend, they mounted their massive invasion of South Vietnam. Three North Vietnamese divisions swept across the demilitarized zone into South Vietnam - in violation of the treaties they had signed in 1954 and in violation of the understanding they had reached with President Johnson in 1968, when he stopped the bombing of North Vietnam in return for arrangements which included their pledge not to violate the DMZ.

Shortly after the invasion across the DMZ, another three North Vietnamese divisions invaded South Vietnam further south. As the offensive progressed, the enemy indiscriminately shelled civilian population centers in clear violation of the 1968 bombing halt understanding.”

In the wake of the “invasion,” Nixon announced in his speech three decisions bearing on the war:

First, because Vietnamization was going well, the President would continue to withdraw American troops. Over the next two months another 20,000 would be pulled out, leaving the number at about 49,000.

Second, he had ordered Ambassador Porter to return to the plenary sessions in Paris on April 27.

Third, Nixon would continue air and naval attacks on military targets in North Vietnam until the North stopped its offensive against the South.

On the relation between bombing and negotiating, he said: “I have flatly rejected the proposal that we stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a condition for returning to the negotiating table. They sold that package to the United States once before, in 1968, and we are not going to buy it again in 1972.”

26 Apr 72

President Nixon announced a further withdrawal of another 20,000 U.S. troops, reducing U.S. strength to 49,000 by 1 July.

27 Apr 72

Twelve F-4D Phantoms of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing [Wolf Pack] based at Ubon, Thailand attacked the Thanh Hóa bridge. Eight of their number carried laser-guided PGM 2,000 lb bombs. The raid was carried out without a hitch, and when the dust of the explosions had cleared, it became apparent that the bridge had been dislodged from its western abutment, dropping one half into the river. Previously, 871 conventional sorties resulted in only superficial damage to the bridge.

Dong Ha fell, as the NVA offensive was resumed in Quang Tri Province.

Pararescueman Charles D. McGrath with the 40th ARRS was lowered from an HH-53, Jolly Green 73. He went down the hoist to rescue a badly wounded F-4 pilot in North Vietnam. He dragged the pilot through thick jungle to a site suitable for recovery. The helicopter was hit by ground fire and lost its hoist, leaving the two men stranded. When the high bird pulled into a hover, McGrath got the wounded pilot ready and rode up the hoist with him amid gunfire. Once inside the helicopter, Chuck provided emergency medical care to the F-4 pilot and another PJ whose leg had been shattered by gunfire.

28 Apr 72

Jolly Green 65 scrambled for a feet wet SAR near the DMZ, Jolly Green 65 replaced the original Alpha low aircraft due to mechanical problems. Jolly Green 71, a local trainer, joined on Jolly Green 65's wing to become his Alpha high bird as they were already airborne. Hobo 40 was on scene over the two survivors of Gunsmoke 01. They were located approximately 8 miles south east of the Cua Vet River about 5 miles off shore. A Pararescue specialist was deployed to swim the penetrator to the first survivor. Gunsmoke 01A was picked up and then the Bravo man who was about 100-meters away was picked up. Fire was taken from the shore but Jolly Green 65 proceeded east out of range of the shore batteries and RTB'd without further incidence.

Jolly Green 65

AC Captain Donald A. Sutton
CP Captain Charles R. Hagerhjelm
HM Sgt Jimmie R. Cherry
RS Sgt Michael L. Wagner
RS A1C Michael A. Ailler

Jolly Green 71

AC Captain Rodney S. Griffith
CP Captain Douglas A. Peck
CP Captain David E. Mullenix
HM SSgt Jimmie D. Minshew
HM Sgt John W. Drayer
HM Sgt Cayetano Pina
RS Sgt Robert LaPointe
RS Sgt David W. Young

29 Apr 72

NVN introduced a new dimension to their air defense forces – the Strella (SA-7), designated Grail by NATO. This weapon is designed to engage low flying aircraft, particularly slow-operating reciprocating engine aircraft. These weapons are being utilized in support of NVN forward ground forces which have as of (1 June) downed 9 aircraft
source (1 June 72 7AF/CC briefing titled "North Vietnams War Making Capabilities)

30 Apr 72

All ARVN forces north of the Thach Han River were withdrawn in order to defend Quang Tri City from more tenable positions south of the river line.

Throughout the night of 30 April the South Vietnamese defenders of Quang Tri were heavily bombarded by 4,500 rounds of 130mm artillery, 122mm rockets and mortars. Combined armor and infantry attacks from the north, northwest, and southwest materialized as the invading forces pushed forward. Enemy pressure continued to build throughout the morning 1 May. Most American advisors were evacuated by US helicopters during the afternoon. With the fall of Quang Tri Province, the defense emphasis shifted to Hue – the ultimate enemy objective.⁶

The enemy stoutly resisted the allied control of the skies. In Military Region 1 alone it was estimated that as many as seven regiments of antiaircraft artillery were employed. To further his air defense, for the first time the enemy introduced the SA-7 Strella missile, a shoulder fired, infrared, homing missile. This presented an immediate and serious threat to all aircraft, but especially to helicopters and other slow flying aircraft.

The initial usage of this weapon resulted in roughly one aircraft downed per eight SA-7s fired. (The SA-2 fired per aircraft downed ratio during the same period was 64 to 1.) SA-2 sites were also moved into both the Demilitarized Zone and northern South Vietnam itself with the resulting firing envelope including considerable portions of Military Region 1.⁷

30 Apr 72

The 39th ARRS at Cam Ranh Bay AB RVN was inactivated effective 30 April 1972 as part of the general reduction of U.S. forces in Vietnam. It had been absorbed into Det 4 3 ARRGp at Korat RTAFB, where all its operations were carried out with a reduced complement of men and aircraft. Originally authorized 11 HC-130P/N aircraft and 120 aircrew member at Cam Ranh Bay, the 39th ARRS was gradually reduced to 7 aircraft and 66 aircrew by the end of March. It was thin number of men and planes that joined Det 4 at Korat.

30 Apr 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 68,100 personnel as Increment XI withdrawals were completed.

MAY

ELF and RHAW systems begin being installed on 40th ARRS HH-53s. They had priority because the 40th was tasked to fly most of the feet dry SARs in NVN

1 May 72

The theater commander in Saigon, General Creighton W. Abrams, informed Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in message MAC 4021 that strategically important Quang Tri City in MR-1 was about to fall to the enemy. He further feared that the same fate awaited the Highlands stronghold, Kontum City, and the old imperial capital, Hue. Consequently, Abrams asked Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to arrange a meeting with South Vietnam's President, Nguyen Van Thieu. (Abrams Papers, Historical Resources Branch, United States Army Center of Military History)

At the meeting, Abrams first let Thieu read the message he had sent to Laird:

"When he finished I described for him my conviction that the real problem for South Vietnam was the effectiveness of his field commanders. I described in some detail the ineffectiveness of individual commanders by name in northern MR-1, the B-3 Front and MR-3. I told the President that it was my conviction that all that had been accomplished over the last four years was now at stake, and, at this stage, it was the effectiveness of his field commanders that would determine the outcome - either winning all or losing all. At this point President Thieu talked to Executive [Officer] and directed that all commanders be called to the Palace today. President Thieu then continued, advancing the view that if Hue and Kontum held for four days they would have won the battle. I told the President that no one should think in any less terms than six weeks more of heavy, bloody fighting and maybe more. This is a battle to the death, the Communists have planned it that way and will not quit until they have been totally exhausted.

"This was a candid meeting, but at no time did President Thieu show either irritation, impatience, or disagreement." (Message MAC 4039 from Abrams to Laird, May 2; *ibid.*) In backchannel message 81 from Saigon, May 2, Bunker, who also attended the meeting, told

Kissinger: “We made it clear to him [Thieu] the need to act decisively and quickly to straighten them out. We emphasized the massive air support the President has provided but pointed out that this is a battle of will on both sides and that no amount of air support would be effective unless there is also the will on the part of ground forces.” (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 44, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Cables, 3 April–15 June 1972).

1 May 72

An O-2 flown by 1Lt W. L. Jankowski, 20 TASS, DaNang was shot down while directing airstrikes on Quang Tri just prior to the evacuation of U.S. Army personnel by the 37 ARRS. He was shot down by an SA-7 Stella missile. The 57 inch long missile guided to the heat produced by the aircraft’s engine and was a particular threat to slow moving aircraft and helicopters at altitudes below 6000 feet. While the 1.15-kg warhead was large enough to cause fatal damage to an aircraft, a hit by an SA-7 did not always result in total destruction.

Source = Hobson

An A-1H, Sandy 8, flown by 1Lt William J. Seitz (survived), 1 SOS, 56 SOW, NKP was shot down at dusk by SA-7. He was part of the SAR for Lt Jankowski when he was hit at 3,500 feet 10 miles south of Quang Tri. The aircrafts engine caught fire but 1Lt Seitz managed to reach the coast, escorted by an OV-10, and ejected about four miles off the beach where he was picked up by an Army helicopter.

Source = Hobson

During April seven hundred and seventy-seven SAMs were fired at US aircraft. Eleven US aircraft were lost to enemy action as follows⁶:

- 9 to SAMs
- 1 to a MIG,
- 1 to AAA

1 May 72 - Quang Tri Citadel Evacuation

Quang Tri Citadel Raiders. Insert patch.

The Citadel, Quang Tri, RVN. Invading North Vietnamese forces at the ancient Citadel in the strategic northern town of Quang Tri besieges one hundred thirty-two U.S. Marines. Four HH-53s of the 37thARRS at DaNang are tasked to extract the Americans. Preliminary tactics call for three of the Jollies to land in the fortress and on-load the Marines while the fourth loiters outside, ready to dash in if needed. Enemy AAA and SAM-2 sites encircle the area however, causing the helicopters to approach at treetop level despite the rush of automatic weapons fire which is usually avoided by flying above three thousand feet.

⁶ United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam. 1972 – 1973 *Command History*

The 37th ARRS evacuated 132 U.S. and Vietnamese Army personnel from the citadel in the besieged city of Quang Tri, South Vietnam, to DaNang Air Base. Four HH-53s of the 37th Air Rescue Squadron at DaNang took off for Quang Tri. They planned to have three Jolly Green Giants pick up all the survivors while the fourth chopper loitered outside the city, ready to dash in if needed. The North Vietnamese had moved SA-2 surface-to-air missiles south, and their area of coverage encompassed Quang Tri City. This factor caused the helicopters to approach the city at treetop level in spite of the risk of automatic weapons fire which they usually managed to avoid by flying above 3'000 feet.

Over the nearly demolished outskirts of the city the three Jolly Greens moved in one at a time through a single corridor blasted by A-1E's and other supporting aircraft to the walls of the fortress. As the first chopper approached the citadel enemy small arms fire increased in intensity. While his HH-53 slowed down to land, Staff Sergeant Robert LaPointe silenced several enemy snipers with the onboard minigun. After the helicopter landed, there was so much confusion that only 37 men climbed aboard before the pilot was forced to depart. The early departure was caused by the army troops swarming the helicopter and the fear that the HH-53 would be overloaded and unable to take off. Sergeant LaPointe left his aft gun position and tried to slow down the flow of men racing on board. Sergeant David Young, who was at the front left side of the helo manning the #1 minigun, warned the pilot that the situation was out of control and they had better depart before they could not do so. When the helicopter abruptly departed, Sergeant LaPointe was on the ground trying to get things organized. The first clue he had that the chopper was leaving was when his head was jerked up and back by his helmet that was connected to a long intercom cord.

Now on the ground, LaPointe explained to the ranking officer of the troops that helicopters would land one at a time until everyone was picked up. Somehow, the evacuees thought that all the helicopters would land at the same time for the pickup. When only one landed, some of the troops thought that if they did not get out on the first chopper, they would be left behind to be captured or killed by the NVA. Once everyone understood the plan, the commander divided his troops into groups for loading into the HH-53's that were inbound. With order restored, the second chopper quickly loaded 45 people and took off. Sergeant LaPointe was among the men picked up.

The third Jolly Green landed in the fortress and loaded the 50 remaining survivors just as quickly as the second helicopter. Its pilot pulled up and headed for safety. Minutes later the North Vietnamese flag flew over the citadel ruins.

Jolly Green 71

AC Major Jackson K. Scott Jr
CP Captain David E. Mullenix
HM Sgt Ronald W. Blackwell
RS Sgt Robert L. LaPointe
RS Sgt David W. Young

Jolly Green 21

Jolly Green 65

AC Captain Rodney S. Griffith
CP Major Anthony A. Gates
HM SSgt David Garcia
RS SSgt Cole E. Panning
RS Sgt Charles B McQuoid
tdy from 40th ARRS

Jolly Green 72

AC Captain John R. Weimer Jr.
CP Captain Gary A. Dake
HM SSgt William A. Simm
RS Sgt Richard L. Steed
RS A1C Michael L. Aillet

AC Captain Donald A. Sutton
CP Major Jerry J. Gilbert
HM SSgt Jimmie D. Minshew
RS Sgt Daniel G. Manion
RS Sgt William J. Thompson

Jolly Green 60

AC Captain Richard L. Wall
CP 2Lt James M. McCorkle
HM Sgt John W. Drayer
RS Sgt John W. Stephens
RS Sgt Michael L. Wagner

Sergeant LaPointe was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his cool actions under fire. Other pararescuemen included in the operation are Dave Young, Michael Aillet, Charles McQuoid, Daniel Manion, Cole Panning, Richard Steed, and William Thompson.

Source = Pararescue 50 years Note: Needs cleanup to add personal observations and errors

HH-53's Evacuate 132 from Quang Tri

Tan Son Nhut, RVN – Five Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict when they airlifted 132 American and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri. Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th ARRS at DaNang airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated, and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to DaNang. U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and antiaircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital. Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation. While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 forward air control aircraft and an A-1 Skyraider rescue support fighter were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The A-1 pilot ditched his aircraft in the ocean and was picked up by Army helicopters.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from enemy soldiers. SSgt Robert LaPointe, a pararescueman, silenced them with bursts from his minigun from the rear of the helicopter. After the helicopter landed, Sgt LaPointe jumped out and organized the people on the ground so the operation would go more smoothly. He remained on the ground until he boarded the second helicopter to land. The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second 45, and the third 50.

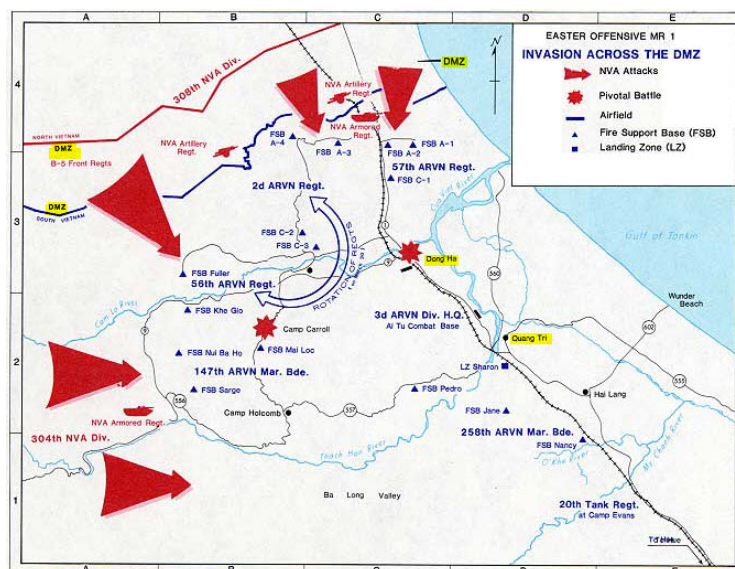
The fourth helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK47 automatic weapons and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. Sgt William J Thompson, a PJ, knocked out the AK47 with bursts from his minigun. The sniper fire was suppressed by Sgt Daniel G Manion, another PJ. All the HH-53's returned safely to DaNang.

Also on the first HH-53 to land were Major Jackson R Scott Jr., aircraft commander, Captain David F. Mullenix, co-pilot, Sgt Ronald W Blackwell, flight engineer, SSgt Robert L LaPointe and Sgt David W Young, pararescuemen. The second helicopter crew was Captain Rodney S Griffith, aircraft commander; Major Anthony A Gates, co-pilot; SSgt David Garcia, flight engineer; SSgt Cole E Panning and Sgt Charles B McQuoid, pararescuemen. The third Jolly was crewed by Captain John R Wiener, aircraft commander; Captain Garry A Dake, co-pilot; SSgt William A Simm, flight engineer; Sgt Michael A Aillet and Sgt Richard L Steed, PJs. The fourth helicopter was crewed by Captain Donald A Sutton, aircraft commander; Major Gerry J Gilbert, co-pilot; SSgt Jimmy D Minces, flight engineer, Sgt William J Thompson and Sgt Daniel G Manion, PJ's.

American advisors evacuated from Quang Tri before it fell to enemy forces are greeted by personnel at DaNang Airfield. Altogether, 132 American and Vietnamese were taken to safety by three HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants of the 37th ARRS.

Source *Stars and Stripes*

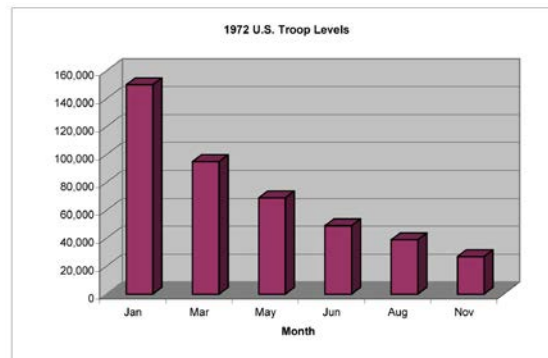
The exodus of U.S. advisors from Quang Tri marked the complete capture of that city by the NVA. With the fall of Quang Tri Province, the ARVN defense emphasis shifted to Hue – the ultimate NVA objective. The 8,000 man ARVN 3rd division responsible for the defense of Quang Tri had abandoned the city, in most cases simply running away leaving behind operational tanks, artillery and tons of munitions. The 3rd was in a headlong retreat and spread out on Highway Rt. 1 the road to Hue. They left a trail of equipment (helmets, full ammunition pouches, web belts and packs) thrown away if thought to be too heavy to carry. To be sure, the 3rd had been the worse of South Vietnam's 13 divisions. It had been put together a year ago from stragglers, men released from jail, captured deserters and provincial forces. But no one thought that this division would simply disintegrate after a few days of battle.



The capture of Quang Tri on 2 May marked the high point of the North Vietnamese offensive. Fierce fighting would continue for several more months, but the enemy would win no more dramatic battles or advance further into South Vietnam. Slowly, the RVN began to regroup and recapture lost territory.

However, the fall of Quang Tri cast a pall of gloom over Saigon and raised questions in Washington about Nixon's Vietnamization policy. Most U.S. policy makers wondered if the ARVN could defeat the North Vietnamese offensive. The South Vietnamese had to win the ground battle on their own. Less than 69,000 U.S troops remained in Vietnam. Few of them were Army troops. As the biggest NVA invasion of South Vietnam continued, previously scheduled troop withdrawals continued.

The number of USAF personnel in RVN on 31 Jan72 was 26,098. On 13 January 1972, President Nixon announced Increment 11 force reduction. Total US military force strength in Vietnam was to be reduced from 139,000 to 69,000 personnel by 1 May 1972. On 15 January 1972, MACV tasked Seventh Air Force to develop a force structure with a USAF strength of 16,308 on 1 May 1972. On 25 January 1972, Seventh Air Force submitted a troop list that would reduce USAF strength by 10,590 between 1 February and 1 May 1972.



American commanders no longer had the decisive say in how or where the South Vietnamese fought. Those decisions were being made by President Thieu and his General Staff. The U.S. continued to dominate the air and sea and Washington was replacing lost equipment. President Nixon would punish Hanoi for the invasion by increased and less restrictive bombing of NVN along with mining all ports of entry by ships resupplying NVN. But the ground war had to be fought by South Vietnamese troops. A few U.S. Army troops were assigned to ARVN staffs to advise them and assist in coordinating air support. But these advisors were not supposed to participate in ground battles with the exception of self defense.

2 May 72

Two more Skyraiders were downed within seconds of each other as they searched for Sandy 8 just north of Quang Tri. Major Harding and Captain Screws were flying at 5,500 and 6,500 feet respectively when their aircraft were hit by SA-7s. Both missiles hit close to the aircrafts engine, the source of heat to which they guided. The pilots ejected and both were picked up by Army helicopters although Captain Screws was badly injured.

A-1E, 1 SOS, 56 SOW, NKP, Maj James C. Harding (survived)

A-1G, 1 SOS, 56 SOW, NKP, Capt D. R. Screws (injured but survived)

Source = *Hobsen*

FSB Nancy, the last friendly position in Quang Tri Province fell to the NVA.

3 May 72

Defense will deploy the additional tank and air assets to South Vietnam as soon as possible. In order to make room for the additional air assets,. Pentagon announced that 72 F-4's and their approximately 4300 support personnel; along with 16 KC-135 aircraft and 583 support personnel would be sent to Thailand. This required the reopening of Takhli Air Base on an austere basis with a capability to support tactical operations for a period of 90 days. These were not the only air assets moved to SEA to counter the enemy offensive. The below table shows how serious President Nixon was in stopping the enemy offensive:

	<i>1 Jan 72</i>	<i>24 May 72</i>	<i>% Increase</i>
TACAIR			
Land-based	212	480	126
Sea-based	121	334	176
B-52s	42	148*	252
KC-135s	64	129	102
Other Aircraft	110	149	35
Naval Gunfire Ships	16	54	238

*This figure of 148 included only 8 of the 66 B-52G aircraft ordered deployed on 23 May; the remaining 58 had yet to arrive in Southeast Asia and their subsequent arrival raised the total B-52 strength to 206.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971-1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. 167-168

4 May 72

Admiral Moorer CJCS presented a proposal to mine Haiphong Harbor to President Nixon. Nixon ordered him to prepare, on a very close hold basis, to mine North Vietnam's ports beginning on 9 May Washington DC time.

M48 tanks began arriving aboard C5A transport to replace tanks lost during the Quang Tri fighting. I saw some of these tanks being off loaded a C-5A to the ramp at DaNang.

ELF and RHAW systems begin being installed on HH-53s

4 May 72

Excerpts from Message From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Abrams) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) and the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 62, COMUSMACV General Service Messages, March 1972. Top Secret; Flash; Specat; Exclusive

Saigon, May 4, 1972

TO: COMUSMACV 031204 May 72 (TS/Specat)
CINCPAC 030402Z May 72 (TS/Specat)
CJCS 022232Z May 72 (TS/Specat)

(TS) The situation in RVN at this moment and for the next several days will not permit the diversion of B-52s and 7AF assets to Frame Glory on 6 and 7 May.³ We have elements of two

enemy divisions in the DMZ with good evidence that they are moving south into RVN. Kontum is expected to come under attack at any moment. The defenses protecting Hue are under attack by fire and ground attack could begin at any time. The command and control problems in MR1 remain critical. President Thieu has attacked the command and control problem by making key command changes. Gen. Truong took command of I Corps yesterday and we have got to pour the air support to him, both to sustain his already strong will and to hold the main enemy forces off of him with air and buy time while he regains control in MR1. President Thieu's strategic concept includes clearing up An Loc immediately and releasing the Airborne Division for movement to the critical MR1 area. To help accomplish this disengagement of the Airborne Division, President Thieu has asked me to give top priority on air support to MR3 for the next three days. I have already issued the necessary guidance to accomplish this. We must stay with them at this critical time and apply the air power where the immediate effect is greatest. (TS) If Frame Glory must be executed for reasons not known to us here, the solution that would have the least effect on in-country operations would be to employ the carrier force, leaving the B-52 and 7AF effort for in-country use.

Note: FRAME GLORY, a naval gunfire support raid on radar installations on the island of Hon Mat, North Vietnam, near Vinh.

5 May 72

Excerpts from: Memorandum for the Record

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 45, Geopolitical File Vietnam, Easter Offensive, 1971-1972. Top Secret; Sensitive.

Washington, May 5, 1972

SUBJECT

Meeting of Dr. Kissinger, Admiral Moorer

The purpose of the meeting was for Admiral Moorer to present a plan for mining North Vietnamese ports.

Admiral Moorer then began his briefing. With regard to the status of ships heading toward North Vietnam, he stated that 17 were enroute. This was the normal monthly average. In considering the possible reactions open to hostile countries, Admiral Moorer stated that the North Vietnamese did not have much they could do although we would want to strike their aircraft facilities.

Admiral Moorer then described the mines which would be used. The large mines would be dropped in Haiphong Harbor by aircraft. These mines had selected delays of one and three days before activation. They could also be sterilized within a certain period of time. They were influence fused. It would also be planned to use MK-36 destructors in shallow water, ports and rivers. These would be dropped in the channels two days after the mines were placed in Haiphong Harbor since they are armed after only 24 hours. Besides Haiphong it was also planned to drop larger mines in Hon Gai.

Admiral Moorer then stated that if the mining were done right then with the current settings, the ships in Haiphong would have 72 hours to leave port. The 42 ships there would have two alternatives, either to get out or stay there for the duration. We could then either sink them or leave them alone since the docks would not be available if the harbor were mined. Dr. Kissinger commented that if the ships left, the first thing we would do would be to eliminate the docks with B-52s. Admiral Moorer added that we could mine to a depth of 80 or 90 feet and that Haiphong Harbor was excellent for mining.

In explaining the air operations which would be employed for the mining, he explained that air defenses in the area would have to be suppressed whether the air operation was done in daylight or at night. At night less aircraft would be required; however, it would probably be better in the day because then the North Vietnamese could see the mines going into the water.

Dr. Kissinger noted that within several days of the mining there should be strikes against the railroad facilities at Vinh and Hanoi. Admiral Moorer asserted that all military targets would be hit. However, Dr. Kissinger cautioned that he would want to look at all targets and then we could see what could be hit.

6 May 72

Excerpted from the Boston Record American newspaper



22nd Birthday in Vietnam

LYNN PARARESCUE SPECIALIST APOLOGIZES FOR WORRYING FAMILY

"I am sitting in my room with a .45 pistol to my right and an M-3 submachinegun to my left. I've got my flak vest, helmet and combat gear laid out in case I need them in a hurry. All in all, it's a hell of a way to usher in my 22nd birthday."

Those words were written by Air Force Sgt. Robert Lapointe of 63 Tudor St. Lynn, as he waited at DaNang for an expected enemy attack and a hurried summons that would mean he would once again risk his own life trying to save another.

Lapointe is a Maroon Beret, a pararescue specialist who spends virtually all his days and many of his nights behind enemy lines picking up doomed fliers and friendly forces trapped and wounded in battle areas.

Letters to his parents and younger brothers written almost every day are a chronicle of the war in bits and pieces – night alerts, daring rescues recounted so matter-of-factly they seem routine, once of the haunting feeling that he was going to die.

"At 1 a.m. this morning my crew chief woke me up and told me that I've got a mission," Lapointe wrote in one letter to his father Paul and his brothers Raymond 17, and Tommy 15.

"An AC-130 gunship with 14 crewmembers has been shot down on the trail and we are going up and try to get them. I brief at 4:15 a.m. and will take off with the first light of the sun. It is now 3 a.m. and I could not sleep so I thought I would get up and write."

"The area we are going in is a bad one with AAA (enemy guns) and SAMs. We have had two other airplanes shot down there in the last couple of days."

"It is a strange feeling, knowing that in a couple of hours I will be getting shot at and that I can be shot down too. I am no scared, but I am very nervous."

"I'll be O.K. when I get on my airplane had have something to do, but now I am listening to some music and thinking, I've never felt this way before a mission, before this. I wanted you to know that I've got no regrets at being here as I believe in the mission of air rescue over here and I like my work."

"I've never felt sorry that I have come here. Well, Dave is a fellow maroon beret and he is at my door waiting for me so we can go check out our aircraft and survival gear. I am reminded now of the movie "Patton" when at the end he said that "All glory is fleeting. I know what he means now."

From childhood he was what his fellow airmen would call "gung ho." In high school he joined a Civil Air Patrol unit and learned the difficult art of rescue. "He even used to get called out of school to go climb a mountain and look for a plane that was down," says his father.

A tall, slim, good looking man with brown hair and blue eyes, Lapointe joined the Air Force after high school graduation. He "felt it was his duty," says his father. He did one tour in Vietnam, then signed on for another one year stint. He made it home on leave last September and hopes to be back for another in June.

It was on his last leave that Robert met his stepmother for the first and only time. The Lapointe's were married seven months ago, nine years after they were both widowed.

Asked to describe his son, the elder Lapointe said "He is what you would call an all-American boy" and there was pride in his voice as he said it.

Young Lapointe made the news earlier this week when on a rescue mission to free friendly forces and civilians trapped by the Communist offensive. He was left behind when his chopper took off.

"He mentioned that in one of his letters" says his father. "He had to wait for a second chopper and he sure wasn't going to get left behind a second time."

Lapointe received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in a rescue near Quang Tri. Through his efforts and accurate fire – a damaged ship was led back to safety. Had it not been for Lapointe, the air force said, the occupants of the other craft would have faced certain death or capture.

On April 21st, in the midst of the Communist offensive, Lapointe wrote: *"The artillery is booming outside now and it sounds as though it is hitting close. If the offensive had not started I would be in Thailand having a good time on R & R (rest and recreation). But, as my commander told me "War is hell and we are not being paid to go on R & R. I guess he's right."*

In another letter he tells of a rescue: *"I just returned from a mission where we just picked up two U.S. pilots who had crashed in Quang Tri Province. I was on the low bird and we have been credited with two combat saves."*

Next, he tells his family that as a reward for the mission his crew had been given the remainder of the day off, *"my first in a long time."* In the same letter, dated April 15, Lapointe notes the enemy still is gaining ground and says, *"The ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) reports of enemy casualties are all inflated and no one here believes them."*

"The officers are having a party to celebrate our pickup but I would like to pass it up as I am tired. It doesn't make much sense to me to get drunk while all this is going on as they will probably call us up if anyone else goes down. This whole war doesn't seem to be going our way lately and as far as I am concerned, I've got the only good job in it."

7 May 72

On 7 May at 3:18 a.m. DaNang was hit by 16 rounds. 1 aircraft was destroyed (20th TASS OV-10A, 2 aircraft were damaged. 3 Airmen WIA

8 May 72

President Nixon took decisive action. On the evening of 8 May, President Nixon told the nation that: United States forces have been directed to take appropriate measures within the territorial and claimed waters of North Vietnam to interdict the delivery of any supplies. Rail and all other communications will be cut off to the maximum extent feasible.” The mining and air campaigns were named POCKET MONEY and LINEBACKER. Haiphong Harbor was where Soviet arms were being funneled in. US aircraft planted 36 MK-52 mines in the Haiphong ship channel. The President also ordered the bombing of prime military targets in Hanoi.

Before the spring offensive, B-52's generally aborted missions if there were active SAM sites or MiGs in the target area. Now they were required to press on to their targets.

An intense firepower campaign consisting of B-52s, tactical aircraft, naval gunfire, and artillery fires was also directed against enemy forces in southeastern Quang Tri Province.

In a memo to Kissenger, Nixon said *“I cannot emphasize too strongly that I have determined that we should go for broke. What we have got to get across to the enemy is the impression that we are doing exactly that. Our words will help some. But our actions in the next few days will speak infinitely louder than our words.”* Because of the North Vietnamese offensive, President Nixon on May 8 suspended peace talks.

9 May 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From President Nixon to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 45, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Easter Offensive, 9 May 1972. Top Secret; Eyes Only.

Washington, May 9, 1972

With regard to bombing strikes in the North I have decided that it is imperative that they be at the highest limit that Abrams can spare from the battle area in the next few days.

I mentioned that our primary target, except for the rail lines, should be POL. This, of course, should be our long-term goal. But over the next few days I also want some targets hit which will have maximum psychological effect on morale in North Vietnam. That is why it is so important to take out the power plants. If your operational group thinks of any other targets of this type hit them and hit them hard.

You have often mentioned the necessity of creating the impression in the enemy's mind that I am absolutely determined to end the war and will take *whatever steps are necessary* to accomplish this goal. The time to take those steps is now.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that I have determined that we should go for broke. What we have got to get across to the enemy is the impression that we are doing exactly that. Our words will help some. But our actions in the next few days will speak infinitely louder than our words. Our greatest failure now would be to do too little too late.

What all of us must have in mind is that we must *punish* the enemy in ways that he will really hurt at this time. Over a longer period of time we can be more methodical in directing our air strikes to two specific targets - the rail lines, highways and POL supply areas. I have an uneasy feeling that your present plans are simply too restrained. Now that I have made this very tough decision **I intend to stop at nothing to bring the enemy to his knees.**

Needless to say, indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas is not what I have in mind. On the other hand, *if the target is important enough*, I will approve a plan that goes after it even if there is a risk of some civilian casualties. We have warned the enemy time and time again and then have acted in a rather mild way when the enemy has tested us. He has now gone over the brink *and so have we*. We have the power to destroy his war making capacity. The only question is whether we have the *will* to use that power. What distinguishes me from Johnson is that I have the *will* in spades.

9 May 72

USN aircraft from the USS CORAL SEA mined Haiphong harbor and its approaches, using delay action fuses set to arm 72-hours after sowing. The next day the approaches to the other North Vietnamese harbors and some of the inland waterway networks were sown with MK-36 destructor bombs (an air-dropped mine) set to arm simultaneously with the naval mines dropped at Haiphong.

At 0900 three Marine A-6A and six Navy A-7E aircraft from the *Coral Sea* dropped 36 1,000-pound, bottom-moored MK 52 mines across the two channels at the mouth of the harbor. The mines were set with a three-day arming delay, allowing ships to leave the harbor before the minefield went active at 0900 on 12 May.

The President informed the world that neutral shipping had 72-hours to leave Haiphong before the mines self-armed (as he spoke Navy aircraft were sowing them). Thirty-one merchant ships eventually were trapped in Haiphong Harbor.

This was part of a coordinated plan involving all services and directed against the logistics network of the enemy. Its objective was to deny the North Vietnamese armies in South Vietnam the means with which to fight.

9 May 72

Excerpts from Message From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 68, JCS Out General Service Messages, 1–15 May 1972. Top Secret; Flash;

Washington, May 9, 1972

Subj: NVN Interdiction Plan (U).

1. This is an execute message.

2. You are authorized to continue the coordinated campaign initiated on 10 May 72 to interdict/destroy NVN transportation system. Guidance follows:

A. Conduct a continuing TACAIR and NGFS interdiction effort, augmented by B-52 sorties as required, to destroy and disrupt enemy POL and transportation resources and LOC in NVN; e.g., POL storage and pumping stations, rails and roads, bridges, railroad yards, heavy repair equipment, railroad rolling stock and trucks. Utilization of resources to neutralize defense is also authorized. In addition to attacks against fixed installations, armed reconnaissance is authorized against choke points and other time-sensitive transportation/interdiction targets that develop outside restricted areas.

B. Air and naval gunfire operations are authorized as applicable in NVN except within the Chinese buffer zone. Minimize civilian casualties and avoid damage to foreign shipping.

C. Maintain a continuing strike/support effort consistent with a determined and early accomplishment of the objectives referenced in sub-paragraph 2A. It appears that arrival of the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing and the use of three carriers for NVN targets will permit a substantial sortie level to be sustained without reducing the current level of support for the land battle in RVN. When a tactical emergency requires, COMUSMACV is authorized to divert sorties from this effort.

D. Initial efforts should give first priority to POL storage facilities as well as rail LOC in area between Chinese buffer zone and Hanoi; Hanoi and Haiphong areas and LOC leading out of Hanoi/Haiphong complex to south.

E. Plan to take maximum advantage of EO/Walleye capability against appropriate transportation targets as well as command and control facilities, and air defenses. You are authorized to seed LOC and key choke points with MK-36/40 weapons.

F. The following fixed targets are validated for strike by TACAIR/NGFS as applicable. [Omitted here is a list of 53 named targets.] Authorization includes only those areas that can be targeted with aiming point not closer than 800 feet to non NVN shipping for TACAIR closer than 250 feet from non NVN shipping for EO/LGB weapons.

G. Include AAA, SAM defenses and supporting command and control system in your targeting plan as required.

3. Reporting instructions.

The unclassified nickname Linebacker repeat Linebacker will be used as a flag word in all communications pertaining to all air operations against NVN in lieu of the old flag word Rolling Thunder.

10 May 72

Det. 8 (P) was established at Takhli to support the increased air activity resulting from the North Vietnamese Army invasion. This unit deployed from CONUS and retained its' organizational designator of Det. 8, 43 ARRS. Det. 8 was later redesignated Det. 10, 40th ARRS and became a permanent LBR unit.

10 May 72

Operation Linebacker was the title of a U.S. Seventh Air Force and U.S. Navy Task Force 77 aerial interdiction campaign conducted against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) from 10 May to 23 October 1972. Its purpose was to halt or slow the transportation of supplies and materials for the *Nguyen Hue Offensive* (known in the West as the Easter Offensive), an invasion of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), by forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). that had been launched on 30 March. *Linebacker* was the first continuous bombing effort conducted against North Vietnam since the bombing halt instituted by President Lyndon B. Johnson in November 1968. (source = wikipedia)

NVN aggressively defended its airspace with an integrated air defense of AAA, SAM's, and MiG's. Over 100 SA-2's were launched and at least 41 MiGs engaged US forces. 11 MiG's and 6 F-4's were shot down in air to air engagements.

The first mission of the Linebacker Operation against North Vietnam was flown against the Paul Doumer Bridge and the Yen Vien railroad yards, both near Hanoi. Strike tactics called for guided ordnance on the bridge and unguided bombs on the yard. 41 MiGs rose to meet USAF aircraft.

Results of the mission were:

- Twenty-two K-84 laser guided bombs and seven MK-84 electro-optically guided bombs were dropped on the bridge, causing heavy damage.
- One hundred eighty-four MK-82 unguided bombs were dropped on the Yen Vien railroad yard, cutting tracks and damaging boxcars and warehouses.
- Nineteen AGM-45s and six AGM-78s were expended by the Iron Hand force as suppression against 42 reported SAM firings. The entire force encountered heavy concentrations of AAA over the target area.
- Nine MIG-19s and seven MIG-21s were observed, of which three were downed with an expenditure of 31 air intercept missiles.

Navy and Air Force pilots shot down a total of ten MiGs, the largest single day total in the war. Lt Randal Cunningham and Lt (jg) William Driscoll been the first Americans during the Vietnam war to down five enemy aircraft and earn the status. of "ace"

USAF TACAIR losses were two F-4s downed by MIG-19 cannon fire.

After the initial Linebacker strikes, missions were planned daily and flown when weather permitted. Usually the strike missions consisted of 8 to 12 bombers accompanied by appropriate fighter and support aircraft. The North Vietnamese responded to the US air attacks with all the resources at their command, launching MiGs and firing SAMs. During May, North Vietnam fired 429 SAMs, downing six US aircraft.

10 May 72

F-4 Oyster 01 shot down northwest of Hanoi. P40-42#4

Only the backseater, Oyster 01B Captain Roger Locher, ejected. Capt. Locher evaded for several days to a less heavily defended area for pick-up near Yen Bai airfield.

See 2 June for more details P152-153Whitcomb

11 May 72

USAF F-4s close the Doumer Bridge with laser guided bombs and 2,000-pound bombs. US aircraft laid mines in the ports of Thanh Hoa, Dong Hoi, Vinh, Hon Gai, Quang Khe, and Cam Pha, cutting off all seaborne supply to North Vietnam. Two days later, CINCPAC was authorized to attack North Vietnamese ships and aircraft either engaged in or configured for mine clearance. Haiphong would stay closed until a peace agreement was signed.

NVA troops and tanks entered the provincial capital of An Loc and were met by 70 B52's dropping 1,700 tons of bombs in the war's heaviest bombing concentration.

Excerpts of Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-116, Washington Special Actions Group, WSAG Minutes (Originals) 1-3-72 to 7-24-72. Top Secret; Sensitive

Washington, May 11, 1972

Mr. Kissinger: Did the North Vietnamese sweep up the mines before they became activated? That's my nightmare.

Adm. Moorer: Don't worry. The mines are still there. (Went to special briefing map of North Vietnamese coast) The first thing I want to bring up is the fact that two Soviet ships have left Haiphong and gone to Cam Pha. In the meantime, we mined the approaches to Cam Pha.

Mr. Kissinger: That means the Soviet ships can't get out of Cam Pha.

Adm. Moorer: Right. They won't be able to get out after 5:00 p.m., our time, when the mines become activated. Perhaps we should notify them of this. The information was contained in documents that have already been circulated, and I'm sure the Soviets went into Cam Pha knowing that the channels will be mined. But I thought that we might be able to improve our position by making certain that they know what the situation is.

Mr. Kissinger: They would only have four hours in which to get out.

Adm. Moorer: Yes, but at least the ships won't be sunk.

Mr. Kissinger: I'll take care of this.

Adm. Moorer: (Displayed another map showing the power grid system in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.) You asked yesterday about the North Vietnamese power supply. As you can see, the map shows the generating system—the power grid system—in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. We've already taken two of the generating stations out down south. The others have not been targeted yet.

(Displayed another map, showing interdiction targets) Our interdiction effort is going well, I think. You can see the two railroads going through the buffer zone and on into China. One railroad spur comes from Haiphong, and all the railroads join at the bridge north of Hanoi. The bridge was hit again yesterday and last night. We scored hits with five 3,000-pound bombs. And we have a picture of it, too. I would say the bridge is impassable.

Mr. Johnson: Five 3,000-pound bombs hit the bridge?

Adm. Moorer: Yes. My people tell me the bridge is not usable at this moment. In addition, we've taken out some of the railroad bridges further north.

Mr. Kissinger: Do all the railroad lines go across that one bridge north of Hanoi?

Adm. Moorer: Yes. The North Vietnamese are still able to move some supplies by rail down to Vinh. From there, they distribute the supplies by boat and truck further south. But we're making a big effort in the Hanoi-Haiphong area right now. We have the rolling stock trapped between the two bridges north of Hanoi, and we'll work on the stock tonight. We also plan tonight to hit another bridge further to the northwest of Hanoi. Then we hope we can maintain that situation, while attacking the rolling stock and the yards south of Hanoi.

Mr. Johnson: How far south does that go?

Adm. Moorer: Down to Vinh. The railroad ends at Vinh. At that point, the North Vietnamese have to truck the supplies down Highway 7, into Laos. They also have to truck the supplies through the Mu Gia and Ban Kerai Passes.

Mr. Kissinger: Even if they offload the ships in Haiphong, they won't be able to transport the supplies.

Adm. Moorer: Except by truck.

Mr. Kissinger: And if they make a big effort with the trucks, they will use up even more of their POL.

Adm. Moorer: One thing is for sure. They won't be able to maintain the volume of delivery that they had before. I want to say something about the North Vietnamese air defenses.

Their MiGs weren't as active yesterday as they were the day before. There is also some tenuous evidence — from communication intercepts — that a Soviet pilot who had been training the North Vietnamese was airborne yesterday. This isn't anything that should worry us, but I just wanted to pass it on to you.

Mr. Johnson: The latest reports are that ten MiGs were downed yesterday. We originally thought only seven of them had been shot down. Did this all happen during the same action?

Adm. Moorer: Yes.

Adm. Flanagan: One of the Navy pilots even got three MiGs in one flight.

Adm. Moorer: That's not all. After he got the three planes, he was hit by a SA-2 missile. He had to bail out, but we picked him up. Now he's back on the *Constellation*, ready to go again. In addition, he already had two MiGs to his credit before yesterday's action.

Mr. Rush: Doesn't that make him the first ace in the war, now that he has five kills to his credit?

Mr. Rush: I guess you have to send this Navy pilot back home now.

Adm. Moorer: No, we don't. We'll tell him to go out and get five more.

Mr. Johnson: What weapons did he use to shoot the MiGs down?

Adm. Flanagan: Sidewinders.

Mr. Johnson: Are they working now?

Adm. Flanagan: The Sidewinders have always worked. It was the Sparrow that gave us trouble.

Mr. Johnson: What did the North Vietnamese use to get our planes?

Adm. Moorer: The MiG 19s use 20-mm cannon fire. They apparently got two planes. SAMs got the other two.

Mr. Nutter: One French journalist in Hanoi reported that he saw three parachutes. He also reported that the railroad bridge was badly damaged.

Mr. Sullivan: Yes. That was Joel Henri.

Adm. Moorer: This action took place yesterday. Today, one of our planes was shot down near the Laotian border, but we expect to rescue the crew very shortly.

Yesterday we also hit the command and control center outside of Hanoi. The center is underground, and we used laser bombs in an attempt to destroy it. I don't know if we were successful. This center controls all the North Vietnamese planes and missiles. I'm sure they have alternative centers, but this is the main one — the Colorado Springs of North Vietnam.

11 May 72

USAF F-4s close the Doumer Bridge with laser guided bombs (LGBs) and 2,000-pound bombs.

12 May 72

First ELF HH-53 checkout completed at 40th ARRS. P16#4

13 May 72

Fourteen Air Force F-4s, with varying loads of 3,000-pound and 2,000-pound LGBs plus 500-pound gravity bombs, strike Thanh Hoa Bridge, taking out a span. Seventh AF announced the destruction of the Thanh Hoa "Dragons Jaw" bridge, 80 miles south of Hanoi, by an F-4 aircraft. The bridge stood for seven years despite repeated attacks to destroy it. In addition, several spans of the Paul Doumer Bridge on the northern edge of Hanoi were collapsed. The ordnance used

was 2,000 and 3,000 pound laser guided bombs. The bridge is unusable for rail traffic for the rest of the year.

13 May 72

On 13 May enemy rocket and mortar teams attacked DaNang AB. 18 122mm rockets hit inside the base, causing damage to the runway and 1 F-4 aircraft, 1 other aircraft damaged, and destroying a warehouse. The runway was repaired in 2 hours. One rocket hit the Duy Tan Hospital killing 5 Vietnamese patients and wounding 16 other Vietnamese

15 May 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to Secretary of Defense Laird

Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files: FRC 330-77-0095, 385.1, Viet (January-May 1972). Top Secret; Sensitive

Washington, May 15, 1972

SUBJ

Air Campaign in North Vietnam (U)

1. This responds to your memorandum of 10 May 1972, which requested the Line Backer plan and information on certain related topics.

2. The objectives of the air campaign (Line Backer) are to destroy and restrict the flow of war material through the North Vietnamese land mass and contiguous coastal waters by disrupting lines of communication and destroying transportation assets and supplies. The air campaign operates in concert with the mining operation (Pocket Money) which is designed to restrict the flow of maritime shipments into NVN.

3. NVN depends entirely on imports to support its war machine. The transportation target system consists of elements of the military supply and distribution network through which these imports move to the battlefields in Laos, Cambodia, and most particularly RVN. An initial priority effort is the reduction of existing POL stocks and the destruction of the major fixed POL storage facilities.

4. There are eight key bottlenecks along the Northeast and Northwest rail lines. Successful interdiction of these lines will complicate the North Vietnamese efforts to increase overland shipments now that their sea lanes are closed. They will be forced to use time-consuming shuttling operations and divert rail shipments to the road network.

5. Sealing off the ports was the first milestone. This move shut off maritime shipments which represent 95 percent of all imports. Rail shipments from China have been averaging 600 short tons per day. Imports will be limited to these quantities until the Soviet and Chinese increase their overland inputs.

6. As indicated above, the successful mining operation is expected to create a gap in the flow of supplies that will reduce imports below essential minimums. The enemy is now faced with the enormous task of completely readjusting his supply and distribution system to handle increased rail shipments from China. It will take 4 to 6 months of uninterrupted effort for the enemy to complete the readjustment. Our interdiction campaign is aimed at keeping the supply line capacity from the Chinese border to the battlefield reduced to the lowest possible level.

7. The near-term results will be disruption of the military supply and distribution system. Over the long-term, we can expect the campaign will impact seriously on the enemy's ability to maintain an adequate logistic network. We will degrade his capability to support his supply lines in Laos by requiring diversion of trucks, repair assets, and

AAA to cover the entire length of the logistic network.

8. Our forces and tactics will require continuous adjustment based on the enemy's efforts to accommodate to closure of the ports, and his ability to reconstitute his defenses and develop alternate LOC. As new targets are developed, they will be struck with available air assets and NGFS.

9. The USSR and PRC can be expected to apply psychological and diplomatic pressure on behalf of North Vietnam. They will probably also take measures to continue the supply flow to North Vietnam by overland routes through China. I feel it is unlikely that either USSR or China will directly involve their combat forces in an offensive role. However, we are watching carefully for actions which indicate otherwise.

10. Friendly loss rates are estimated at less than one half of one percent overall. The rate is expected to decline as the operations progress. 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. Overall, the losses are considered acceptable in light of the significant objectives.

T.H. Moorer

Note: Operation Pocket Money was the title of a U.S. Navy Task Force 77 aerial mining campaign conducted against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from 9 May 1972, during the Vietnam War.

15 May 72

U.S.AF turned over Cam Ranh Bay Air Base, the largest U.S.AF installation in South Vietnam, to the South Vietnamese.

17 May 72

General John W. Vogt, Commander, Seventh Air Force, presented the 3d ARRGp its third Presidential Unit Citation. This award recognized the heroic services performed by the Group from 1 February 1969 to 30 April 1970.

HH-43 unit Det. 4 Korat RTAFB was involved in multiple saves on May 17th. An F-105 landed with a fire onboard and still armed with bombs. The "Pedro" responded offering fire suppression support. Following explosions from the F-105 from on board ordinance the Pedro fire fighters successfully cleared the area of injured personnel. The injured were later medevac'ed to U-Tapao RTAFB by the on alert HC-130. For their excellent job the Pedro crew has been recommended for the Airmans Medal. (source 3rd ARRGp History Apr-Jun72)

A Wild Weasel was landing at Korat after an Iron Hand mission had one of its tires blown out on touchdown. The aircraft veered off the runway and caught fire. Both crew escaped but the aircraft was so badly damaged that it had to be scrapped. The aircraft was returning from an aborted mission and landed overweight causing the tire to blow. (Source Hobson's p.226)

18 May 72

The aircraft carrier U.S.S SARATOGA joined the 7th Fleet, bringing to six the number of carriers operating off the shores of Vietnam for the first time in the war. The total number of Navy personnel offshore rose to approximately 46,000 in some 64 ships.

U.S.AF aircraft using "smart" bombs destroyed over 5.5 million gallons of fuel 3½ miles northeast of Hanoi.

18 May 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From President Nixon to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 341, Subject Files, HAK/President Memos, 1971. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

Washington, May 18, 1972

While we are in Moscow it is vitally important that our bombing activity continue, at least at its present level and if possible above the present level in the event that the other carrier or other squadrons arrive on the scene and are available for use. The only restriction is that we do not want to hit in the Hanoi area. However, it is particularly important that strikes in North Vietnam and around the area of Hanoi and Haiphong, except for the small area of Hanoi itself, be kept up at their present level so that the enemy will not get any impression that because of our Moscow trip we let up on our strikes.

Due to the fact that we did restrain our military activities in the period before, during and after the Chinese trip there will be an expectation that we will reduce our efforts at this point. Under no circumstances must we make that mistake.

When we return, assuming that there has been no progress on the negotiating front, I want Abrams and Vogt to have for my consideration a major B-52 strike in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. One obvious target is the power plant in the center of Hanoi which, of course, is off limits at this point. In addition to that however, there must be some pretty good areas where B-52s would clean up where the smaller planes have already done some damage. A B-52 strike could have major psychological effect at that time and we want to get it in while we still have the public support for this kind of activity. The only excuse for not authorizing such a strike, which I will consider, other than progress on the negotiating front, is Abrams' judgment that he continues to need all the B-52s on the battlefield. That, of course, would have to take priority. But by that time it is my judgment that he would be able to spare half his B-52s and I would prefer around 50 of them for this kind of a strike.

On the propaganda front I think one theme that should be hit among the North Vietnamese forces in the South is a story to the effect that two Marine divisions from Japan and Okinawa have been ordered to North Vietnam and will be landing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area between the 1st and 15th of June. Another line that might be very effective would be to indicate that all women and children are being evacuated from Hanoi and that riots are occurring in Hanoi and in other cities in the North, and urging the soldiers to go home to defend their families against the expected attacks. I hold no brief for either of these ideas, but they at least do give you an impression of the kind of radio broadcasts that we should have been making long ago. Let's be sure that we get some creative thinking going on the psychological offensive immediately.

19 May 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From President Nixon to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) and the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 341, Subject Files, HAK/President Memos, 1971. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

Washington, May 19, 1972

I am thoroughly disgusted with the consistent failure to carry out orders that I have given over the past three and a half years, and particularly in the past critical eight weeks, with regard to Vietnam. It is our responsibility to ride the departments hard to see that when I give an order it is carried out faithfully, or that I am told as quickly as it is known that the order is not being carried out, and why that is the case.

I refer specifically to the fact that I have ordered, on occasion after occasion, an increase in the quantity and quality of weapons made available to the South Vietnamese. All that we have gotten from the Pentagon is the run around.

Finally, I have told Henry today that I wanted more B-52s sent to Vietnam. I want this order carried out, regardless of how many heads have to roll in carrying it out. Even though the bomb load is smaller, the psychological effect of having 100 more B-52s on the line would be enormous. I either expect this order to be carried out or I want the resignation of the man who failed to carry out the order when it was given.

I want you to convey directly to the Air Force that I am thoroughly disgusted with their performance in North Vietnam. Their refusal to fly, unless the ceiling is 4000 feet or more, is without doubt one of the most pusillanimous attitudes we have ever had in the whole fine history of the U.S. military. I do not blame the fine Air Force pilots who do a fantastic job. I do blame the commanders who, because they have been playing "how not to lose" so long, now can't bring themselves to start playing "how to win."

Under the circumstances, I have decided to take the command of all strikes in North Vietnam in the Hanoi-Haiphong area out from under *any Air Force jurisdiction whatever*. The orders will be given directly from a Naval commander whom I will select. If there is one more instance of whining about target restrictions we will simply blow the whistle on this whole sorry performance of our Air Force. About their failing for day after day after day in North Vietnam this past week to hit enormously important targets when they had an opportunity to do so, were ordered to do so, and then wouldn't carry out the order.

I want you to convey my utter disgust to Moorer which he in turn can pass on to the Chiefs and also convey it to Abrams and Bunker in the field. It is time for these people either to shape up or get out.

20 May 72

40th ARRS SAR on Bowleg 02A. Jolly crew was Captain Schibler A/C, Lt Hutchinson C/P, SSgt Bryant FE, Sgt Perry & Amn Mason PJs

21 May 72

At 1337L, Pedro 61 was notified that an emergency medevac mission was required for a USAF sergeant who had taken an overdose of drugs. The patient was flown from the 366th USAF Dispensary to the 95th Evacuation Hospital. IV fluids were given to the patient during the flight. One non-combat save was credited to Captain Donald R. Wagner.

23 May 72

On 23 May two Soviet SA-7 missiles were captured intact by friendly elements operating south of Hue. Subsequently, SA-7s were employed to a limited extent in all military regions of South Vietnam. Also in May, aerial photographs revealed that the enemy was using the Soviet ZSU-57 self-propelled antiaircraft gun for the first time.

24 May 72

The Defense Department announced that more B-52's were en route to southeast Asia and added to the target list all facilities used to support the enemy war effort.

25 May 72

At 0415L, Pedro 61 was notified that two VNAF personnel with severe burns needed to be medevac'ed to the 95th Evacuation Hospital. Pedro 61 arrived at the 95th at 0445L and one non-combat save credited to Captain James Wilkinson.

F-4 Phantoms using 2,000 pound smart bombs, destroyed the Lang Ghia railroad bridge 65 miles northeast of Hanoi linking North Vietnam with China.

26 May 72

At 3230 local time, King notified the 37th ARRSq that an F-4 was down in the vicinity of Khe Sanh. Jolly Green 21 and 71 were returning from a fragged orbit at the time and landed at DaNang to plan a route to the area. After one and a half hours of planning with Sandy 7 and 8 the two Jollies and two Sandies took off for the SAR area. While Captain Dake was in the hover to pickup Gunsmoke 02B they took ground fire, but this was silenced by the pararescueman with his minigun. Gunsmoke 02A was then picked up without any enemy reaction.

Jolly Green 21 and 71 egressed the area without further incident and returned to DaNang.

37th ARRS History, April – June 1972, p. 18-19

Jolly Green 21

AC Captain Gary A. Dake
CP Captain James D. Bruner
HM Sgt Cayetano Pina
RS SSgt Cole E. Panning
RS Sgt John W. Stephens
Civ Mr Dennis Cameron

Jolly Green 71

AC Major Jerry J. Gilbert
CP Captain Frederick W. Harrington
HM A1C Charles J. Rouhier
RS SSgt Douglas E. Wilson
RS SSgt Michael L. Wagner

26 May 72

At 0925L, Pedro 61 scrambled on an inflight emergency on an inbound USMC A-4 fighter, callsign Wine Leaf 04. The aircraft was uncontrollable below 190 knots and the pilots decided to eject feetwet 15 miles south of DaNang. Pedro 61 headed to the area as the crew ejected at 0944L. The first man was hoisted at 0945 and the second at 0948. Pedro 61 returned to DaNang and two combat saves were credited to Captain Robert R. Ames and Captain Mike Schmidt.

37th ARRS History, April – June 1972, p.28

30 May 72

The heaviest air raids since 1968 struck Vinh the second largest port in North Vietnam.

31 May 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 63,000. By the end of May, aerial mining had effectively closed Haiphong harbor and Linebacker had cut the rail lines leading from China to Hanoi and railroads to the south had been cut as well.

JUNE

1Jun72

First SAR using ELF. P16#4 p123#7

Four hundred and twenty-two NVA tanks have been reported destroyed or captured since the onset of the Easter Offensive. NVA main forces have inflicted serious defeats on several ARVN divisions and have in fact destroyed the 3rd ARVN division at Quang Tri and the 22nd division at Kontum. Several other ARVN divisions plus the Ranger command have also taken heavy casualties. In general, the communists have demonstrated that many ARVN units simply cannot stand on their own without massive U.S. air support. We believe the North Vietnamese fully intend to continue their offensive at least into the summer months. They have apparently invested everything in the success of this effort and their war making capabilities have not yet been diminished to the point which would force reconsideration.

source (1 June 72 7AF/CC briefing titled "North Vietnams War Making Capabilities)

2Jun72

"I had to decide whether we should risk the loss of maybe a dozen airplanes and crews just to get one man out. Goddamn it, the one thing that keeps our boys motivated is the certain belief that if they go down, we will do absolutely everything we can to get them out. I just said, Go do it!" General John W. Vogt 7th AF Commander

40th ARRS SAR. Oyster 02, an F-4 downed on 10 May and crewed by xxx xxx and Captain Roger C. Locher, 02B, down for 21 or 23 days before he comes up on radio. Capt Locher Evaded away from troops looking for him. He Ended up in the mountains near Yen Bai MIG field on the Red River. The HH-53 pickup crew included Captain Stovall A/C, Captain Gillespie C/P, Sgt Walsh FE, Sgt Cakebread and Sgt McQuoid PJ's, Sgt Welborn photographer. This SAR utilized for the first time the ELF (electronic location finder) system. Two of these test sets had been sent to the 40th ARRS for evaluation in a combat environment. The low bird on this SAR used the ELF to pinpoint the survivors position resulting in a rapid pickup by the Jolly (ELF info from ARRS Hist 1Jul71-30Jun72, vol 1, p148). High Bird included Captain Shipman A/C, Captain Zielinski C/P, Sgt Liles FE, Sgt Goodlett & Sgt Williamson PJs, Sgt Smith photographer. The four PJ's are indoctrinated as honorary members of the Red River Valley Pilots association and received Silver Stars.

On May 10, 1972 the F-4 carrying Capt. Roger C. Locher of the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Udom Royal Air Force Base, Thailand, was shot down by a heat-seeking missile launched from a MiG-21; Capt. Locher was on his 407th combat mission. He parachuted to safety near Yen Bai Airfield (northwest of Hanoi) but could not contact friendly aircraft with his survival radio. For the next 22 days he hid, living on fruits, nuts, and berries, until he was finally able to make radio contact with friendly aircraft.

A rescue attempt was launched on June 1 by HH-53 helicopters, A-1 attack airplanes, and an HC-130 command airplane, with F-4 and F-105 fighters providing air protection, but they were driven off by enemy MIG's. They were back the next day, deep inside North Vietnam, and an

HH-53, using a newly-developed electronic location finder (ELF), pinpointed the downed airman through a canopy of jungle growth, lowered a jungle penetrator and lifted Capt. Locher to safety.

7Jun72

Radio Hanoi reported China and the Soviet Union pledged continued aid to North Vietnam and the Viet Cong on the occasion of the third anniversary of the founding of the PRG.

8 Jun 72

MACV reported 95 Americans killed and 266 wounded in air and ground action since the offensive began on March 30.

Excerpts from Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) and the Deputy Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Vogt)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Moorer Diary, July 1970–July 1974. Secret. Moorer was in Washington; Vogt was in Saigon.

June 8, 1972

Secure TELECON/OUT—To General Vogt

CJCS:—I just got authority to hit the dam and I just wanted to give you a little background on it so you will know what to do. The way I wrote the message was, I called it the Lang Chi HPP and Adjacent Substation, because you had said you were interested in the Substation.

Vogt:—We can hit both.

CJCS:—Hit one at a time. Here is what happened. I will read you the message the way I wrote it and then the way it is coming out. I said, the following target is validated. Then I named the Plant and Substation and I said concentrate strike efforts on transformers adjacent to generator building additionally you are requested to take special precaution to minimize damage to the dam.

The strike effort about generator house right behind transformers about 8 or 10 feet, doesn't make any difference, hope you can hit both of them. Strike effort will be limited to transformers and substation (I know that you can not be that precise, don't worry about that, concentrate on generators and transformers, one bomb in generator house would be great) it says additionally you are limited to the use of laser weapons, take special precaution to not damage the dam and spillways.

Vogt:—We will probably go day after tomorrow my time. Work highway bridges tomorrow. The long range weather forecast is good for tomorrow and the next day.

CJCS:—When you go in there first time, really cream it.

Vogt:—What I will do is have 3 flights and let the first go in, if they do it I will wave off the others and have them come on back, but if not, we will let the second and third go up there and be sure of it.

CJCS:—Instead of waving the other one off, put him on Substation instead of let's not waste anything, knock out the Substation since you are up there. You will get the message in an hour.

Vogt:—Read you loud and clear, ready to go. We will take the whole works out.

Notes:

1. The Air Force hit the site two days later, using laser guided bombs, and effectively took offline over 50 percent of North Vietnam's electricity-generating capacity. See

Thompson, *To Hanoi and Back*, p. 251.

9 Jun 72

The aircraft carrier Ticonderoga joined the 7th Fleet off North Vietnam, raising the number to seven carriers.

The last infantry GIs to die in Vietnam on the ground by enemy action were 1st Cavalry Rangers: Sgt. Elvis Osborne and Spec. 4 Jeffrey Maurer. On June 9, H Company's Ranger Team 76, led by Osborne, conducted a recon patrol near Tan Uyen. After helicopter gunships raked the NVA bunker complex there, the team went in to assess the damage. Either rocket fire or a command-detonated bomb rigged as a mechanical ambush device claimed their lives.

10 Jun 72

At 2:24 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 8 rockets. 3 Airmen WIA and 2 aircraft damaged.

At 0705 Pedro 61 was notified that a Vietnamese National had been struck by a munitions truck and needed an immediate medical evacuation to the 95th Evacuation Hospital. The patient was suffering from multiple compound fractures and lacerations. The patient was flown from the 366th USAF Dispensary to the 95th arriving at 0717L. One non-combat save was credited to Captain Robert R. Ames and crew.

At 1355, Pedro 61 was notified that a USAF sergeant had sustained multiple critical injuries in a vehicle accident and needed an immediate medevac for surgery. Pedro arrived at the 366th Dispensary at 1359 and flew the patient to the 95th arriving at 1406. One non-combat save was credited to Captain Robert R. Ames and crew.

11 Jun 72

U.S. aircraft destroyed the Lang Chi hydroelectric power plant, 63 miles northwest of Hanoi (capable of producing 75 percent of the North's power requirements), using "smart" bombs to avoid damaging the adjacent dam.

12 Jun 72

The House Armed Services Committee called Generals Lavelle and Ryan to testify on June 12. Instead of ending the controversy, however, the House hearing sparked calls for a Senate inquiry. During the largest invasion of South Vietnam, instead of leading his troops, General Lavelle was in Washington DC explaining why he ordered airstrikes on enemy positions.

13 Jun 72

At 23:21 p.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 6 rockets. 12 Airmen WIA

14 Jun 72

At the White House, the issue of Lavelle's authority had become a point of heated, behind-the-scenes discussion. On Wednesday, June 14, in a nearly 29-minute Oval Office meeting between Nixon and Kissinger, the issue of Lavelle came up repeatedly.

The President began: "Let me ask you about Lavelle. I was, I had it on my list this morning. I just don't want him to be made a goat. We all know what protective reaction is. This damn

Laird.” [Nixon evidently was responding in line with the views of Kissinger, who blamed Laird for the removal of Lavelle.]

Then Kissinger said: “And he had him already removed by the time I even learned about it.”

Nixon asked, “Why did he even remove him? You, you destroy a man’s career.”

Still, Nixon does not receive a satisfactory answer from his national security advisor. The President continued: “Can we do anything now to stop this damn thing?” “Lavelle was removed at the end of March,” Kissinger noted.

Kissinger failed to inform the President that he had proposed a replacement for General Lavelle. The replacement was a friend of Kissinger’s.

15 Jun72

A VNAF UH-1 helicopter was downed on the 270° radial at 22 miles off channel 69. First reports indicated that there were no survivors and the VNAF were working the crash site. Four hours after initial notification of the crash, the Alpha crews were scrambled. After holding feet wet, Major Jackson K. Scott Jr. went into the area for the pickup. One survivor was rescued and Jolly Green 64 proceeded to the 95th Hospital.

37th ARRS History, April – June 1972, p. 19

Jolly Green 64

AC Major Jackson K. Scott Jr.
CP Captain David E. Mullenix
HM Sgt. Cayetano Pina
RS Sgt David W. Young
RS A1C Michael a. Friedrich

Jolly Green 21

AC Captain Gary A. Dake
CP Captain Gerald M. Tonn
HM A1C Charles J. Rouhier
RS Sgt Charles B. McQuoid II
RS Sgt Michael L. Wagner

When the 196th Infantry Brigade left Vietnam in early June, the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, stayed behind to protect DaNang Air Base. Along with B Battery., 3rd Bn., 82nd Field Artillery, it formed *Task Force Gimlet*.

Between 9 May and 15 June, the United States had carried out 14,621 air strikes and 836 naval gunfire attacks against North Vietnam. Air strikes had effectively closed both the northeast and northwest rail lines from China. The air campaign did significant damage to the North Vietnamese POL and electric power systems. In spite of extensive damage, North Vietnam was able to carry on operations in South Vietnam.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p.178

16 Jun 72

At 1000, Pedro 61 was notified that an aircraft from the USS Kitty Hawk was inbound to DaNang with a patient on board in critical condition with a stroke. Pedro 61 met the aircraft at the end of the runway and unloaded the patient and a flight surgeon, delivering them to the 95th Evac Hospital at 1017. One non-combat save was credited to Captain Allen C. Spitler and crew.

17 Jun 72

MACV announced the stand down of major elements of the last two U.S. infantry brigades in South Vietnam, the 196th at DaNang / Phu Bai and the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) at Bien Hoa.

18 Jun 72

At 12:45 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 4 rockets. 1 Airmen WIA

OL-A the RCC at Son Tra, call sign "Queen" and OL-B at Udorn were deactivated as part of the withdrawal policy. OL-A had been responsible for SAR operations in the DaNang Sector. Their missions were assumed by the 40th ARRS at Nakhon Phanom AB where it continued to operate under the call sign of "Jack"

OL-B the RCC (Jack) at Udorn RTAFB moved to NKP. P9#4

18 Jun 72

An AC-130, serial number 55-0042, call sign "Spectre 11" and assigned to the 16th SOS, Ubon RTAFB was shot down in the vicinity of the Ashau Valley. It's crew of 15 were:

Capt Paul F. Gilbert, pilot

Capt Robert A. Wilson, co-pilot

Maj Robert H. Harrison, navigator

Maj Gerald F. Ayres, sensor operator

Capt Mark G. Danielson, electronic warfare officer

Capt Gordon L. Bocher, fire control officer, **survivor**

2nd Lt Robert V. Reid, low light sensor operator, **survivor**

TSgt Richard M. Cole, Jr., flight engineer

SSgt Leon A. Hunt, aerial gunner

SSgt Richard E. Nyhof, aerial gunner

SSgt Larry J. Newman, aerial gunner

MSgt Jacob E. Mercer, aerial gunner

SSgt Stanley L. Lehrke, aerial gunner

SSgt Donald H. Klinke, illuminator operator

SSgt William B. Patterson, illuminator operator, **survivor**

Spectre 11 was conducting a night armed reconnaissance mission to attack elite NVA forces known to be infiltrating from Laos into South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Oscar Eight area.

Oscar Eight was the code name given to a sector of eastern Laos located in rugged jungle covered mountains, approximately 25 miles northwest of the infamous A Shau Valley, Saravane Province, Laos. The area encompassed the junction of Highway 92, which was a primary north-south artery of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and Highway 922 which branched off and ran directly east where it crossed into South Vietnam at a strategic point near the northern edge of the A Shau Valley.

More American aircraft were downed in the vicinity of the junction of Highways 92 and 922 than any other place in Laos. This was because burrowed deep in the hills of Oscar Eight and located just to the east of the road junction was North Vietnamese General Vo Bam's 559th Transportation Group's forward headquarters. It was also the Ho Chi Minh Trail's control center as well as containing the largest NVA storage facility outside of North Vietnam. Oscar Eight was defended by consecutive belts of anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) guns of all sizes.

The AC-130's target was in mountainous terrain -- in a valley with hills around it that reached up 3,500 feet. At 2355 hours, Spectre 11 was making its second attack pass over the target area. An SA-7 missile code named "*Strella*" was fired from the side of one of the hills by the 36th Anti-Aircraft Battalion.

Sgt William B. Patterson had the job of watching for missiles and AAA fire. He lay on the aft cargo door, actually hanging out into the airstream so he could get a good field-of-view below the aircraft. It was dark and Sgt Patterson spotted the tell-tale flash of light when the missile was fired. It arched up toward the aircraft in a smooth curving trajectory, the motor burning with an eerie blue-white light, holding straight to its course. When the missile was 2-3 seconds away, the crew fired a decoy flare, but the SA-7 kept boring right in, hitting the right inboard #3 engine. There was a loud explosion and a flash of fire as the missile struck. Flames trailed 40+ feet behind the engine.

The aircraft shuddered, the nose rose slightly, then settled down and began a hard right turn. The #3 engine separated from the wing. The flight engineer called on intercom that they were losing altitude, the pilots worked to pull her up. Capt Gilbert rang the egress (bailout) bell. Someone else was calling out on the UHF radio that Spectre 11 had been hit by a missile. Personnel in three escorting F-4's observed the gunship break apart and descended in four large fireballs, missing what appeared to be the tail and right wing before it crashed and exploded in the rugged jungle covered mountains northwest of the A Shau Valley.

At least three men were thrown clear of the Spectre aircraft as it broke up and they parachuted safely to the ground. SSgt Patterson, an accomplished parachutist, grabbed his parachute after the SA-7 hit. While falling through the night sky, Patterson managed to strap himself into the harness and deploy his chute.

Although initial reports placed the crash location in Laos, subsequent SAR efforts (and later on-the-ground investigation) placed the location approximately 2 miles east of the South Vietnamese/Lao border. Some of the gunship's wreckage fell into a village in South Vietnam while the rest of it fell into adjacent jungle foliage.

US forces heard multiple emergency beepers. The F-4 escort aircrew flight leader immediately radioed *Moonbeam*, the EC-130 airborne battlefield command and control center (ABCCC) notifying it of Spectre 11's loss and requested a search and rescue (SAR) mission.

(sources: Laymon: Today in SEA History and Capt. Larry Henry, 334th TFS, F-4E WSO TDY to Ubon RTAFB [mailto: Larry.Henry@L-3com.com]) Captain Henry was flying F-4 escort for the AC-130 and saw it get hit. Capt Henry retired as a Major General.)

At first light, SAR aircraft were on scene. Captain Don Sutton and his crew in HH-53C Super Jolly Green Giant, s.n. 69-5787 from the 37th ARRS at DaNang were able to locate and recover 2nd Lt Robert Reid, Capt Gordon Bocher and SSgt William Patterson.

Captain Sutton said: "We were on alert at DaNang as Alpha Low when Spectre 11 was shot down. The 37th ARRS didn't have any night gear so the rescue attempt was going to be made at first light. We knew that there were at least 3 reported survivors which meant that there were 12 or so not accounted for.

We were led into the area by the Sandys and made a typical tree top, high speed run into the final position. We had the first survivor 'pop smoke' and got into a hover over his position. The Sandys put down some BLU-52 so we had our gas masks on during the operation. *(BLU-52 was a 'riot control' CS-based powder delivered in a 500 lb napalm tank. BLU-52 was used in an attempt to reduce enemy movement in the area. It would temporarily incapacitate anyone that came into contact with it, including the survivor. Typically, the victim would experience burning eyes, draining sinuses, and nausea. The effects of BLU-52 were only temporary.)*

I was pretty well nestled into the tree tops to try to maintain a low profile and I remember the Sandys saying that I could come up a little. Also remember thinking I was just fine where I was. I recall coughing a little bit during the rescue which meant that I didn't have my gas mask on tight enough because I must have been inhaling small amounts of the CS agent.

The Sandys flew a daisy chain around us, but I don't recall them having to suppress any enemy fire, but that may have been because I was too busy concentrating on getting the survivors on board as quickly as possible.

The first survivor was difficult to locate due to dense jungle. Once the penetrator was deployed to the survivors estimated position, he climbed on the penetrator and was on it for approximately one minute before he was hoisted up. He did not shake the cable to let the flight engineer know he was on and ready for hoisting. The survivors were all pretty close to each other so the time spent in a hover or at low speeds getting to each one was pretty minimal. The other two survivors were picked up without any difficulty. We did not take any small arms fire that we were aware of and didn't have to use our mini guns at all. The PJs and Flight Engineer did a great job of getting everybody on board and keeping their eyes out for any other hostile activity.

Our flight back to DaNang was uneventful. We were obviously excited about rescuing three of the Spectre's crewmembers. But that excitement was muted quite a bit by the fact that we knew that the rest of the crew had been killed in the incident. This was the third Spectre that had been shot down within the last two and half months and we were hoping this would be the last.

As with most rescue attempts, you were never quite sure what was going to happen. We were prepared for the worst, but thankfully this one turned out to be pretty benign. As always, I had supreme confidence in my crewmembers, the Sandys around me, and the rest of the SAR participants. Everybody was going to do their absolute best to see that we got the survivors safely back to DaNang.

SAR efforts continued for six days but no trace of the rest of the crew was found. The remaining 12 crewmen were declared Missing in Action.

Jolly Green 72

AC Captain Donald Sutton
CP Captain Todd Hohberger
HM Sgt. Ronald Blackwell
RS SSgt Cole Panning
RS A1C Kenneth Cakebread

Jolly Green 64

AC Captain Douglas Bruner
CP Captain David Mullenix
HM Sgt Gregory Sealander
RS Sgt David Mueller
RS A1C Michael Aillet

12 Nov 1993

To: Commander, United States Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii

Subj: REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTATION - REFNO 1879

Ref: (a) CDRUSACILHI MSG 181729Z OCT 93, Request for documentation pertaining to REFNO 1879

1. In response to reference (a), this letter provides Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) analysis of the REFNO 1879 case file information.
2. In June 1972, SSGT Newman, SGT Lehrke, SSGT Nyhof, SGT Hunt, MSGT Mercer, SSGT Klinke, SSGT Cole Jr, CAPT Danielson, MAJ Ayers, MAJ Harrison, CAPT Wilson, CAPT Gilbert, 2LT Reid, SSGT Patterson, and CAPT Bocher were aboard an AC-130 aircraft when it was hit by a shoulder-fired surface to air missile (SA-7). The aircraft commander rang the egress (bail out) bell, but an explosion occurred several seconds later, and the right wing separated from the aircraft. The first explosion was followed immediately by a second, which threw three crew members (CAPT Bocher, SSGT Patterson, 2LT Reid) clear of the aircraft. These three individuals were able to deploy their parachutes and land safely.
3. According to a witness in another aircraft, the AC-130 was hit by a missile and began a hard right turn. A few seconds later, the aircraft broke apart and descended in four large fireballs. The following day, Search-and-Rescue (SAR) forces rescued the three survivors. Aerial surveillance was maintained around the crash site for six days, but failed to obtain any signs of survivors. The hostile threat in the area precluded a detailed ground inspection of the site.
4. In June 1993, a joint investigation team located two witnesses who produced dog tags relating to two individuals (Harrison, Wilson) involved in this incident, along with three flight helmets. The team photographed the dog tags and helmets which were retained by the witnesses. The team traveled to the crash site and conducted a survey. During the survey, the team recovered portions of a flight suit and survival vest. The team also observed the tail assembly from a C-130 aircraft.
5. During August and September 1993, a joint team excavated the crash site and recovered teeth, bone fragments, and ID media (Ayers) from the site. The material evidence recovered from the site confirms a minimum of four individuals were aboard the aircraft at impact. Additionally, a data plate, 20mm cannon, 40mm Bofers gun, confirms that the aircraft was an AC-130 aircraft. According to JTF-FA records, the REFNO 1879 aircraft is the only AC-130 which crashed within 40 kilometers of this site.

6. Analysis of the reporting from on-scene SAR forces, survivor statements, and testimony from villagers who visited the crash site, indicate that only three of the fifteen crew members exited the aircraft before impact. JTF-FA files contain no evidence which suggests that any of the twelve remaining crewmembers survived the crash of the aircraft.

THOMAS H. NEEDHAM

Major General, USA

Commander, Joint Task Force -Full Accounting

19 Jun 72

The U.S. resumed airstrikes north of the 20th parallel in North Vietnam, following a four day suspension during the visit of Soviet President Podgorny.

20 Jun 72

Sandy 7 was hit while participating in a SAR for a Navy F-8 pilot who was later recovered by Jolly Greens from the 40th ARRS NKP, Thailand. Sandy 7 was bedded down for the night and an attempt to pick him up the next morning was planned during the night. The morning of the 21st ordinance was put in around the survivor until Sandy lead felt the area was secure enough for a pickup. Jolly Green 72 ingressed to Sandy 7's location. The only problem encountered was in getting the penetrator through the dense foliage. The survivor was hoisted up and Jolly Green 72 returned to DaNang.

37th ARRS History, April – June 1972, p. 20-21

Jolly Green 72

AC Major Christopher C. Korper

CP Captain Gerald M. Tonn

HM Sgt Jimmie R. Cherry

RS SSgt Douglas E. Wilson

RS A1C Michael A. Friedrich

Jolly Green 64

AC Captain Gary A. Dake

CP 2Lt Jerry D. Stout

HM A1C Charles J. Rouier

RS Sgt David W. Young

RS Sgt Charles B. McQuoid

21 Jun 72

Gen. Creighton W. Abrams was named by President Nixon to replace Gen. William C. Westmoreland as Army Chief of Staff

Nickel 102 B SAR. Ashau Valley. Rescued by HH-53 from DaNang. Jolly crew was Captain Orrell A/C, Captain Courtice C/P, Sgt Liles FE, Sgt Salome & Sgt Webber PJs (not Werber?) Sandy 7 (Larry Highfill) SAR. Ashau Valley. Had been working Nickel 102. Rescued by HH-53 from DaNang. Jolly crew was Captain Orrell A/C, Captain Courtice C/P, Sgt Liles FE, Sgt Salome & Sgt Webber PJs.

22 Jun 72

At 1:15 a.m. six 122mm rockets impact DaNang AB. One U.S. KIA

23 Jun 72

B-52's flew a record 33 missions in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces in the 24-hour period ending at noon.

MACV announced the movement of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing from DaNang AB, the last F-4 squadron in South Vietnam. Three squadrons of the 366th moved to Takhli AB Thailand, to join another F-4 squadron from the U.S.

South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam rejected any in place cease-fire agreement and said that the North Vietnamese must withdraw their forces from South Vietnam as prelude to a cease-fire.

25 Jun 72

40th ARRS launch eight aircraft on SAR attempt in NVN. Six took battle damage. SSgt Cash WIA. Harry received initial medical treatment, including a blood transfusion at Lima Site 16. His HH-53 was left there as unflyable with two PJ's. Harry was taken to Udorn for definitive care. By the 29th he was able to receive visitors that included Chuck McGrath

26 Jun 72

SERGEANT CHARLES D. McGRATH. For two days, 26 and 27 June 1972, the 40th ARRS at NKP has been working to rescue two downed F-4 crews, Valiant 03 and 04, from deep inside North Vietnam. Many attempts are made, and as many times, enemy resistance drives them away. Then Valiant 03A is recovered. At a holding point, Jolly 73 joins Jolly 57 for an attempt on Valiant 04A who had received a broken leg, knee, elbow, and jaw, upon ejection and landing. Aboard Jolly 73, the Low Bird, is Sergeant Chuck McGrath, who prepares his equipment to recover the pilot.

Enemy opposition to Jolly 73's intrusion is furious. A hailstorm of bullets rip through the aircraft and accompany McGrath to the ground. Somehow he is unscathed. In the deep undergrowth, McGrath finally locates the injured man. Not only is the man seriously injured, he's also in a very poor location for extraction. Tall trees will force Jolly 57 to establish a high hover, which will make it vulnerable to deadly ground fire. Meanwhile, enemy forces race through the area frantically searching for the two men. McGrath scoops up the immobile pilot and carries him some 120 feet through dense undergrowth to a safe place for a pickup.

Overhead, Jolly 73 has taken more ground fire and loses the use of its hoist. It is able to climb out, and Jolly 57 immediately dives in to pick up McGrath and his survivor. But Jolly 57 is also receiving punishment. Just as Jolly 57's PJ, Technical Sergeant Dennis Reich, is hauling McGrath into the helicopter, Reich is hit by ground fire. The onboard combat photographer, and the flight engineer drag the men inside, and Jolly 57 pulls out to join up with Jolly 73 which now has a severe fuel leak and needs an immediate air refueling. An HC-130P "King" answers the call, and a rendezvous is effected

Meanwhile, Sergeant McGrath begins treating Sergeant Reich, who is bleeding profusely from the bullet wound in his leg. Jolly 57's other PJ, now free from manning his mini-gun, joins in the care of Reich. McGrath bounds over to his survivor, worse for the wear, but relieved to once again be airborne and on his way to what he hopes will be a secured American base. On examination of the survivor's injuries, McGrath notices a new one: a bullet hole up through the

bottom of the pilot's boot. He had been shot while ascending the hoist. Both patients are delivered safely to a medical facility-yes, on a secured American base. Sergeant McGrath goes on to receive a commission in the Air Force and finishes his career as an officer, but a pararescueman forever.

27 Jun 72

The critical importance of the interface between the USAF and USN was demonstrated by an unusual series of USAF F-4 losses on 27 June 1972. On that day, Red Crown was unable to appear on station due to a typhoon in the Gulf of Tonkin and Disco became the only US control agency available. Before the day was over, four USAF F-4s had been shot down, three by MiGs.

The first loss occurred when a strike aircraft was downed near Hanoi by a surface-to-air missile. Shortly thereafter a USAF Anti-MiG Combat Air Patrol aircraft was downed by a MiG after having received a last-minute warning from Disco. During the SAR effort which ensued, two more F-4s were downed by MiGs. MiG warnings were being issued only intermittently, and were not always being received due to radio interference and saturated communications frequencies. In all, four aircraft and eight crew members were downed. SAR forces faced heavy MiG reactions and ground fire, and were able to recover two of the downed crew members only because they refused to abandon the attempt.

CHECO SEA Tactical Data Systems Interface, p47-48

40th ARRS SAR on Valiant 03A. Captain Orrell A/C, Lt Connelly C/P, Sgt Sanders FE, Sgt Walker and Sgt Musmilion PJs.

40th ARRS SAR on Valiant 04A. Captain Stovall A/C, Lt Hutchinson C/P, Sgt Simmons FE, TSgt Reich and Sgt Nunes PJs, TSgt Shuman photographer

28 June 72

President Nixon announced the withdrawal of 10,000 additional U.S. troops by 1 September. He also announced that draftees no longer would be sent to Vietnam unless they volunteered. President Nixon also commented that 10,000 more troops would be withdrawn by Sept. 1, leaving a total of 39,000 military personnel in Vietnam, a major reduction from the 525,000 who were there when he took office on Jan. 20, 1969.

30 June 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 48,000 as Increment XII withdrawals were completed. By June, the military situation was finally beginning to improve for the South Vietnamese.

During this quarter, 37th ARRS personnel constructed revetments around the squadron building located in hanger 1723. The revetments were needed for protection from rocket attack.

The mission of the 37th ARRSq, Pedro Section, DaNang RVN is to operate and maintain search and rescue equipment to Accomplish air crew recovery, local base rescue, and evacuation missions as directed. The section maintains a 24 hour alert with the capability of becoming airborne in three minutes during the day and in ten minutes at night. The geographical area of responsibility for air crew recovery is a radius of action of 75 miles. The radius of action of local base rescue response with the Fire Suppression Kit, which is the primary mission, is 15 miles.

This unit had two helicopters assigned during this quarter, both HH-43F models; SN #62-4508 and SN #62-4560.

On 30 June, 304 pararescuemen were assigned to ARRS units around the world, against 340 authorized. Of these, 37 were serving in SEA vs 40 authorized for that theater.

Excerpts from Memorandum From the Director, Joint Staff (Seignious) to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Nutter)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 160, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, June–July 1972.
Top Secret; Sensitive

June 30, 1972

SUBJECT

Proposed Radio Operation (U)

1. (S) Reference is made to your memorandum, subject as above, dated 26 June 1972 in which you requested an appraisal of the Archie Bunker concept (knock out Radio Hanoi).
2. (S) The Defense Intelligence Agency performed an independent study in response to the first two requests in your memorandum, drawing on all available intelligence on the broadcasting system of North Vietnam and on the five targets that would be struck in the Archie Bunker attack. Their conclusions (which I support) are as follows:
 - a. On the intelligence basis for and probability of actually knocking Radio Hanoi off the air: "Intelligence indicates that the five nominated targets are the primary radio broadcasting facilities used by the North Vietnamese for propaganda and informing the populace of those items the government wants released. They are supplemented by a separate, extensive wired broadcast network, connected to loudspeakers throughout the city of Hanoi. This network relays major Radio Hanoi broadcasts. If the nominated targets are successfully destroyed simultaneously, the probability of knocking Radio Hanoi off the air is very good."
 - b. On the best estimate of Hanoi's capability to restore broadcasting: "Radio broadcasts from possible substitute facilities probably could not be initiated immediately. Radio broadcasting probably could be restored with greatly reduced efficiency by using local low-powered transmitters, but this might take several hours."
3. (S) In your third request, you asked for an appraisal of the importance of the Archie Bunker operation to the success of the overall psychological operations offensive. The Archie Bunker project presents an opportunity to reach a large portion of the North Vietnamese population by taking advantage of North Vietnam's own internal communication system. Intelligence indicates that tight controls are maintained on the distribution and use of the 500,000 to 600,000 radio receivers in North Vietnam. Sets are registered, the sale of batteries is controlled, some private receivers have been modified to receive broadcasts only on government frequencies, and listening to other than government radio broadcasts is forbidden. The Archie Bunker concept calls for the destruction of Radio Hanoi's transmitters in the minutes just preceding the major evening news broadcast which is received off the air and relayed live outside Hanoi by a few low-powered local transmitters and by hundreds of wired loudspeaker networks. As each Hanoi transmitter leaves the air, it would be replaced on its own frequency by a broadcast from the Coronet Solo aircraft. This taped broadcast would purport to be an emergency transmission from Radio Hanoi, thus gaining immediate access to Hanoi's national audience and to the local transmitter and wired loudspeaker networks relaying Radio Hanoi. This access would continue in the Hanoi area until lower powered

replacement transmitters could go on the air, and for longer periods elsewhere, where the Coronet Solo transmissions would be more powerful than Hanoi's low-power replacements.

George M. Seignious, II
Lieutenant General, USA

Note: Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird vetoed the operation, questioning its military viability and citing its potential international and domestic drawbacks.

Nguyen, Lien-Hang T.. Hanoi's War (The New Cold War History) (p. 262). The University of North Carolina Press.

June 72

U.S. troop levels fell from 239,000 in June 1971 to 47,000 in June 1972

Faced with failure militarily, the enemy returned to the bargaining table and agreed to cease-fire which he used as a cover to continue guerrilla activity and buildup for a future military operation, should the cease-fire conditions not gain him political control. By the end of June, the thrust of the Easter Invasion had been blunted and the RVNAF were retaking lost territory. When the offensive came to a halt, North Vietnam had occupied much of South Vietnam below the DMZ and a strip of land along the South Vietnamese border with Laos and Cambodia.⁸

On 30 June 1972, 304 pararescuemen were assigned to ARRS units around the world, against 340 authorized:

Location	Authorized	Assigned
Southeast Asia	40	37
Other Pacific units	74	55
Europe	56	51
HQ ARRS & OL's	8	9
Hill AFB PJ School	33	25
Other CONUS units	118	127
Alaska	12	16
Panama Canal	7	5
Greenland	4	0

By the end of June 1972, only five LRB detachments were still serving in SEA. Four of these – Det 3 at Ubon, Det 4 at Korat, Det 5 at Udorn, and Det 13 at Utapao were in Thailand. The fifth, Det 14 remained at Tan Son Nhut in RVN.

During this quarter, 37th ARRS had nine HH-53's that received battle damage. Due to the untiring efforts and devotion to duty of the squadrons maintenance personnel, all of these aircraft were returned to an in-commission status in an absolute minimum of time. The 37th average manning level was 89%. However the Pararescue manning A923X0 was down to 9 assigned for 18 authorized.

JULY

2 Jul 72 ARRS Reorganization

2 Jul, 3ARPJJp submitted a proposed PAD to 41 ARRWg which called for the reduction/reorganization of 3ARRGp and realignment of Command/ Control and operational control of SAR forces.

The proposal called for:

1. Reduction of 3ARRgp/JBCC staff to 17 personnel by 31 Aug 72.
2. Redesignation of an 3ARRI3p LBR detachments as detachments of 40 ARRSq effective 20 Aug 72
3. Retention of the JRCC collocated with 7AF BLUECHIP at TSN to function as 7AF SAR coordinator under the command of 3 ARRGp

The proposed PAD was concurred with by MAC / ARRS and published as 41ARRWg PROP 72-2. All actions were completed by 31 Aug 72 and under the new structure:

1. 41st ARRWg assumed direct command/control of an SEA SAR units
2. 3rd ARRGp exercised operational control over all SEA SAR units and serves as 7AF representative
3. 40th ARRSq assumed LBR management responsibilities for LBR Dets in SEA

8 Jul 72

Det. 4, Korat, redesignated 56th ARRS. The 56th consisted of HC-130s and HH-43s. P10#4

11 Jul 72

31 ARRS, Clark AB Republic Philippine's deploys TDY with HH-3E's to Tan Son Nhut AB. The original Jolly Green Giants had return to the war. Note: The first H-3 back was '67-14783' which had been the last H-3 to depart Danang for Kadena in early 1971. I remember when the word came into Kadena to gear up for deployment. All the guys who already had one SEA tour were really unhappy. They were now going back to a war they thought they were finished with because they were on H-3s. The reasoning was that HQ ARRS would never send these woefully underpowered and lightly armed aircraft back into a war they left because of their deficiencies.

Everyone did a great job but there was still the lingering undercurrent, especially by the guys in from Panama. Talk about culture shock! MSgt Harry Birtel becomes the deployed PJ NCOIC. The original purpose of the deployment is to cover a possible evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. (I could be wrong but didn't we also go there to backfill for the H-53s that had either been lost or transferred out of theater?) After they arrive at Tan Son Nhut, they begin SAR coverage of the southern portion of SVN. Other TDY PJ's included Martin (Max) Magee (Now THERE was a fun roommate!), Karl C. Morgan, Richard Land, Richard G. Terry, Glenn Farley, Daniel Hodler, Donald Lang, Timothy "Zeke" Zarnowski, Tim Trepanier, Jim Karabinus, John Tobey. At the end of Dan Hodler's TDY, he sold his .45 pistol to Glenn Farley. Glenn accidentally fired his new pistol through the floor of an HH-3 while it was parked on the ramp at TSN. Glen Farley was from Kadena. He had many other equally outrageous exploits while he was there. There was no official small arms training in country. New PJs received training where they could get it. Glenn had never used a semi-automatic pistol before. He removed the magazine, thought it was empty, and pulled the trigger. Fortunately no one was injured, except for Glenn's ego. He caught hell from safety, operations and especially his fellow PJ's who thought he had embarrassed all of us. 3rd Group Safety Office raised hell at the 37th ARRS about PJs there having .45 pistols. The PJs had to put all the .45's into hiding and only pull them out of

A-3 bags after the aircraft had taken off. The aircraft commanders all knew that the PJs had .45's and grenades in their alert bags. But they understood we needed them if we went down the hoist. Being on the ground and coming into contact with enemy forces was a real situation the PJs needed to be able to deal with. For the rest of the war, the 37th command structure insisted to 3rd Group that its PJs had turned in all unauthorized weapons. At the same time, the majority of the pilots knew the PJs still had these weapons but they did not inform the commander or director of operations. It was not a good way to run a unit but 3rd Group had decided that the war was almost over and the PJs could do without weapons they had been carrying for virtually the entire war. This policy resulted in the PJs not trusting their commanders to protect their best interests in protecting the PJs if they had to deploy from the aircraft. It also resulted in the commanders and ops officers fearing that their PJs were going to do something that would affect their performance reports post war options for command of a rescue unit.

In retrospect, everyone took it much too seriously. Inadvertent discharges were more common than we admitted. The root cause was inadequate training prior to arriving in a war zone. Note: Comments from PJ Bill Preble who was part of this HH-3 unit and Bob LaPointe who was in the 37th at this time.

17Jul 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From Richard T. Kennedy and John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 160, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, June–July 1972.
Top Secret; Sensitive

Washington, July 17, 1972

SUBJECT

Plan to Knock Out Radio Hanoi and Preempt Its Frequencies (Operation Archie Bunker)

A memorandum covering the possible alternatives was sent forward to Secretary Laird (memorandum to Laird is in the Washington National Records Center, OSD Files: FRC 330–77–0094, Viet (North) 370.64 1972) The Secretary, however, did not choose to forward this memorandum to you but instead has sent you a separate memorandum stating that after reviewing the matter he has decided not to proceed “due to the marginal nature of the operation and the likely repercussions.”

Secretary Laird's objections are both military and political. Militarily, he feels we have no assurance that Radio Hanoi's facilities could be totally knocked out, or if they were, could be kept out long enough for the operation to be effective. Politically, he considers that we would be subjected to both international and domestic criticism for disrupting the nonmilitary communications handled by Radio Hanoi, and believes that this would be a particular problem domestically if National Guard aircraft and personnel were used. He doubts that it would be practicable to carry out the mission using active duty personnel due to degraded effectiveness and operational delay caused by the need to give special training.

21 Jul 72 7th AF CC Point Paper re: Current Situation

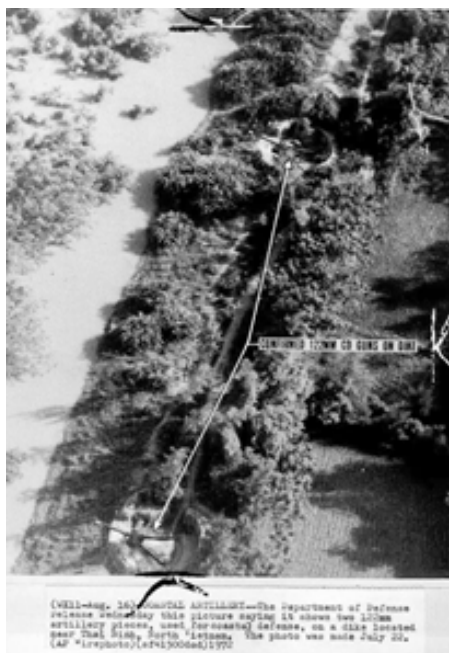
Hanoi's goal of unifying Vietnam under a Communist government and thereby dominating all of Indochina has not changed. North Vietnam's strategy remains based on the principle of the "three pronged offensive – military, political and diplomatic. In late March, Hanoi launched major military offensives below the DMZ, in the border provinces northeast of Saigon, and in the highlands increasing pressure on ARVN forces in MRs 1 and 2 and the Mekong Delta. Accompanying these main force attacks the Communists have intensified their subversive political activity throughout SVN. The immediate objectives of the campaign are to discredit and ultimately defeat the Vietnamization and pacification programs. Simultaneously, sufficient military and political pressure is being applied against the governments of Cambodia and Laos to neutralize their effectiveness and isolate SVN. To support the military effort in Indochina, the Loatian logistics and personnel infiltration corridors have been expanded, improved, and made secure from ground attack.

In the diplomatic aspect of their 1972 offensive, Hanoi's principle effort has been directed toward the Paris peace talks. Despite the U.S. attempt to reach a compromise through secret negotiation, the North Vietnamese persist in demanding acceptance of the seven-point proposal advanced in July 1971. Reduced to two essential conditions, this proposal requires the complete withdrawal of U.S. support for SVN and removal of the Thieu government. To strengthen its bargaining position, Hanoi has rejected the possibility of releasing U.S. POW in it's demands are met

22 Jul 72

RF-4C reconnaissance photos taken 22 July 1972 shows a series of anti-aircraft emplacements and 122mm coastal maritime defense guns along a dike near the coastal town of Thai Binh, some 30 miles south of Haiphong, in the Red River delta.

The R.O.E. stated dikes were "off limits" for humanitarian concerns for the general civilian population in the DRV and JAG interpretation of the Law of War.



25 Jul 72

MACV announced that the phase-out of the previous week included the last 3,000 U.S. combat forces in the Saigon region. Only one U.S. ground combat unit remained in South Vietnam.

26 Jul 72

Excerpts from Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to South Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 44, Geopolitical File, Cables, 24 June-29 August 1972. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only; Immediate.

Saigon, July 26, 1972

Subject: Viet-Nam: Assessment of Present Situation

Summary. The most dramatic change in recent weeks has been the manner in which the GVN has gone on the offensive in MR 1 and MR 2. In MR 3, An Loc has been relieved. Route 13 is finally cleared, and the situation elsewhere in the region is quiet. These very satisfactory developments must be weighed against the heightened intensity of enemy activity in the Delta and the obvious determination of the enemy to bring his last remaining reserves into MR 1.

Assessment.

A. The ARVN counter-offensive in Quang Tri, the effort to reoccupy northern Binh Dinh which began a few days ago, and the reopening of QL 13, which confirms the lifting of the siege of An Loc, are developments which have been most heartening to the GVN and to the population. There is an atmosphere of confidence in South Viet Nam notwithstanding the storm clouds which loom over Quang Tri and Hue as the enemy brings reinforcements and additional units toward the battle. The Delta situation is fluid and hard to define. It is perhaps for this reason that it has received little press attention. The nature of the war in the Delta precludes definitive battles and I am more concerned by MR 1 and the threat posed by the enemy's build-up in the north. President Thieu is

earmarking additional forces to send to MR 1 if needed. The Marines, Airborne and First Division have fought gallantly, and have been in contact with the enemy for many months.

I might mention that I would not be surprised to see a step-up in enemy activity in southern MR 1 in the near future. The NVA Second and Third Divisions might well try to apply pressure on Quang Ngai in order to divert focus from the Quang Tri battle. Both General Weyand and I believe that August will be a difficult month in both the Delta and MR 1, but the enemy will be confronting ARVN forces which are well equipped, numerically stronger and more capable and more confident that they were in March. Most importantly they will be supported by U.S. firepower which will be an important if not decisive factor.

B. Success on the battlefield has brought an atmosphere of optimism to most of the country and the problem areas remain those in which NVA units present a threat. It is clear that the GVN does not intend to be caught napping in what might be a fast moving situation and will be resourceful in utilizing all its assets to prevent a last-minute grab by the enemy if a cease fire is declared.

C. Our continuing interdiction of the supply of war materiel to the North has contributed to a feeling that the tide of war has turned and has also strengthened confidence in United States support.

30 Jul 72

40th ARRS attempted LNRS pickup. System malfunctioned, forced to shear hoist cable and PJ and survivor were left on the ground. High bird came in for pickup using lights.

31 Jul 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 46,000 with one ground combat battalion remaining in Vietnam

SEA SAR Resources as of July 1972

DaNang AB, RVN: Six HH-53C and two HH-43F helicopters are assigned to the 37 ARRSq.

Two HH-53's are fraggged for ground or airborne alert 24 hours a day. During airborne alerts, two additional HH-53's are on ground alert. One HH-43 is on 24 hour alert. Two A-1 aircraft TDY from the 56 SOWg, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, are fraggged for ground or airborne alert during daylight hours.

Tan Son Nhut AB RVN: Four HH-43F are assigned to Detachment 14 40th ARRSq. One HH-43 is on 24 hour alert. The TDY HH-3's were released by 7AF on 4 Sep 72.

Bien Boa AB RVN: One HH-43 from Detachment 14, 40ARRSq at Tan Son Nhut is on 24 hour alert at Bien Hoa.

U-Tapao RTAFB Thailand: Two HH-43F helicopters are assigned to Detachment 12, 40ARRSq. One HH-43F is on 24 hour alert.

Korat RTAFB, Thailand: Seven HC-130P aircraft are assigned to the 56 ARRSq. Two HH-43F helicopters are assigned. Three HC-130P's are fraggd daily; two maintain daylight airborne coverage over the Laotian Panhandle, normally orbiting from Nakhon Phanom to the Pak Sane area. One is maintained on ground alert. One HE-43F is on 24 hr alert.

East HC-130P Orbit: Two HC-130P aircraft assigned to the 31ARRSq, Clark AB, Philippines, are fraggd daily during daylight hours to provide an East Orbit off the DaNang coast. During the orbit period, their aircraft are under the operational control of 3ARRGp.

Ubon RTAFB, Thailand: Two HH-43F helicopters are assigned to Detachment 3, 40ARRSq. One HH-43 is on 2h hour alert. In addition, two HH-53C helicopters are TDY from the 40 ARRSq, Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand. The two HH-53's and two A-1's from the 56 SOWg are on daylight alert.

Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand: Ten HH-53C and one HH-43F helicopters are assigned to the 40ARRSq. Two HH-53's are fraggd for ground or airborne alert 24 hours a day. Two additional HH-53's are on ground alert during airborne alert periods. Five HH-53's are LNSS equipped with the PAVE-IMP night pickup equipment to provide a limited blacked out night SAR capability. One HH-43 is on 24 hour alert. Four 56 SOWg A-1's are normally fraggd for ground or airborne alert during daylight hours.

Udon RTAFB, Thailand: Two HH-43F helicopters are assigned to Detachment 5, 40ARRSq. One HH-43F is on 24 hour alert.

Takhli RTAFB, Thailand: Two HH-143F helicopters are TDY to Takhli from Detachment 8, 43 ARRGp, Bergstrom AFB, Texas, One HH-43 is on 24 hour alert.

AUGUST

1 Aug 72

MACV announced that U.S.AF fighter-bombers attacked the Haiphong shipyard for the first time in the war.

3 Aug 72

At 6:45 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 45 rockets. 1 KIA 20 Airmen WIA and 4 aircraft damaged. This was the largest number of incoming rockets to hit DaNang in a single day during the war. The below articles was listed in the DaNang AB newspaper the "Gunfighter Gazette"

On August 3, DaNang Airfield experienced two rocket attacks. The second attack destroyed DaNang Base Exchange (BX). But just four days later on August 7, a new temporary BX opened to service the needs of the men who will be stationed at DaNang "Until the job Is Done"

The BX was destroyed early that Thursday morning," said Major Dennis Driscoll, 6498th Air Base Wing plans officer, and by 9 that morning Col. Clifford Allison wing vice commander, had the staff looking for a building to house a new BX. Building 1215 was an easy choice as it was available and large enough for a BX with the bonus of already containing the required shelves."

At 3 p.m. Monday afternoon the BX was officially opened thanks to the teamwork and spirit of the men on DaNang. The wing commander presided over the opening ceremony and as crowds of men rushed in they received an opening day bonus... they were allowed to buy more than one carton of cigarettes. Yes at DaNang being able to buy more than one carton of cigarettes is a bonus. The men here are subjected to many sacrifices, both large and small, but there is not much complaining because once your on DaNang you acquire the spirit of DaNang which lets you endure hardships through teamwork and pride.

In just four days the BX went from ruin to full operation. DaNang has suffered many hardships in its role first as the home of the Gunfighters and now as the home of the Wing that in finding targets for Air Force, Navy and Marine aircraft as well as refueling, rearming and turning around F-4's in support of the air war. The spirit of DaNang to bounce back from ruin to full operation is a fact the world knows, and DaNang will prevail "Until the job is done".

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"The Wing Commander, Col. William W. Hoover approved the idea and then the ball began to roll. Civil Engineers, Philco-Ford and BX officials were 'told of the new site. BX officials decided what supplies they would need to get the building ready. They asked for ten men to help them, some lumber and pipes."

"BX personnel with the help of Philco-Ford and the 10-man Air Force team cleaned the building, arranged the shelves, built new shelves and counters, made a security door and acquired cash registers."

According to the Major, the site was ready to be stocked by Saturday afternoon. All available supplies in the area were consolidated and routed to the BX and stocking began Saturday and went on all day Sunday.

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In regard to the future of the BX, Major Driscoll said, "We are moving four buildings to the old BX site as soon as

it's cleaned up. We hope to reopen the BX in its old location sometime in October."

The BX was reopened in a minimum amount of time through teamwork. Some men who deserve special mention for their efforts in the reopening Army Major Donald F. Miles, exchange operations officer, 1st Lt. Kevin M. Popper, exchange officer, Sgt. Frank Collis, exchange WO2C, Tsgt. Fletcher Hawkins Jr. who supervised the

10-man Air Force work team, Edward Hyatt, DaNang area exchange resident manager."

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File 7Aug72 DaNang BX before attack.jpg



7Aug72 DaNang BX after attack.jpg

6 Aug 72

Excerpts from Message From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 69, JCS Out General Service Messages, 1–15 August 1972. Top Secret; Immediate; Specat; Exclusive

Washington, August 6, 1972

Subj: Linebacker Targets

You should note that the picture as seen from here is that a disproportionate share of the air effort is programmed in the NVN panhandle at the expense of targets in the northern route packages. To illustrate my point, less than 25 percent of the validated targets in RP V and VI have been struck. I recognize that many validated targets may never be struck for excellent reasons. Nonetheless, only 74 new targets were struck during July. The July totals including restrikes show only 5 targets were struck in RP V, 48 in RP VI-A and 172 in RP VI-B. While the need for strong interdiction operations in the lower route packages is certainly appreciated, the limited weight of effort against key targets in the northern area of NVN raises questions as to whether we are holding to our priorities.

Therefore, it appears we must increase our overall efforts in the north by refining our concept of operation every way possible for maximum impact on the enemy. For instance, we must make fullest use of all the visual daylight flying weather. Although morning strikes leave more time for SAR, a double or triple punch in one day may well find the enemy in confusion with his defenses degraded and lower our overall losses.

As inclement weather becomes more of a factor, we must use more all weather bombing techniques. For example, while the A-6 is now being used extensively up north, I wish to emphasize the value in using this aircraft to continue harassment of the enemy at night and during periods when weather prevents visual bombing. I am sure you agree it will pay dividends to exploit to the fullest the unique capability of the A-6 in both an alpha strike and armed reconnaissance role. This effort should continue involving all A-6 assets. In this regard, I note the Nam Phong Marine A-6 aircraft are largely operating in MR-1 during daylight hours. Using the Marine all-weather capability in RP I would compound the enemy's problems in this rear support area and should free some USAF sorties for use in the northern route packages. We also have an excellent all weather system with the Loran F-4 and more extensive applications should be possible in NVN. This will be the subject of a subsequent message. Finally, I am optimistic that the F-111 deployment will be approved for September. The F-111 should greatly assist in our efforts to achieve an all-weather presence in the northern route packages.

During periods when good flying weather is forecast over all of NVN, the armed reconnaissance effort in the NVN panhandle should be shifted to bombing in RP V, VI-A, and VI-B. As a general rule, scheduling a minimal effort in RP I through IV when the weather is good in the north, would allow for a substantial effort against the more lucrative RP V and VI targets. To offset unexpected bad weather in the northern route packages, strikes in the lower route packages should be scheduled as weather alternates.

Lastly, in reference to your plans for B-52 strikes, I agree that they can be employed profitably in NVN against any of the targets specified in Ref E or against airfields. In addition to the significant military results, periodic B-52 raids into the NVN heartland would forcefully demonstrate the seriousness of our intentions to the Hanoi leadership.

8 Aug 72

Lt. Col. Rocco Negris stood before the men of D Company., 3rd Bn., 21st Infantry. "No taking chances. No heroics," he told them. "This is our last patrol." For three days, Aug. 8-10, the grunts beat the bush in the DaNang "rocket belt." Several were wounded by booby traps. Spec. 4 James McVicar stepped on a half-buried c-ration can, which exploded, spraying him with shrapnel. Evacuated to the 95th Evacuation Hospital in DaNang, he was the last line infantryman wounded in the war. When the entire operation was completely done, Sgt. Al Alcala exclaimed: "God, I can't believe we're finally going home—that it's over!" CBS reporter Phil Jones accompanied that final patrol. "For the grunts," he proclaimed, "the Vietnam War is over."

For the Air Force and the men of Air Rescue the war was definitely not over for them.

9 Aug 72

Seventh Air Force announced that laser guided bombs (LGB) destroyed the newly repaired Thanh Hoa Bridge in NVN for the second time in three months.

9 Aug 72

USAF F-4 downed Gulf Tonkin. Both pilots picked up by JG 72 37th ARRS DaNang AB. JG 72 crew included Boroczko pilot, Stice copilot, Cherry FE, and PJs Wilson, Wagner, Beauchamp, and LaPointe

Excerpt from the 11 August 1972 "Gunfighter Gazette" Jolly's make another "feet wet" rescue

An Air Force Phantom jet was severely damaged by enemy groundfire about 15 miles southwest of Hue Wednesday. The crew managed to get the jet out over the ocean before ejecting. They were picked up almost immediately by a rescue helicopter from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at DaNang.

Describing the incident, Captain Jim Beavers, the F-4 pilot said, "We were hitting enemy troop locations about 15 miles southwest of Hue. I think we were hit with automatic weapons fire, the airplane still flew alright and we made for the ocean and turned for DaNang, however, my backseater, Lt. Andy Haskell, noticed a small fire. An explosion followed and we ejected."

The aircraft commander of the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter, Captain Dennis Boroczko, then said, "We were on another training flight when we got word of the plane in trouble, we saw the F-4 blow up and the F-4's wingman was circling over the survivors. We came in to the area and picked up both men. I don't think they were in the water more than 15 minutes."

Excerpt from the 11 August 1972 "Gunfighter Gazette"

The crew of the Jolly were Captain Dennis Boroczko, aircraft commander; Lt. Jack Stice (Coast Guard), co-pilot; Sergeant Jimmie Cherry, flight engineer; and Sergeants Delbert Beauchamp, Mike Wagner, Robert LaPointe, Doug Wilson and Curtis Towne, Pararescuemen.	Jollys make another "feet wet" rescue An Air Force Phantom jet was severely damaged by enemy groundfire about 15 miles southwest of Hue Wednesday. The crew managed to get the jet out over the ocean before ejecting. They were picked up almost immediately by a rescue helicopter from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang. Describing the incident, Capt. Jim Beaver, the F-4 pilot, said, "We were hitting enemy troop locations about 15 miles southwest of Hue. I think we were hit with automatic weapons fire, the airplane still flew alright and we made for the ocean and turned for Da Nang, however, my backseater, Lt. Andy Haskell, noticed a small fire. An explosion followed and we ejected." The aircraft commander of the HH-53 Super Jelly Green Giant rescue helicopter, Capt. Dennis Boroczko, then said, "We were on another training flight when we got word of the plane in trouble, we saw the F-4 blow up and the F-4's wingman was circling over the survivors. We came in to the area and picked up both men. I don't think they were in the water more than 15 minutes." The crew on the Jolly were Capt. Dennis Boroczko, aircraft commander; Lt. Jack Stice (Coast Guard), co-pilot; Sgt. Jimmie Cherry, flight engineer; and Sgt. Delbert Beauchamp, Sgt. Mike Wagner, Sgt. Robert LaPointe, Sgt. Curtis Towne, pararescuemen.
<i>Excerpt from Hobson book "Vietnam Air Losses"</i> F-4D 65-0599 7 TFS, 49 TFW, USAF, Takhli Capt J L Beavers (survived) 1Lt W A Haskell (survived) A flight of Phantoms from Takhli was temporarily based at DaNang to provide close air support for friendly ground troops about 12 miles southwest of Hue. Capt Beavers was on his fourth pass dropping Mk82 bombs on enemy troops when his aircraft was hit by automatic weapons or small arms fire. The Phantom's rear fuselage caught fire and Capt Beavers headed out to sea where he and his WAS ejected about 15 miles north of DaNang. They were quickly picked up by a USAF SAR helicopter. Capt Beavers had been shot down while on a previous tour with the 12th TFW during a mission near Katum on 17 April 1969	<i>Excerpt from Hobson book "Vietnam Air Losses"</i> 9 August 1972 F-4D 65-0599 7 TFS, 49 TFW, USAF, Takhli Capt J L Beavers (survived) 1Lt W A Haskell (survived) A flight of Phantoms from Takhli was temporarily based at Da Nang to provide close air support for friendly ground troops about 12 miles southwest of Hué. Capt Beavers was on his fourth pass dropping Mk82 bombs on enemy troops when his aircraft was hit by automatic weapons or small arms fire. The Phantom's rear fuselage caught fire and Capt Beavers headed out to sea where he and his WSO ejected about 15 miles north of Da Nang. They were quickly picked up by a USAF SAR helicopter. Capt Beavers had been shot down while on a previous tour with the 12th TFW during a mission near Katum on 17 April 1969.

The last U.S. ground combat unit in South Vietnam, the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, stood down.

16 Aug 72

U.S. aircraft flew 400 sorties against North Vietnam in the heaviest raids since the April resumption of the bombing.

18 Aug 72

At 4:15 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by rockets. 37th ARRS JG 21 HH-53C tail number 68-10361 was destroyed on the ground where it was parked in a revetment on the Jolly Ramp to 122mm-rocket attack on DaNang AB

source = K318.2 Jul72-Jun74 ARRS v.1

19 Aug 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 161, VietnamCountry Files, Vietnam, August 1972.

Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only

Washington, August 19, 1972

SUBJECT

Vietnam Military Situation as Viewed in Saigon

In my two days in Saigon I received extensive briefings on the military situation from General Weyand, General Vogt, Ambassador Bunker, the CIA station chief, and other Embassy officers - and President Thieu. I asked them for their estimates of the current military situation and their forecasts for the next two months, the next six months, and the next twelve months. There were no significant divergences of view. The consensus that emerged was as follows.

1. *The ARVN had already virtually recovered its equipment and manpower losses from the first phase of the 1972 offensive. But the enemy's main force capability had suffered severe losses in manpower and equipment, especially heavy weaponry, that he had little immediate prospect of recovering.* The GVN was likely to gradually re-expand its area of control in the coming months. The enemy's difficulties would progressively worsen over the coming months, given his losses and his massive resupply problem, the advent of the rainy season (mid-September), our continued bombing and blockade, and the ARVN's recovery of the initiative.

—The enemy's effort in MR I, for example, had already developed into a defense of its Quang Tri position rather than an offensive against Hue. General Weyand estimated that the enemy had suffered 100,000 killed or seriously wounded country wide since the offensive. General Vogt estimated that 600-650 out of the enemy's 750 tanks have been destroyed.

—In MRs II, III, and IV, enemy infiltration of manpower had already tapered off to close to zero

2. *Nevertheless the enemy retained the capacity to launch a wave of small-unit attacks by fire over the next two months and give an impression of widespread activity and presence.* This was particularly possible in MRs I and III. Some district towns might be taken, and there may even be shelling and sapper attacks against Saigon.

—COSVN headquarters and the enemy's Sapper Command had moved in-country for the first time in MR III.

—General Minh, contrary to our best judgment and advice, has been concentrating his forces on Route 13 where the battle had stabilized, instead of spreading his forces to meet threats

elsewhere in MR III. I raised this matter with President Thieu who acknowledged that Minh has lost his aggressiveness.

3. *The middle-term (6-month) prospect was that the enemy would at some point wind up the offensive, withdraw several of the NVA divisions northward, and revert to a protracted-warfare strategy. Not because this offered any prospect of success but because he had no alternative.* President Thieu said he thought the enemy would rather revert to protracted warfare, despite its futility, than admit defeat.

Ambassador Bunker was convinced that the launching of the 1972 offensive had itself been prompted by the earlier failure of protracted warfare to achieve any appreciable political gain.

4. *Our bombing and mining of the North was crucial to all this in the short and middle terms.* The enemy's essential problem was that he had suffered staggering losses and was still running down his stockpiles, while we were hitting him more effectively in the North and compounding all his difficulties of resupply in the South.

Overall, my discussions elicited a consensus that while Hanoi may not yet be on the ropes, their strategy was soon likely to revert to one of protracted warfare within GVN capabilities to contain. Virtually all of the persons with whom I spoke viewed the military situation with considerable confidence and foresaw a continued decline in our direct involvement - provided we continued to provide military and economic aid to South Vietnam and took the necessary steps to repair the remaining gaps in the RVNAF force structure, such as further Vietnamizing the air war.

20 Aug 72

At 1 a.m. DaNang AB was attacked by 28 rockets. 10 Airmen WIA and 1 aircraft damaged.

Note: in August 1972 the base was hit with 82 rounds. This was the largest number on incoming rounds at DaNang for 1972 and probably for the entire war

37th, 40th, 56th, Det. 14, moved under the command and control 3rd ARRS Gp to the C&C of the 41st ARRWg. At Hickham AFB, Hawaii. OPCON remains with 3rd ARRGp

Det. 3 Ubon, Det. 5 Udorn and Det. 12 U-Tapao of the 3rd ARRGp were redesignated Detachments 3, 5, and 12 of the 40th ARRS. Det. 14 was placed under the 40th ARRS at the end of August 1972. P5#4 p121#7

25 Aug 72

37th ARRS rescues F-4 crew shot down by MIG. F-4 crew ejected over the northern Gulf of Tonkin. Survivors were Captain Jeff Feinstein (left) and Lt. Col Carl Baily (right). LaPointe deployed into the water to recover Feinstein.

An F-4 fighter bomber was damaged by anti aircraft artillery over the city of Kep in North Vietnam Friday August 25. The plane managed to get to the sea where the crew bailed out and were rescued by helicopters from the 37th ARRS at Da Nang.

Describing the incident Lt. Col. Carl G. Bailey aircraft commander said, "We were on a bombing mission over Kep when AAA slammed into our fuel cell and for a second the fuel gauges read zero. I didn't think the plane would hold together long enough to give us time to get over the water so I headed north for the mountains so ground troops would have a hard time finding us.

The plane was holding together alright though so we headed south for the sea and punched out over the water." With the colonel was his weapons controller Captain Jeff S. Feinstein. Captain Gerald Tonn, aircraft commander in one of the two rescue helicopters that made the rescue said, "We were pretty far from the point where they went down, but when we got the call we made a bee line for the area saw them and picked them up. They were in the water for 20 minutes and both men are in excellent condition. See file 25Aug72 JG Gazette.pdf

Jolly Green

AC Captain David Mullenix
 CP Captain Todd Hohberger
 HM Sgt Charles Rouhier
 RS Sgt Curtis Towne
 RS Sgt Ronald Buchanan
 AP SSgt David Tesdal

Jolly Green

AC Captain Gerald Tonn
 CP 1Lt Olin Land
 HM SSgt Cayetano Pina
 RS Sgt Robert LaPointe
 RS Sgt Ronald Charlesworth.

Jollys do it again




The crew of a Jolly Green Giant, set down after returning from another successful rescue. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Sgt. Paul R. Kennedy)

An F-4 fighter bomber was damaged by anti aircraft artillery over the city of Kep in North Vietnam Friday August 25. The plane managed to get to the sea where the crew bailed out and were rescued by helicopters from the 37th ARRS at Da Nang. (AAA) over 25.

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The crews of the two rescue helicopters were: Capt. David Mullenix, aircraft commander, Capt. Todd Hohberger, copilot, Sgt. Charles Rouhier, flight engineer, Sgt. Curtis Towne and Sgt. Ronald Buchanan, pararescuemen and SSgt. David Tesdal, photographer. On the other helicopter were: Capt. Gerald Tonn, aircraft commander, 1st Lt. Olin Land, copilot, SSgt. Cayetano Pina, flight engineer and the pararescuemen were Sgt. Robert LaPointe and Sgt. Ronald Charlesworth.

26 Aug 72

A successful rescue was accomplished on 26 August 1972. This attempt was performed in an exceedingly hostile area of North Vietnam. A total of six different A-1 pilots were involved, culminating in the recovery of a Marine F-4 crewmember

28 Aug 72

President Nixon announced that he would end the draft by July 1973.

USAF Captain Steve Ritchie downed his fifth MiG over North Vietnam and became the third U.S. ace and the first U.S.AF ace of the war.

29 Aug 72

President Nixon announced a 12,000 man cut in U.S. troop strength by December 1.

31 Aug 72

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 36,800 as Increment XIII withdrawals were completed.

Public opposition to the bombing of North Vietnam continued. The focus of the criticism shifted from the streets to the Democratic and Republican National Conventions and the selection of presidential nominees. The Democrats, meeting in July, chose Senator George S. McGovern (D, SD), an avowed opponent of the war, and he pledged, if elected, to withdraw all forces from Vietnam within 90 days of his inauguration. The Democratic platform included a plank calling for "immediate and complete" withdrawal of US forces from Indochina and termination of all military assistance to the Thieu government. A little over a month later, the Republicans gathered at Miami Beach. While thousands of antiwar protesters demonstrated outside the convention hall, the Republicans renominated Richard M. Nixon by a vote of 1,347 to 1 and endorsed his peace efforts.

Despite public and Congressional opposition, the United States maintained the air campaign against North Vietnam. US force augmentations to support the campaign were extended from month to month throughout 1972.

SEPTEMBER

1 Sep 72

MACV announced five Americans were killed and three wounded for the previous week, the lowest weekly casualty toll since 1965

2 Sep 72

North Vietnam announced the release of three U.S. PWs in celebration of National Day. They were Lt (jg) Markham L. Gartley, U.S.N, captured August 17, 1968. Lt (jg) Norris A. Charles, U.S.N, captured December 30, 1971 and Major Edward K. Elias, U.S.AF, captured April 20, 1972

3 Sep 72

An Army UH-1 is downed near Dalat, SVN with 11 survivors. Ralph Morino, Don Goodlett, and Dennis Williamson on board HH-53 that picks up the survivors.

4 Sep 72

7th AF/DO terminated the requirement for TDY HH-3 support at TSN. The remaining four HH-3 aircraft and 51 personnel were ordered to return to home units.

11 Sep 72

USAF jets again destroyed the Paul Doumer Bridge in Hanoi, just as repairs were nearing completion

15 Sep 72

Units of the Vietnamese Marine Division retook the Quang Tri Citadel, the only provincial capital captured during the offensive

15 Sep 72

Four HH-3s TDY from Clark to Det 14 3 ARRGp Tan Son Nhut return to Clark AB. All the H-3s eventually returned to their home units, including Panama. My own feeling when we left was a certain disbelief that all the years of effort had come to such an inconsequential end. We basically just turned off the lights, closed the door and went home. There was one good mission by the H-3s over to An-Loc picking up an AC-130 or 119 crew that had bailed out. Interestingly, I met the loadmaster from that aircraft a few years later when he was flying HC-130s out of 'Woody'. There was another mission to the Dalat area where an H-3 was damaged and had to stay at Dalat for rotor blade changes. I wasn't on any of these missions so you'll have to chase down the info. One mission I WAS on was a launch out toward An Loc to recover RVN troops in contact. We fired up and then shut down again when command post told us Intel wasn't sure which side of the river we should land on. I think you guys from Danang came in with a little more firepower and did the job. That's when you and the rest of the guys spent the night with us at Tan Son Nhut (what we remember of that night). That was when I realized the H-3s were there as an alternative if the '53s weren't available.

Note: Comments from PJ Bill Preble who was part of this HH-3 unit

17 Sep 72

An OV-10 PAVE NAIL aircraft went down in the jungles of Laos near the Vietnam border. Despite the extremely mountainous terrain, thunderstorms, and almost zero visibility, the SANDIES' suppressive firepower enabled the helicopters from DaNang to make another successful rescue. Knowing that NAIL 60 BRAVO was injured and could not evade the enemy, four A-ls successfully flew cover for the downed crew, suppressing the hostile forces for an hour and fifteen minutes

18 Sep 72

North Vietnam released the three American pilots to a U.S. peace group *in a Hanoi ceremony*. On September 28th the released U.S. PWs arrived in New York, having traveled via Peking, Moscow, and Copenhagen.

23 Sep 72

DaNang AB hit by rocket attack at 5 a.m. 27 rounds 122mm rocket. 3 aircraft damaged

27 Sep 72

DaNang AB hit by rocket attack at 1845. 5 rounds 122mm rocket. 3 aircraft damaged. 1 WIA

30 Sept 1972

U.S. fighter bombers struck North Vietnamese Air Bases in what was described as the heaviest blow to date against aircraft on the ground at these bases. The F-111 swing wing fighters returned to combat for the first time since 1968, participating in the raids for the second day.

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 35,500

OCTOBER

6 Oct 72

B-52's flew 11 missions within 30 miles of Saigon in an attempt to cut off enemy infiltration towards Saigon.

8 Oct 72

B-52's struck a supply buildup near Vinh in the deepest B-52 raids into North Vietnam in six months.

12 Oct 72

Special Forces medic Sgt. Fred Mick was KIA in an ambush of a truck convoy. He was the last U.S. serviceman killed by small arms fire in the Vietnam War. Sergeant Mick had been in country only 22 days. Age 26, he was married and had one daughter.



12 Oct 72

General Fred C. Weyand, U.S.A, assumed command of MACV

12 Oct 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to Secretary of Defense Laird

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 29, Vietnam, October 1972. Top Secret; Sensitive

Washington, October 12, 1972

SUBJ

Objectives of the Linebacker/Pocket Money Campaign (U)

1. This responds to your memorandum of 7 October 1972, which addresses a re-examination of the overall Linebacker/Pocket Money interdiction campaign against North Vietnam.

Background:

2. An objective appraisal of the Linebacker/Pocket Money (mining of waterways) results achieved to date in stopping the flow of logistics into and out of NVN is influenced by the limitations and tactical situation under which air operations have been conducted.

a. First, the mining campaign forced a fundamental revision in the basic method by which NVN received supplies. Except for some minor offshore operations near Hon La and Hon Nieu, the NVN coast has been closed to foreign shipping. This forced the NVN to offset the closing of their ports by shifting movement of supplies to the rail and road networks which is less efficient and subject to interdiction from air and naval gunfire. The NVN adjustment to the mining campaign took several months. Primarily, the adjustment lengthened their supply lines which caused delays in the responsiveness of their system to front line requests.

b. Second, high priority has been given to interdiction between Hanoi-Haiphong and the Chinese Buffer Zone. The enemy has made extensive use of the Buffer Zone as a sanctuary for storage and movement of supplies. As you know, a prohibition against strikes in the Buffer Zone has been in effect since 13 June, except for one-time authorizations against three bridges. Since Hanoi has been off limits approximately 40 percent of this time, interdiction of these lines of communications has been limited to the distance between the Hanoi circle and the Buffer Zone. Within this limitation there has been a continuing effort to interdict the rail system by destroying key bridges on both the Northeast and Northwest railroads. Although the success of this campaign has been highly dependent upon good weather for guided bomb attacks, the overall effect has been to force extensive shuttling from railcar to truck to ferry. As the bridges have been interdicted, NVN has been forced to increase use of ferries and barges to cross rivers.

c. Third, the Hanoi-Haiphong area represents not only the major distribution point for supplies, but the principal industrial complex for construction and repair of war related equipment. For these reasons, we have requested authority to strike a variety of important targets in and around the two cities. A recent assessment indicates that progress has been made, but many significant targets remain. The necessity of placing Hanoi "off limits," for intermittent periods, is understood and appreciated. Nevertheless, the lost opportunity has detracted from Linebacker efforts due to being unable to press the attack against warehouses and other facilities that serve as redistribution points for supplies being shipped to the battlefield. As weather permits, the remaining targets in the Hanoi circle will be destroyed.

d. Fourth, major effort has been south of the Hanoi-Haiphong area. Here the campaign has broadened in order to place maximum pressure on LOCs before supplies cross through the passes to Laos or move south through the DMZ. Extensive daily tactical reconnaissance has

exposed supply points, which are attacked as soon as they are identified. Below Hanoi there is little evidence of rail traffic. Trucks have become the prime carrier. During daylight hours armed reconnaissance searches for trucks and the constant threat of air attack has suppressed daylight movement. The enemy has reacted by moving at night. Our counter has been the increased use of attack aircraft, principally the A-6, at night to destroy the trucks. The newly introduced F-111 will also increase our presence at night and be useful in attacking transshipment points and other areas of known activity. Gunships have been our most effective night interdiction weapon, but the presence of extensive air defenses precludes using them in NVN. Because of the ever-present threat of air attack, the enemy has separated supplies along the LOCs so that one fighter/attack aircraft cannot destroy more than one cache. Since 6 October, B-52s have been given an expanded role with authority to bomb up to the 19th parallel. The all weather capability of the B-52, coupled with its large bomb load, greatly increases our effectiveness against dispersed supplies.

3. In summary, the Linebacker effort has been coordinated to assure that the necessary air priority was given to the support of combat operations in South Vietnam. As a result of the improved military situation in the Republic of Vietnam, more effort has been shifted to air operations in the North. The interdiction campaign in NVN has achieved certain objectives and partially achieved others. We have forced the NVN to rely upon a supply route now stretching from the Chinese Border nearly 400 miles to South Vietnam. The inclusion of all weather bombing systems and the B-52 into Linebacker operations has given us capabilities and qualities that were not present during the 1965-1968 campaign.

4. The degree to which priorities will vary depends upon a complexity of factors that are not entirely predictable. Our aim has been to maintain flexibility in the conduct of the air campaign. For example, the effort against inland waterways has been a follow on to the interdiction of NVN land LOCs. Our current emphasis on all weather bombing with B-52s, A-6s, F-111s, and LORAN F-4s is a response to the weather and to the enemy's proclivity to move at night. We will continue to exercise flexibility and seek optimum ways to combine weapon system capabilities with the tactical situation, geography, and the weather.

Management and Control of the Air Campaign:

5. At my request CINCPAC has rewritten instructions on the management and control of air warfare in Southeast Asia. His plan for SEA is as follows:

- a. Isolate the NVN heartland in order to prevent the import of supplies from outside
- b. Support the battlefield in SVN and adjacent areas
- c. Interdict the flow of war making materials through NVN into SVN
- d. Support other contiguous battle areas such as Laos and Cambodia

The objective of the above plan is to tighten up procedures and provide a better means of scheduling strikes and evaluating results.

T.H. Moorer

11-12 Oct 72

Source: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume IX, Vietnam, October 1972-January 1973, Department of State Report, p. 163

In a 16-hour session in Paris on October 11-12, 1972, Henry A. Kissinger, the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, and Le Duc Tho, North Vietnamese Special Adviser, completed negotiations on a tentative agreement to settle the war in Southeast Asia. Kissinger then returned directly to Washington to report the meeting's results to President Richard M. Nixon.

13 Oct 72

Excerpts from Message From the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Weyand) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)

Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files: FRC 330-77-0094, 385, Viet (October-December 1972). Top Secret; Specat; Exclusive

Saigon, October 13, 1972

Personal for Admiral Moorer

The following is my assessment of the situation in MR III.

Enemy intentions: Although enemy failures and RVN military strength have forced alteration of enemy strategy, enemy plans to attempt increased pressure in MR 3 and Saigon have not changed. The enemy has shown every intention to maintain a widespread presence by continuing to occupy GVN land. He intends to conduct screening and economy-of-force operations with the objective of tying down major ARVN units and hampering GVN efforts to regain enemy controlled territory. Overall, Hanoi desires to regain the initiative in the eyes of the world. Primary enemy goals remain the defeat of pacification, downfall of the GVN, and ultimately, some form of allied political capitulation.

Commanders comments: It is clear that the enemy considers the period until 7 Nov critical to the attainment of his political objectives. He is attempting to put together an all out effort to make his presence in MR III felt world-wide. RVNAF has the forces at hand to cope with the situation; however, the chain of command is unsure of itself and defensively oriented. To succeed, they must have assurance of continuous U.S. air support during what they regard as their crisis period. We are in a very sensitive period, politically speaking, when events of relatively minor or short-term military impact may be interpreted as disasters. I am confident that we will suffer some setbacks and surprises, but when the dust settles, Saigon will still be in GVN hands and the very substantial strength of the RVNAF relative to the enemy will be clearly evident.

16 Oct 72

Excerpts from Letter From President Nixon to South Vietnamese President Thieu

Washington, October 16, 1972

Dear President Thieu:

I have asked Dr. Henry Kissinger to convey to you this personal letter regarding our current negotiations with North Vietnam which now appear to be reaching a final stage. As you know, throughout the four years of my Administration the United States has stood firmly behind your Government and its people in our support for their valiant struggle to resist aggression and preserve their right to determine their own political future.

At the negotiating table we have always held firmly to the principle that we would never negotiate with North Vietnam a solution which predetermined the political outcome of the conflict. We have consistently adhered to positions that would preserve the elected government and assure the free people of Vietnam the opportunity to determine their future.

Until very recently the North Vietnamese negotiators have held firmly to their long-established position that any settlement of the war would have to include your resignation and the dismantlement of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and its institutions.

The consequence of this change in strategy has resulted in a situation wherein we and Hanoi's negotiators have reached essential agreement on a text which provides for a cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of remaining allied forces, the exchange of prisoners of war, and the continued existence of your Government and its institutions after the ceasefire takes effect. In addition to the document itself a number of private assurances have been obtained designed to meet the security concerns of your country and whose implementation we consider an essential part of this agreement.

Dr. Kissinger will explain to you in the fullest detail the provisions of the proposed agreement which he carries with him and I will therefore not provide further elaboration in this message. **I do, however, want you to know that I believe we have no reasonable alternative but to accept this agreement.** It represents major movement by the other side, and it is my firm conviction that its implementation will leave you and your people with the ability to defend yourselves and decide the political destiny of South Vietnam.

As far as I am concerned, the most important provision of this agreement, aside from its military features, is that your Government, its armed forces and its political institutions, will remain intact after the ceasefire has been observed. In the period following the cessation of hostilities you can be completely assured that we will continue to provide your Government with the fullest support, including continued economic aid and whatever military assistance is consistent with the ceasefire provisions of this government [*agreement*].

Finally, I must say that, just as we have taken risks in war, I believe we must take risks for peace. Our intention is to abide faithfully by the terms of the agreements and understandings reached with Hanoi. We expect reciprocity and have made this unmistakably clear both to them and their major allies. I can assure you that we will view any breach of faith on their part with the utmost gravity; and it would have the most serious consequences.

Sincerely,
Richard Nixon

16 Oct 1972

The USAF also deployed the A-7 aircraft for the first time, in southeast Asia. The first A-7 missions were flown on 16 October. The A-7 proved to be a valuable weapons system, particularly for close air support. Because it had excellent navigational equipment, it was heavily used during periods of marginal weather. The A-7 became the primary aircraft used for SAR CAP, assuming that commitment on 15 November.

20 Oct 72

Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the White House

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 857, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Sensitive Camp David, Vol. XX [1 of 2].

Saigon, October 20, 1972

I met with Thieu and the National Security Council. There was considerable emotion at both sides of the table, but it was not a confrontation. They raised a long series of problems and points for clarification. These were represented as inequities or difficulties, but the plan itself was never rejected. Neither was it accepted.

It was clear from the sober, somewhat sad, mood of the session that they are having great psychological difficulty with cutting the American umbilical cord. They probably realize that the deal is a good one by American standards, but their focus is on remaining North Vietnamese

forces and the likelihood of violations of the agreement. While they showed pride in the talents of their generals, they continued to exhibit awe of Communist cunning and a lack of self-confidence.

Against this mood I did my best to underline their inherent advantages, draw out their self-confidence and assure them of US backing, both during an agreement and in the face of violations. I was partly, not totally, successful.

Overall I think we made some progress. We now face the delicate task of giving the GVN a sense of participation without at the same time upsetting the apple cart in Hanoi.

I believe we can relocate essential installations and Headquarters so as to give ourselves a substantial capability if we have to react to Communist violations of the agreement.

21 Oct 72

Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu

Dear Mr. President:

I have studied with utmost care all of the provisions of the proposed agreement as they now stand, including the most recent concessions by Hanoi concerning Laos and Cambodia. Based on my study, I consider this agreement to be acceptable in all its ramifications and therefore urge your most careful consideration and acceptance of it.

Were you to find the agreement to be unacceptable at this point and the other side were to reveal the extraordinary limits to which it has gone in meeting demands put upon them, it is my judgment that your decision would have the most serious effects upon my ability to continue to provide support for you and for the Government of South Vietnam.

I can assure you that if you proceed with us under the conditions which now have been outlined, you will continue to have my fullest support. This would include whatever military actions might be necessary in the event of an abrogation of the agreement by the other side.

Sincerely,
Richard Nixon

22 Oct 1972

North Vietnamese concessions in the Paris peace meetings led to a cessation of bombing strikes over the 20th parallel in NV. But the talks broke down again two months later.

22 Oct 72

Excerpts from Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 59, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Trips, Kissinger, Henry, 1972, October, Chronological File. Top Secret; Flash; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only

Saigon, October 22, 1972

Deliver immediately.

Thieu has just rejected the entire plan or any modification of it and refuses to discuss any further negotiations on the basis of it. He insists that any settlement must contain absolute guarantees of the DMZ, total withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces, and total self-determination of South Vietnam without any reference as to how this is to be exercised. I need not tell you the crisis with

which this confronts us. Before you talk to the President, please Flash back your own quick assessment. I will in the meantime collect my own thoughts.

Excerpts from Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 59, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Trips, Kissinger, Henry, 1972, October, Chronological File. Top Secret; Flash; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only

Saigon, October 22, 1972

Deliver immediately

It is hard to exaggerate the toughness of Thieu's position. His demands verge on insanity. He insisted that he would settle for nothing less than a document which legally recognizes the two Vietnamese states with the DMZ as their border. He is totally oblivious to the score of DRV concessions, the massive amount of equipment we are moving for him, the various Presidential guarantees, or the ramifications of the course he has chosen.

2. I see two choices as follows:

The first choice is for me to go through with the final leg, discuss our difficulties with the North Vietnamese leadership there, and offer to immediately negotiate a bilateral agreement which we would sign after the election.

The second choice is for you to get in touch immediately with Dobrynin and hand him a Presidential letter to Breshnev to the following effect:

—We have encountered nearly insuperable obstacles in Saigon.

—We have always said that we would not impose a solution on our allies.

—We are honor bound to present our allies' objections to the other side.

Obviously I favor the second course, but have offered the first one for intellectual completeness.

23 Oct 72

On 23 October air operations north of 20° were halted. President Nixon ordered bombing halt north of 20th parallel in NVN. The assets of the Linebacker force thus released were applied mostly to the interdiction campaign in Laos.

25 Oct 72

DaNang AB hit by rocket attack at 0307. 19 rounds 122mm rocket. 4 WIA

26 Oct 72

During a press conference in Washington on October 26, 1972, the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry A. Kissinger, said: "*We believe that peace is at hand. We believe that an agreement is within sight based on the May 8 proposals of the President and some adaptations of our January 25 proposal which is just to all parties. It is inevitable that in a war of such complexity that there should be occasional difficulties in reaching a final solution, but we believe that by far the longest part of the road has been traversed and what stands in the way of an agreement now are issues that are relatively less important than those that have already been settled.*"

(Department of State *Bulletin*, November 13, 1972, page 549; the transcript was also printed in *The New York Times*, October 27, 1972, page 18)

27 Oct 72

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird announced a halt to U.S. bombing above the 20th parallel in North Vietnam.

President Thieu declared that he would accept no settlement which did not provide for withdrawal of NVA troops from South Vietnam.

28 Oct 72

A-1 Sandy. Until 28 October 1972, the A-1 was the primary RESCORT aircraft. The advantages and disadvantages of the A-1 have been presented in several previous CHECO SAR reports.

Both the A-1E and A-1H were used in SAR operations, but the

A-1H, a single place version, was preferred because of better pilot visibility. The U.S. policy of Vietnamization called for the transfer of all A-1s to the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) before the end of 1972, thus a new RESCORT aircraft had to be found. The

A-7D was the aircraft assigned to provide the needed capability.

Decision made that A-7s will replace A-1s as RESCORT Sandy's. The United States policy of Vietnamization called for the transfer of all A-1s to the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) before the end of 1972. P21#4

DaNang AB hit by rocket attack at 0302 by 27 rounds 122mm rocket. 8 aircraft damaged 3 WIA

29 Oct 72

Excerpts from Letter From President Nixon to South Vietnamese President Thieu

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 857, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Sensitive Camp David, Vol. XXI (1). No classification marking

Washington, October 29, 1972

Dear Mr. President:

As I have informed you, Dr. Kissinger has spoken and continues to speak on my behalf. There has not been, nor will there be, any distinction between his views and mine. As I wrote to you in my letter of October 16, "Dr. Kissinger's comments have my total backing."

Concerning the current status of the draft agreement, Dr. Kissinger has made a solemn commitment to you to obtain the maximum number of changes reflecting the views expressed to him during his visit to Saigon.

Dr. Kissinger's press conference was conducted on my detailed instructions. He was doing his utmost to prevent you from being portrayed as the obstacle to peace with an inevitable cutoff by Congress of U.S. funds to the Government of South Vietnam.

Beyond these specific points I cannot fail to call to your attention the dangerous course which your Government is now pursuing. You know my firm commitment to the people of South Vietnam and to you personally.

It is my conviction that the future depends on the unity which exists between us and on the degree to which we can make clear our unequivocal support to do what is necessary in the days ahead to insure that the provisions of a peace settlement are strictly enforced.

I urge you again, Mr. President, to maintain the essential unity which has characterized our relations over these past difficult four years and which has proven to be the essential

ingredient in the success we have achieved thus far. Disunity will strip me of the ability to maintain the essential base of support which your government and your people must have in the days ahead, and which I am determined to provide.

Sincerely,
Richard Nixon

31 Oct 72

B-52's staged the heaviest raids in three months over North Vietnam, south of the 20th parallel.

U.S. troop strength was reduced to 32,200

NOVEMBER

1 Nov 72

Hanoi announced there would be no further talks in Paris until the U.S. signed the draft ceasefire agreement

2 Nov 72

7th AF fragged 12 A-7 aircraft daily for SAR training missions in Thailand with the 40th ARRS NKP P22#4

3 Nov 72

Excerpts from Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 857, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Sensitive Camp David, Vol. XXI (1)

Saigon, November 3, 1972

I said that President Nixon was astonished and found it incomprehensible that within twenty-four hours after having received his letter giving his views concerning the nature of the draft agreement, and pointing out that he considered the comments of Foreign Minister Lam that the U.S. is negotiating a surrender to be as damaging as they are unfair, that Thieu should have referred to the agreement as a surrender document.

I had been asked to bring this to Thieu's attention because of the seriousness with which these statements are viewed in the United States and by my government, especially at this sensitive time. It is our view that whatever domestic gain he may believe such statements achieve here is more than offset by the sharp loss of the confidence and support which he and his government suffer in the United States.

We fear that this process is nearing the point of no return. In that case, there is certainly no future for the GVN or the South Vietnamese people. I repeated, as I had in referring to Tran Van Lam's statements, that it is imperative to put a moratorium on statements of this kind.

I reported that we had not yet heard from Hanoi on the next meeting. However, the broadcast from Hanoi two days ago seems to indicate that they will ultimately agree to another round of meetings, although we do not think it probable that this will take place until the end of next week, probably November 9. I repeated that we would welcome Mr. Nha's presence at the time of the next meeting so that he could report

on developments at the end of each session. While Thieu did not give me a definite reply, he indicated that he would probably take up our suggestion.

I informed Thieu of the matters that we will take up and ask for at the next round of meetings.

I impressed on him again that it is essential to drop attacks against the United States and against you; that he does not need these for his domestic situation and they can do him only irreparable harm in the United States.

4 Nov 72

North Vietnam panhandle was subjected to heavy B-52 raids in an effort to disrupt the increased movement of troops and equipment South.

5 Nov 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 30, Vietnam, November 1972

Washington, November 5, 1972

In view of the current intelligence indicating

(a) a major enemy campaign to move supplies and equipment into South Vietnam

(b) plans to launch a new offensive in Northern MR 1

I desire, during the next 48 hours, to maximize U.S. airpower (B-52 and TACAIR) in and around the area between the DMZ and a line formed by the Cua Viet River and Route 9. The level of effort should be at least as great as that employed during the early days of the Northern Vietnamese invasion across the DMZ.

Following this 48-hour period for the next two weeks, I desire maximum sortie level for both B-52's and TACAIR applied against all suspected enemy logistic and manpower build-up areas throughout South Vietnam and Route Package 1. This increased level of air activity will remain in effect until 18 November 1972.

Mel Laird

7 Nov 72

37th ARRS Jolly's fly last combat SAR of Vietnam War (see file 7Nov72 last SAR 37th) A-1s fly last RESCORT mission.

On 7 November Capt. Screws and Maj. Ohr (Sandy 7 & 8) successfully completed the last SAR for the 1st SOS. Coachman 159, an Army Huey helicopter with seven survivors, was downed in the evening before an unknown cause on the Song Tra Khuc River approximately 15 miles east of Quang Ngai, SVN. A typhoon was forecasted to hit the area around 1800 with winds as high as 140 knots. The weather had prevented King and several Army helicopters from spotting the location of the survivors. The Sandys launched knowing any delay would cause the SAR force to be grounded by the typhoon, leaving the survivors in enemy territory. The first two attempts to reach the survivors by the Sandys were thwarted by heavy rain, severe turbulence, and low clouds. Capt. Screws, Sandy 7 was able to reach the survivors' location on his third attempt by flying at dangerously low altitudes and sheer determination. The Jolly's were scrambled from DaNang landed at Quang Ngai. They had landed to refuel. They took off to pick up the survivors. During the ingress, the clouds forced Sandy 8 and the Jolly's to fly up the river at less than 100 feet, but the Jolly's were able to reach the area and pick up the seven survivors. During

the ingress the Jollys came under small arms fire. The last SAR for the 1st SOS exemplified the resourcefulness and courage displayed by Sandy aircrews in their efforts to rescue downed airmen.

1st SOS History, July – December 1972

7Nov72

The last SAR involving the A-1 SANDYS occurred on 7 November. An Army Huey helicopter with seven survivors was downed approximately 15 miles west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. With time of the essence, the SANDYS were launched, despite the forecast of a severe typhoon. Because of the heavy rain, turbulence and low clouds, the A-1 crews were forced to fly at dangerously low altitudes (200 ft or less) in order to locate the survivors. Once their exact location had been determined, the SANDYS protected the departing rescue helicopters by effectively silencing the small arms fire that was harassing this bold rescue.

Source = History of the 56th Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, Volume 1, 1 July – 31 December 1972 located at AFHRA

11 Nov 72

USN destroyer Higbee, DD 806 was attacked by a flight of two VPAF MiG-17's off the coast of Dong Hoi, NVN

U.S. Army turns over the massive Long Binh logistics base to the RVN

9 Nov 72

7th Air Force decided that six A-1's were needed for Sandy Alert at DaNang; Six pilots left for Bien Hoa to pick up the aircraft on hand receipts from the VNAF. By the 11th the six were on alert at DaNang. On the 15th November the aircraft were returned to the VNAF and the Air Force's A-1 inventory was zero.

14 Nov 72

A major problem for President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in negotiating the agreement was securing the support of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu. In a November 14, 1972, letter, President Nixon assured President Thieu that "But far more important than what we say in the agreement on this issue is what we do in the event the enemy renews its aggression. You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action."

While we will do our very best to secure the changes in the agreement (requested by Thieu), we cannot expect to secure them all. You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action. I repeat my personal assurances to you that the United States will react very strongly and rapidly to any violations of the agreement.

Source = CRS Report for Congress RL33803

15 Nov 72

The A-7 became the primary aircraft used for SAR CAP, officially assuming that commitment on 15 November.

16Nov72

Bobbin 05, F-105G shot down in NVN

17 Nov 72

A-7s fly as SANDY on Bobbin 05 SAR. p42-47#4

18 Nov 72

Bobbin 05, F-105G shot down in NVN

A-7s fly first Sandy combat mission. P125#7

Linebacker II commences. In the most concentrated bombing of the war, US aircraft drop 40,000 tons of bombs over Hanoi and Haiphong. 15 B-52s and 12 other aircraft are shot down, along with 43 aircrew KIA, and 41 POW. The bombing ends when the DRV agrees to sign a truce that ended hostilities and allowed the USA to pull out of SVN. The truce was called the Paris Peace Accords.

Bobbin 05 Alpha and Bravo recovered.

Nearly all of these combat rescue elements functioned during a successful SAR mission over North Vietnam on 18 November 1972. On 16 November "Bobbin" 05, an F-105G Wild Weasel with a two-man crew was shot down by a surface-to-air missile (SAM). During the ejection and subsequent landing Captain Kenneth D. Thaete, the pilot, suffered facial cuts and a wrenched leg; and Major Norbert J. Mair, the electronic warfare officer, bruised his right thigh, sprained the right side of his back, and injured his right arm. After landing, both men camouflaged their survival equipment, went into hiding and attempted to summon aid with their survival radios. Unknown to the crew, other members of the "Bobbin" flight had already contacted SAR forces.

Major Mair and Captain Thaete established a radio contact with two F-4's at 0400 on 17 November 1972. Having pinpointed the location of the survivors, the RCC at Nakhon Phanom (NKP) RTAFB launched two A-7 "Sandy's" from the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing. The weather in the rescue area was found to be 1,000 feet overcast and it did not clear, so the survivors were told that a pickup would be attempted on the following day.

The JRCC at Tan Son Nhut AB planned to launch a first light SAR effort. During the night a myriad of details were worked out, including the composition of the SARTF, the ordnance, and the responsibilities of the A-7's. Enemy defenses in the rescue area were known to include SAM sites, and 85 and 100 millimeter radar-controlled guns. At the RCC at NKP the staff worked out the arrangement of support aircraft, ingress and egress routes, orbit points, and tanker support.

They "put it all together" in a SARTF consisting of HH-53's, A-7's, HC-130's, an F-4 MiG Combat Air Patrol, F-4 Gunfighters, F-105 Wild Weasel SAM suppressors, EB-66 electronic intelligence, and KC-135 tankers.

In the early hours of 18 November briefings were given and information was distributed. "Sandys" 01 through 05 were launched at 0358, 11 through 16 at 0434, and 08 and 09 at 0608. Radio contact was established with both survivors in the rescue area, but the "Sandy" could not find any routes for the helicopters to penetrate into the area. Therefore the first light effort was abandoned and the A-7's began aerial refueling. At one point the "Sandys" led an HH-53 into the rescue area, but although the helicopter was about 500 feet above the ground, clouds still covered the area and it was forced to egress.

Finally "Sandy" 01 and "Jolly" 03 were able to break through the overcast and found themselves in a valley. After flying up and down a series of valleys for about 45 miles, they reached the site of the survivors. "Sandy" 01 flew over the survivors and encountered ground fire. Sandys 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 02, and 03 came in low from the Gulf of Tonkin and laid a smoke screen shielding "Jolly 03" from the AA guns.

"Jolly 03" began the pickup of Major Mair and Captain Thaete. When Jolly 03 received small arms fire, it returned fire with its miniguns. The survivors were picked up successfully and returned to NKP, but "Sandy 01" was hit and had to be escorted back to DaNang. The total airborne time for the mission lasted approximately nine hours.

Source = K318.2 Jul72-Jun74 ARRS History vol. 1

18 Nov 72

A-7 aircraft from the 354th TFS participated in the recovery of two downed crewmembers in North Vietnam. Many mistakes were made as a result of the short training period of approximately two weeks, but the A-7 had successfully replaced the A-1.

Nevertheless, the A-7D had major weaknesses in the RESCORT role. Amongst these was the relatively short loiter time of one and one-half to three hours for the A-7 versus five hours for the A-1. This problem was somewhat alleviated by using in-flight refueling. Additionally, the A-7's speed was not compatible with the Jolly Green's, thereby making it difficult for the A-7 pilot to keep visual contact with the helicopter. The 3d ARRGp tried several techniques to solve this problem, including luminescent paint on the rotor blades and a strobe light located outside the helicopter. None were satisfactory.

Another problem created by the A-7's speed was the inability to provide continual protection for the Jolly Greens. This was solved by using a rolling wheel (actually elliptically shaped) pattern around the Jolly Greens. With two or more A-7 aircraft flying this pattern, the Jolly Greens had continual protection.

Counteracting its weaknesses, the A-7 had numerous advantages over the A-1. The A-7's higher speed increased its survivability and reduced the time it took to reach a rescue area. A computerized navigation system improved navigation capability and also provided the ability to mark and store coordinates of the downed airman's exact location.

Other desirable characteristics of the A-7 include armor plating, self-sealing fuselage fuel tanks, radar altimeter, UHF-DF homing equipment, forward looking radar with terrain avoidance, and inflight refueling capability.

19 Nov 1972

DaNang AB hit by rocket attack at 0120. Ten rounds 122mm rocket. 2 aircraft damaged

20 Nov 72

Dr. Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resumed their talks in Paris

21 Nov 1972

DaNang AB hit by rocket attack at 0111. Six rounds 122mm rocket. No damage or injuries.

Note: This was the last attack by rockets for the men of the 37th ARRS.

22 Nov 72

The first B-52 combat loss of the war occurred when it was hit by a SAM near Vinh. The aircraft limped back to Thailand where the crew parachuted to safety and was rescued.

23 Nov 72

"Surprisingly, the record for the fastest save of the war is held by a HH-43F assigned to the 37ARRS, 41 ARRW DaNang AB. "Pedro 61" flown by Lieutenants Bill Latham and his co-pilot James Moulton. On 23 November 1972, while on a local flight, they monitored a "Mayday" from an OV-10 FAC. To their surprise, the aircraft impacted several hundred yards in front of them and the pilot in his chute floated down toward a paddy. "Pedro 61" followed the chute down and Sgt McCoy jumped out and dragged the pilot back to the helicopter. Total elapsed time from ejection to rescue was one minute and thirty seconds. "

On 23 November, Nail 36 (Lt John Sundgren) experienced an engine failure on takeoff at Danang. Due to low altitude and low airspeed due to take off configuration Lt Sundgren elected to eject since the aircraft was going out of control.

Source = 23rd TASS Unit History

23 Nov 72

Excerpts from Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 857, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Sensitive Camp David

Paris, November 23, 1972

Memorandum for: The President

From: Henry A. Kissinger

We have just completed a six-hour meeting with the North Vietnamese which proved to be every bit as difficult as predicted. After granting some improvements, including a more satisfactory statement on the status of the DMZ, the other side held rigidly firm that there would be only minor changes in the political chapter, and no improvements in the text of the agreement with respect to the issue of their troops in South Vietnam.

At the same time, we are confronted with an intransigent North Vietnamese stance on improved political positions and with respect to a formal commitment in the agreement regarding the troops in the South.

It is obvious that, barring a sudden give by the North Vietnamese, we do not have an acceptable deal.

Based on today's session it appears that our earlier judgments were correct that now the November 7 deadline has passed so has the incentive for Hanoi to proceed in the same panicky fashion which motivated them in October. Thus it is very possible that we will have to face a breakdown in the talks and the need for a drastic step-up in our bombing of the North accompanied by a review of our negotiating strategy.

25 Nov 72

Dr. Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho broke off their talks without agreement

SAR conference at 7th/13th AF HQ at Udorn to discuss A-7 problems during 16-18 Nov Bobbin 05 SAR.

26 Nov 72 Thieu to Nixon re: Paris Negotiations

FROM: THE WHITE HOUSE

TO: AMERICAN EMBASSY SAIGON

CITE: WHS2260

NOVEMBER 30, 1972

TO: AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FROM: HENRY A. KISSENGER

DELIVER OPENING OF BUSINESS

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF PRESIDENT THIEU'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT NIXON

BEGIN TEXT. QUOTE

SAIGON, NOVEMBER 26 1972

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

I WOULD LIKE TO AVAIL MYSELF OF THE OPPORTUNITY OF MY SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DR. NGUYEN PHU DUC'S CALL ON YOU TO SEND MY WARM PERSONAL REGARDS AND MY APPRECIATION FOR THE FRANKNESS OF YOUR MESSAGES TO ME IN THE PAST FEW DAYS.

I HAVE STUDIED VERY CAREFULLY YOUR MESSAGES AND THE REPORTS FROM MY AMBASSADORS IN PARIS ON THE MEETINGS BETWEEN YOUR REPRESENTATIVES AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.

IT HAS NOW BECOME CLEAR TO ME THAT AFTER FOUR DAYS OF TALKS, THE COMMUNIST SIDE HAS NOT SHOWN ANY GOOD WILL IN CONSIDERING THE

MOD-IFICATIONS WE HAVE PROPOSED TO THE DRAFT AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT AN HONORABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE WAR.

ON THE CONTRARY, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE DISPLAYED EXTREME INTRANSIGENCE BY AGAIN RAISING THEIR UNREASONABLE DEMANDS. THEY OBSTINATELY REFUSE TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM POSED BY THE PRESENCE OF OVER 300,000 OF THEIR TROOPS IN THE SOUTH, WHICH WILL STAY ON EVEN AFTER THE PEACE AGREEMENT IS CONCLUDED. THEY ALSO TRY TO IMPOSE ON THE US A STRUCTURE OF POWER CALLED THE "NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD" WITH THREE EQUAL SEGMENTS WHOSE FUNCTIONS FAR EXCEED THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ELECTION COMMISSION AND INFRINGE UPON THE LEGAL PREROGATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT.

AS I HAVE CLEARLY STATED IN MY LETTER TO YOU ON NOVEMBER 18, 1972 AND IN THE MEMORANDUM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ON THAT SAME DATE, I VIEW THAT THOSE TWO PROBLEMS ARE BASIC PROBLEMS ON WHICH DEPENDS THE LIFE OR DEATH OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATION.

ON THE FIRST BASIC PROBLEM WHICH IS THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN THE SOUTH AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT, I WISH TO STRESS WERE THAT IS A PROBLEM OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO US.

AS STIPULATED BY THE 1954 GENEVA AGREEMENTS ON VIETNAM, NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM ARE TWO DISTINCT ZONES AND PENDING REUNIFICATION THEY HAVE TO RESPECT EACH OTHER'S TERRITORY AND SOVEREIGNTY. HOWEVER, NORTH VIETNAM IN ITS RELENTLESS PERSUIT OF ITS POLICY OF EXPANSION AND DOMINATION HAS BLATANTLY VIOLATED THESE AGREEMENTS.

IT HAS SENT ITS TROOPS TO WAGE AGRESSION AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS, AND MORE RECENTLY THEY OPENLY VIOLATED THE INTERNATIONAL DEMARCATION LINE BY LAUNCHING THEIR MASSIVE INVASION LATE MARCH OF THIS YEAR.

ALTHOUGH THIS ALL-OUT OFFENSIVE COMPLETELY FAILED, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NOT YET RENOUNCED THEIR OBJECTIVES AND HAVE NOT PUT AND END TO THEIR AGRESSION.

THE VICTORY THE COMMUNISTS COULD NOT ACHIEVE BY THE FORCE OF ARMS ON THE BATTLEFIELDS THROUGHOUT THESE YEARS AND ESPECIALLY DURING THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS, THEY STILL TRY TO ACHIEVE IT THROUGH THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT ADVANTAGEOUS TO THEIR SIDE, COUPLED

WITH A MILITARY UPRISING ONCE ALL US TROOPS ARE WITHDRAWN. THE CESSATION OF THE BOMBING AND MINING OF NORTH VIETNAM TOGETHER WITH THE MAINTAINING OF SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM WILL CREATE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS FOR THE COMMUNISTS TO CARRY OUT THEIR AGGRESSIVE PLANS. THIS IS NOT A SPECULATION BUT THE POLICY WHICH THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN NORTH VIETNAM HAS PUBLICALLY ADVOCATED. THEIR CADRES HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE CEASEFIRE, AND THROUGHOUT THE POLITICAL PROCESS AS CONTEMPLATED IN THE DRAFT AGREEMENT.

BY MAINTAINING THEIR TROOPS IN THE SOUTH, BESIDES MILITARY ADVANTAGES, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS SEEK TO INFLUENCE THE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROCESS IN SOUTH VIETNAM PREVENTING THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE FROM EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

THE 300,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM ARE AGGRESSORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLING OF COUNTLESS INNOCENT SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. THEY ARE EXTERNAL FORCES, ILLEGALLY INTRODUCED INTO SOUTH VIETNAM. AS LONG AS THEY STAY IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT EVEN FOR SOLDIERS AND POLITICAL CADRES OF THE NLF TO FREELY EXPRESS THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS AND OPT FREELY FOR THE POLITICAL SOLUTION OF THEIR CHOICE. A FORTIORI, IT IS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE UNARMED CIVILIANS OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

I CAN ASSURE YOU IN ALL SINCERITY THAT IF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM SOUTH VIETNAM, WE CAN RAPIDLY AND PEACE-FULLY SETTLE THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE NLF AND US. I AM CONFIDENT THAT I WILL SUCCEED BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT AMONG SOUTH VIETNAMESE, THERE ARE NO OBSTACLES THAT CANNOT BE OVERCOME.

ONCE THE NLF IS ABLE TO FREE ITSELF FROM HANOI'S HOLD, IT WILL NOT NECESSARILY ESPOUSE ALL HANOI'S DEMANDS. EVEN THOUGH THE SOUTHERN VIETCONG FIGHT UNDER HANOI'S BANNER, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL OF THEM SHARE THE SAME MOTIVES AND OBJECTIVES AS THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS. MORE THAN 200,000 RETURNEES, MOST OF THEM SOUTH VIETNAMESE, ATTEST TO THIS FACT. THE SMOULDERING DISENCHANTMENT OF MANY ELEMENTS IN NLF UNITS WHICH ARE BEING CONTROLLED AND DOMINATED BY COMMUNIST NORTH VIETNAMESE CADRES IS WELL KNOWN.

NOTE: THIS DOCUMENT STAMPED

WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM TOP SECRET EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY

30 Nov 72

Officially we were called the 37th ARRS, but to any downed pilot who heard the heavy chop of the six bladed rotors from the HH-53C helicopter (or the five-bladed beat of the H-3 blades), it was the sound of the Jolly Green Giants. After six years at DaNang and rescuing 887 downed fliers or troops in contact, a flight of six HH-53s departed "Rocket City" for the last time. Only two weeks earlier the scramble klaxon had sounded, but instead of the expected loudspeaker cry of "*Scramble the Jolly's*" a voice unexpectedly announced that all squadron members should gather in the main hanger for an important announcement from our commander.

Twenty minutes later almost 200 aircrew, maintenance, and support personnel milled around openly wondering what this was all about. No one in the squadron could ever recall the scramble klaxon being used for any purpose except launching our aircraft on a combat rescue. LtCol. Stephen L. Sutton soon walked out of Jolly Operations, smiling from ear to ear. He wasted no time, and in a loud voice proclaimed simply "We're all going home, it's over." The squadron erupted into spontaneous turmoil and cheers. We were all screaming, jumping up and down, patting each other on the back. It took some time to quiet this squadron down.

After repeated orders to quiet down Col. Sutton was able to speak once again. His next announcement was going to surprise us almost as much as his first. "You will all be out of here in less than three weeks." Again chaos erupted. This meant that we would not be spending Christmas in Vietnam. It was almost too good to be true. Could we really shut down our entire rescue squadron, pack up our gear, and process each of us for reassignment in 21 days? The answer was an unequivocal yes. Throughout DaNang Air Base, this process was repeating itself at all of the American units. I suspect that it was repeating itself at all U.S. combat units throughout the country of Vietnam.

The powers to be in Washington were negotiating a peace treaty with the North Vietnamese. They now wanted us to pack up and get out of town as fast as we could, if not faster. America had essentially declared victory and we were now going to extricate ourselves from the quagmire Vietnam had become. The men of the 37th ARRS were more than glad to enthusiastically execute this order.

To expedite our departure all unit facilities, equipment, weapons, and munitions were to be turned over to the VNAF. The only exception to this policy would be our aircraft and individually issued professional gear. The aircraft would be transferred to the 40th ARRS at NKP Thailand. Each individual's professional gear would be boxed, inspected by customs, and shipped to our next base of assignment. The same process would repeat itself with our personally owned possessions.

The next three weeks would consist of long days of furious activity. During the day we packed personal and professional gear for shipment back to the states. (what did you do at night?) Performance reports and awards and decorations packages had to be completed on everyone. There was serious concern among U.S. commanders to ensure that we did not ship any weapons or munitions out of the country for war souvenirs. They also wanted to ensure that no one shipped any illegal drugs out in their gear. This led to extensive inspections of all boxes being shipped out of country. Col. Sutton knew that we PJs probably had some weapons and explosives that were not listed on unit supply records. To provide a means to turn them in legally

he instituted an amnesty policy. He placed a wooden box, about 4x4 feet size, in the PJ section with an amnesty sign on it.

PJ weapons in Vietnam had long been an issue that rescue unit commanders struggled with. We had entered the war with .38 caliber pistols and an M-16 rifle. These were the only official weapons authorized by the Air Force for use by its PJs. As the war dragged on the character of the pararescue mission also changed. Dozens of pararescuemen attended Recondo School at Nha Trang and became trained in the full spectrum of infantry weapons and explosives. These pararescuemen in turn trained other PJs who arrived in-country but could not get to Recondo School.

Pararescuemen routinely found themselves on the ground, in enemy territory for longer periods than the Air Force anticipated. We were told that the North Vietnamese placed a bounty on PJs, to motivate their troops to capture or kill pararescuemen who were attempting to rescue a downed pilot.

This led to pararescue teams in-country deciding which weapons were needed to survive in this hostile environment. The only problem with this arrangement was that the weapons carried by PJs at the end of the war were not authorized in USAF supply tables of allowance. In the last few months of the war, Col. Sutton was under pressure from his superiors to ensure his PJs carried only a pistol and a rifle. He in turn put pressure on TSgt Harwell Quillian, the PJ NCOIC to ensure that only authorized weapons were carried. When Sergeant Quillian told us to turn in our illegal weapons a couple of months earlier, the PJs assigned were smart enough not to try and argue the illogic of unilateral disarmament in the middle of a war. We turned in a couple dozen weapons and a few crates of explosives and told him to tell Col. Sutton that these were all the "illegal" weapons. This made everyone happy.

It was an open secret among the rescue aircrews that we flew with that we were still armed to the teeth. But now that we were all going home, we did not require these weapons. It was now the proper time to take the amnesty policy to heart. We did have one minor problem, Col. Sutton's box was a "little too small." In one of the most infamous PJ photos of the war, the 37th PJ team displayed **one of each type weapon** that we owned. These included: .50 cal. heavy machinegun, 7.62 M-60 machinegun, M-79 grenade launcher, XM-148 grenade launcher, M-72 LAW rocket, M-3 silenced grease gun, 9mm "Swedish K", AK-47, AKM, M1911 .45 pistol, Browning 9mm pistol, claymore mine, various types of hand grenades and 40mm explosives and a few weapons that had been so heavily modified that they rightly had no name. Col. Sutton was not amused when he was asked to take a look at his amnesty box. It was buried in high explosive fragmentation grenades. He phoned for the DaNang EOD team to pick up the PJ weapons. They required a flat bed truck to haul it all away. One of them commented that we had enough to outfit an infantry company for a week of heavy battle.



From left to right: Unknown PJ, Steve Jones, Larry Kimball, Bruce Johnson, Ron Charlsworth, Dennis Baker, John Carlson, Clay Hammock, Bob LaPointe, Dudley Green, Buzz Beauchamp, and Bill Bradley. Not in photo was Harwell Quillian. He was in Col. Sutton's office getting his ass chewed about our weapons.

The weapons amnesty issue was the only minor sour note in the shutdown of the 37th. But it only took one passing moment in the blur of other happy activity that was occurring. Everyone received PCS assignments and processed out through the DaNang personnel office. Most would be going straight back to the United States and would be assigned to CONUS air rescue units. About one third of the aircrews and PJs would be reassigned to the 40th ARRS at NKP, Thailand. Virtually all those going to Thailand were volunteers. Another issue that needed to be resolved was what to do with "Stretch". Stretch was an 11-foot long Indian Rock Python that had been the PJ mascot for years. The snake cage was rather large and located outside but adjacent to the Pararescue Section. No one with any sense at all went into this cage without having one of the PJ snake handlers with them. No one ever realized that the cages extra large size was a result of it serving the dual purpose of a munitions storage area for all the "illegal high explosives" that the 37th PJs owned. Thank God that a 122mm rocket never hit this cage, the secondary explosions would have been rather spectacular. It was decided that "Stretch" would PCS with the men going to NKP. He would be flown there on one of the Jollys when they departed. Stretch's new cage at

NKP would be located next to the 40th ARRS's mascot, "Buffy". Buffy was a black Malayan Sun bear.

At sunset we ceased work and celebrated the end of the war. Raucous parties were occurring all over DaNang. Most of the 37th gravitated to the PJ barracks bar or the Jolly Green Inn, the maintenance bar. The night before the "Jollys" departed for NKP the squadron had its last official party. Appropriately it would be at the Jolly Green Inn. All realized that it would be their last social gathering before the squadron was deactivated. Everyone was glad to soon be leaving Vietnam. However it was a mixed emotion. We would also be saying goodbye to many of our brothers in arms, men whom we had gone to battle with, laughed with, cried with. Most realized that it was likely that they would never meet again.

As the free drinks flowed, it was impossible to not recall all the exploits they shared, the men they had saved, and the teammates they had lost in combat. These rescue missions had been some of the most hazardous type of flying activity in this unpopular war. The rescuemen were clear about their mission. "Rescue shot down American pilots from capture or death by the NVA", unpopular war be damned. We were not politicians, we were proud American warriors. Tonight the warriors celebrated one last time. Pilots, maintenance men, PJs, clerks, supply men and other squadron members toasted each other. The drinks flowed freely, the music was loud, the mood was buoyant. Late in the night someone started singing a song we had all heard sung before. Soon everyone was singing. The song was "The ballad of the Jolly Green Giants." It had been written many years earlier by Bull Durham. It went like this:

Insert after obtaining permission to use.

All parties end. The next morning found us all on the flightline ramp. The departing aircrews were in the "Jollys", rotors turning. Those of us remaining at DaNang, awaiting the arrival of the "Freedom Bird", waved to the departing crews, they waved back. The mood was serious, the men quiet. We were witnessing the end of an era.

After takeoff, the "Jollys" formed up in tight formation and then over flew Jolly Green Operations. It was a final salute to their teammates who gathered on the flight line to witness the last Jolly Green Giants to fly over DaNang Air Base. There was more than one moist eyeball in the men left on the now very quiet flightline. In an interview with the DaNang newspaper, the Gunfighter Gazette, Col Sutton stated the following "I cannot begin to describe the dedication these guys have for their job. It is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, always alert and ready to pick someone up so 'Charlie' does not get him. When we bring a downed pilot back to DaNang the guys in my squadron act like he is a long lost brother. They really have empathy for the jet jocks and all men in trouble. They are the greatest bunch of guys I have ever known."

In a few days the last Rescuemen assigned to the Jolly Green Giants departed for home. But they would not be the last rescuemen leaving DaNang. That honor would belong to the Pedros. The HH-43 LBR unit was redesignated Det. 7 40th ARRS and remained at DaNang until the peace treaty was signed on 30 January 73. The Pedro's were the first into the war. It was fitting that they would be the last rescuemen out of Vietnam.

Comments by Bill Preble: There was also a unit that remained in place at TSN until the very last. There were even some casualties there in a later rocket attack. Need to contact him about this and verify his information

5 HH-53's were transferred from the 37th ARRS DaNang to the 40th ARRS at NKP

30 Nov 72

U.S. troop strength in the Republic of Vietnam fell to 25,500 men, the troop ceiling remained at 27,000 as Increment XIV was completed.

DECEMBER

4 Dec 72

Excerpts from Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

Paris, December 4, 1972

Please pass the following report to the President immediately.

After today's session we are at a point where a break-off of the talks looks almost certain. This morning Haig and I met privately with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy for 2½ hours. I made a conciliatory presentation, stripping down our remaining requests of last week to the minimum. I also emphasized however, that we must have these minimum changes in order to press the agreement on our allies.

At the full meeting this afternoon, which also lasted 2½ hours, Tho answered my morning proposal point by point. He rejected every change we asked for. I told him flatly that his approach did not provide the basis for a settlement. In the ensuing dialogue Tho stuck firmly by his intransigent position.

Their own needs for a settlement are now outweighed by the attractive vision they see of our having to choose between a complete split with Saigon or an unmanageable domestic situation. **Therefore I believe we must be prepared to break off the negotiations.**

We shall meet again at 1500 tomorrow and I need instructions by then.

6 Dec 72

In the biggest attack since the Tet Offensive of 1968, an estimated 43 rockets slammed into Tan Son Nhut Air Base and adjoining areas early Wednesday morning. One USAF sergeant was killed and two other U.S. airmen injured in the attack. Eight Vietnamese were killed and 33 wounded within a four mile radius of the base. Approximately 28 of the rockets, all confirmed to be Soviet-built 122mm type, landed on Tan Son Nhut beginning at 7:40 a.m. during the morning rush hour traffic. The last rocket impacted at approximately 9:10 a.m.

Two USAF HH-43 helicopters were damaged by shrapnel at "Pedro", Det. 14, 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service. The U.S. airman was killed at this location by flying shrapnel, when a rocket landed about 20 feet away.

9 Dec 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From Jonathan T. Howe of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1133, Jon Howe Vietnam Subject Files, Project Folder re Vietnam

Washington, December 9, 1972

SUBJECT

Strike Plan for North Vietnam

Attached is the initial-cut of the JCS strike plan for North Vietnam. The packaging of targets is area oriented, but the types of targets you wanted struck in sequence are a manageable total of 34. Seven of these 34 are included in the buffer zone group. Under this concept first priority would be given to the group of power generation and transportation targets in the Hanoi area. These attacks would be followed by a Haiphong package, four power plants not in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, and a buffer zone group. All of the targets are in a quadrant North of 20° North latitude.

This approach has some important military and psychological advantages. In actuality, all 34 of the targets would probably be struck nearly simultaneously. It is estimated that under good weather conditions the 34 targets could be destroyed within seven days by making maximum use of the full-range of air assets in theater. The plan calls for 825 attack sorties a day.

I believe it is better to complete the initial package as quickly and intensively as possible and take the heat all at once, domestically and internationally, for moving to this new level of bombing. This is particularly relevant to the buffer zone targets which have high potential for inadvertent over flight of China. Our response to the Chinese protests will ultimately be an expression of dismay and a commitment to reinstate the previous restrictions.

If it is desired to develop this plan further, the following refinements could be made:

- With this large a commitment of air assets, there should be provision to cover essential battle needs in South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and just north of the DMZ.
- The target list could be increased to include such categories as POL pumping stations, steel and machine tool plants, and other important categories. In addition, there are other key targets throughout North Vietnam which should be struck periodically at places like Thanh Hoa and Vinh.

10 Dec 72

Kansas 01B SAR. 40th ARRS launch Jollys. A/C 793 Captain Campbell A/C, Captain Boyd, Sgt Walsh FE, Sgt Morgan and Sgt Williamson PJs. Aircraft takes battle damage. Captain Boyd hit in leg. Sgt Morgan hit in arm. Forced to pull out. Then Jimmy Walsh, the flight engineer, flies the damaged HH-53.

High bird goes in. A/C 358 Rish A/C, Bourtesse C/P, Smith FE, Young PJ, Gonzales PJ. Their aircraft also takes battle damage. Number 2 engine shut down, utility hydraulics lost. Jolly comes to hover over downed pilot but he makes no attempt to get on penetrator. Jolly forced off by ground fire. Survivor not recovered. A-7s acted as Sandys. *Was this first A-7 SAR?*

Mid-Dec 72

40th ARRS loses HH-53 (combat loss?) p127#7

13 Dec 72

On 13 December 1972, North Vietnamese negotiators walked out of secret talks with Kissinger. On 14 December, President Nixon issued an ultimatum to Hanoi to send its representatives back to the conference table within 72 hours **"or else the bombing resumes."** The North Vietnamese rejected Nixon's demand. Frustrated and upset at the North Vietnamese for their political delays

to peace, the president ordered Operation Linebacker II, a full-scale air campaign against the Hanoi area. This operation was the most concentrated air offensive of the war.

14 Dec 72

Excerpts from Message From John D. Negroponte of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 43, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Bombing, 1972-73
Paris, December 14, 1972

WH 46. Subject: Hanoi's behavior in the negotiations.

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to summarize Hanoi's negotiating behavior both in substance and procedure since the reopening of the negotiations on November 20. It concludes that Hanoi has no intention to meet any of the basic requirements that we made clear to them at the end of October; and through a series of irritating dilatory tactics has pursued a course which can be interpreted as desire to achieve either no agreement at all or an agreement substantially worse than that achieved in late October. Hanoi's tactics have been clumsy, blatant, and fundamentally contemptuous of the United States.

14 Dec 72

Excerpts from Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Chief of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks (Porter)

Washington, December 14, 1972

The President has decided that we will resume full-scale bombing of North Vietnam as early as Sunday, December 17.

In your conduct of the technical meetings it is now essential that you develop a firm written record of the outrageous performance of the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese stalling tactics must not be papered over. Your demeanor should be polite but you should conduct yourself in a strong, no-nonsense manner.

14 Dec 72

The New Zealand government withdrew its last element from South Vietnam.

16 Dec 72

At President Richard M. Nixon's direction, President's Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry A. Kissinger held a press conference on Saturday, December 16, 1972, at 11:45 a.m. "The aim of my briefing as I conceived it," Kissinger later wrote, "was to place the blame for the stalled negotiations where it belonged—on Hanoi—and again to leave no doubt in Saigon of our determination to conclude the agreement."

17 Dec 72

Excerpts from Message From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Gayler) and the Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command (Meyer)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Records of Thomas Moorer, Box 71, Linebacker II Messages, December 1972

Washington, December 17, 1972

Subj: Linebacker II Operations (U).

This is an execute message. You are directed to commence at approximately 1200Z, 18 December 1972 a three-day maximum effort, repeat maximum effort, of B-52/TACAIR strikes in the Hanoi/Haiphong areas against the targets contained in Reference (C). Object is maximum destruction of selected military targets in the vicinity of Hanoi/Haiphong. Be prepared to extend operations past three days, if directed.

Following instructions apply:

- A. Utilize visual as well as all weather capabilities.
- B. Utilize all resources which can be spared without critical detriment to operations in RVN and support of emergency situations in Laos and Cambodia.
- C. Utilize restrikes on authorized targets, as necessary. North Vietnamese air order of battle, airfields, and active surface-to-air missile sites may be struck as tactical situation dictates to improve effectiveness of attack forces and minimize losses.
- D. You are authorized to reduce B-52 operations required during the 24 hour period prior to the initiation of these operations in order to apply maximum effort against scheduled targets.
- E. All B-52 aircraft will carry maximum ordnance load.
- F. Exercise precaution to minimize risk of civilian casualties utilizing LGB weapons against designated targets. Avoid damage to third country shipping.
- G. Naval gunfire operations are authorized along the NVN coast north of twenty degrees latitude to complement the air strike effort.

17 Dec 72

President Richard M. Nixon called Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas H. Moorer. After the conversation, Moorer drafted a memorandum for the record:

“The President called me at home on Sunday afternoon, 17 December, to emphasize that he considered Linebacker II as being ‘the last chance for the Air Force and Navy to put forth a maximum effort against NVN.’ He said he recognized there have been occasions in the past when there has been competition between the Navy and Air Force but he did not want any such thing at this time. He emphasized that ‘the strikes must come off’ and that he did not expect any excuses. I carefully explained to the President the weather situation and assured him that the all-weather strikes would go off and this included the B-52s. Furthermore, I said as soon as the weather gave us an opportunity we would move forward with the visual bombing. I pointed out that we were constrained in the selection of targets and tactics because of the weather, since we were, at the same time, making every effort to avoid injury to civilians—when possible.” (Memorandum for the record, December 17, CJCS M-73-72; *ibid.*, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Moorer Diary, July 1970–July 1974)

18 Dec 72

The Australian government withdrew its last advisory element from South Vietnam.

18 Dec

Operation Linebacker II commences and 123 B-52's head north concentrating against the Hanoi – Haiphong areas. Beginning at 2000 hours on 18 December bombers, the bombers came in three waves; A-6s and FB-111s flew strike missions between them. Surface-to-air missiles brought down three B-52s; pilots tallied well over 200 SAM firings.

18 December 72

Excerpts from Message From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1020, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Gen. Haig's Vietnam Trip, Tohaig/Haigto & Misc., December 17-22, 1972

Washington, December 18, 1972.

Second wave of strikes has been completed. One B-52 was hit and aircraft went down over Thailand. All crew members were recovered. An F-111 is reported missing from the first wave and is believed to have gone down over the water.

17 Dec 72

The JCS issued the following message to CINCPAC, CINCSAC, and subordinate operational commanders:

YOU ARE DIRECTED TO COMMENCE AT APPROXIMATELY 1200Z, 18 DECEMBER 1972 THREE-DAY MAXIMUM EFFORT, REPEAT MAXIMUM EFFORT, OF B52/TACAIR STRIKES IN THE HANOI/HAIPHONG AREAS AGAINST THE TARGETS CONTAINED IN (THE AUTHORIZED TARGET LIST). OBJECT IS MAXIMUM DESTRUCTION OF SELECTED MILITARY TARGETS IN THE VICINITY OF HANOI/HAIPHONG. BE PREPARED TO EXTEND OPERATIONS PAST THREE DAYS, IF DIRECTED.

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS APPLY:

- A. UTILIZE VISUAL AS WELL AS ALL WEATHER CAPABILITIES.
- B. UTILIZE ALL RESOURCES WHICH CAN BE SPARED WITHOUT CRITICAL DETRIMENT TO OPERATIONS IN RVN AND SUPPORT OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA.
- C. UTILIZE RESTRIKES ON AUTHORIZED TARGETS, AS NECESSARY. NORTH VIETNAMESE AIR ORDER OF BATTLE, AIRFIELDS, AND ACTIVE SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SITES MAY BE STRUCK AS TACTICAL SITUATION DICTATES TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF ATTACK FORCES AND MINIMIZE LOSSES....
- D. EXERCISE PRECAUTION' TO MINIMIZE RISK OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES UTILIZING LGB WEAPONS AGAINST DESIGNATED TARGETS. AVOID DAMAGE TO THIRD COUNTRY SHIPPING.

Message, JCS to CINCPAC 17001 OZ Dec 72, Subj: Linebacker II Operations. Declassified by OJCS DJSM-340-80, 15 February 1980. Certain targets on the JCS target list were designated for LGB attack only.

Although the operation named Linebacker II was essentially a continuation of the Linebacker I bombing campaign of the preceding eight months, which included earlier B-52 strikes in the Haiphong area, it was distinctive in two respects. Ever-increasing international and domestic pressure on the United States for resolution of the conflict mandated attainment of a certain level of damage to military targets within the shortest period of time, while adverse weather conditions dictated reliance on all-weather capabilities more than visual attack.³¹ The overall objective remained the same. However, whereas earlier Linebacker I efforts had the military purpose of

widespread interdiction, Linebacker II concentrated on bombing targets located in the military-industrial center of North Vietnam.

18 Dec 72

Beginning at 2000 hours on 18 December (Saigon time) and continuing through 0500 hours on 19 December, U.S. bombers had continually attacked the region north and northeast of Hanoi. The U.S. command acknowledged that U.S. aircraft were attacking above the 20th parallel for the first time in nearly two months. A total of 15 B-52s and 13 other aircraft were reportedly shot down during Operation Linebacker II, a 12-day period between 18-29 December 1972⁷

18 Dec 72

President Nixon directs the resumption of large scale bombing and mining in North Vietnam. A 12 day bombing campaign was directed against North Vietnam from 18 through 29 December, using the code name of Linebacker II. This was an historic shift in the air war over North Vietnam.

One unique aspect of this campaign was the fact that nearly all sorties in this campaign were flown in RPs 5 and 6. A second was that 46 percent of the strike sorties in Linebacker II were flown by B-52 bombers. This intensification of air operations resulted in extensive damage to enemy installations.

There were three distinct phases to Linebacker II operations. Phase 1 (18 to 20 December) was characterized by a total of 315 B-52 night sorties directed against 11 target complexes in the Hanoi area. The giant bombers struck in three waves each night, preceded by support aircraft including CAP/ESCORT, SAM suppression aircraft, and chaff dispensing aircraft. Phase II (21 to 24 December) saw somewhat of a reduction in the sortie rate with 120 sorties being directed against six targets. There was also a shift in the areas targeted. On the 5th night (22 December) Haiphong was the target, and on the 6th and 7th nights Long Dun Kep, Thai Nguyen, and six SAM sites constituted the targets. Phase III of the operation saw 300 sorties directed at 13 target complexes and five SAM sites. On 26 December 120 B-52 sorties were contained in one wave and struck seven targets simultaneously. Seventy-two of these struck the Hanoi area, 30 the Haiphong area and 18 Thai Nguyen. On 27 December the Hanoi area was struck with 30 sorties, nine of which were targeted against SAM sites. The last two days of the B-52 effort saw most sorties directed against the Lang Deng railroad yard and two separate SAM support facilities. The daylight TACAIR effort was mostly sustained by A-7s and F-4s bombing visually or with LORAN techniques, depending upon the weather over the target.

19 Dec 72

All 93 B-52 sorties returned safely even though pilots reported over 180 SAM firings.

Excerpts from Message From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1020, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Gen. Haig's Vietnam Trip, Tohaig/Haigto & Misc., December 17–22, 1972

Washington, December 19, 1972

Third wave of strikes has been completed and targets included Hanoi radio. After the strikes a shift was noted to an alternate frequency with a garbled and weak transmission from a different voice.

One B–52 was lost during this wave and crashed in the Hanoi area. It was downed by either a MIG or SAM.

19 Dec 72

Excerpts from Memorandum of Conversation

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 860, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Sensitive Camp David, Vol. XXIII, Haig-Thieu mtgs.

Saigon, December 19, 1972

General Haig noted that President Nixon had asked him to travel again to Saigon to explain to President Thieu the current situation in Paris and future U.S. intentions. General Haig pointed out that President Nixon had worked intensely on the Vietnam situation ever since General Haig returned to the United States from Paris on Saturday, December 9th. President Nixon had, just prior to General Haig's departure for Saigon on Sunday night, dictated a personal letter to President Thieu.

Only General Haig, Dr. Kissinger and the President were aware of the contents of this letter and no copies would be distributed in the U.S. bureaucracy. President Thieu should understand that President Nixon had written this letter only after the most careful and painful reappraisal of the situation in Southeast Asia, the current state of negotiations and especially President Thieu's attitude with respect to them.

The President is confident that President Thieu will treat this letter with the greatest secrecy. General Haig handed President Nixon's letter to President Thieu which President Thieu read very carefully, obviously somewhat shaken by its contents.

Letter from President Nixon to President Thieu December 17, 1972

Dear Mr. President:

I have again asked General Haig to visit you in Saigon. He will inform you of my final considered personal judgment of the state of the ceasefire negotiations and of the prospects we now face.

Over the last two months through my personal letters, through my extensive personal discussions with your emissary, through communications via Dr. Kissinger, General Haig, and Ambassador Bunker, and through daily consultations in Paris, I have kept you scrupulously informed of the progress of the negotiations. I have sought to convey to my best judgment of what is in our mutual interest. I have given you every opportunity to join with me in bringing peace with honor to the people of South Vietnam.

General Haig's mission now represents my final effort to point out to you the necessity for joint action and to convey my irrevocable intention to proceed, preferably with your cooperation but, if necessary, alone.

Recent events do not alter my conclusion. Although our negotiations with Hanoi have encountered certain obstacles, I want you to have no misunderstanding with regard to three basic issues:

1st we may still be on the verge of reaching an acceptable agreement at any time.

2nd Hanoi's current stalling is prompted to a great degree by their desire to exploit the public dissension between us. As Hanoi obviously realizes, this works to your grave disadvantage.

3rd as I have informed Hanoi, if they meet our minimum remaining requirements, I have every intention of proceeding rapidly to a settlement.

You are also aware of certain military actions which will have been initiated prior to General Haig's arrival. As he will explain to you, these actions are meant to convey to the enemy my determination to bring the conflict to a rapid end - - as well as to show what I am prepared to do in case of violation of the agreement. I do not want you to be left, under any circumstances, with the mistaken impression that these actions signal a willingness or intent to continue U.S. military involvement if Hanoi meets the requirements for a settlement which I have set.

If the present lack of collaboration between us continues, and if you decide not to join us in proceeding now to a settlement, it can only result in a fundamental change in the character of our relationship. I am convinced that your refusal to join us would be an invitation to disaster to the loss of all that we together have fought for over the past decade. It would be inexcusable above all because we will have lost a just and honorable alternative

I have asked General Haig to obtain your answer to this absolutely final offer on my part for us to work together in seeking a settlement along the lines I have approved or to go our separate ways. Let me emphasize in conclusion that General Haig is not coming to Saigon for the purpose of negotiating with you. The time has come for us to present a united front in negotiating with our enemies and you must decide now whether you desire to continue to work together or whether you want me to seek a settlement with the enemy which serves U.S. interests alone.

Sincerely,
Richard M. Nixon

19 Dec 72

Excerpts from Memorandum of Conversation

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 860, For the President's Files (Winston Lord)—China Trip/Vietnam, Sensitive Camp David, Vol. XXIII, Haig-Thieu mtgs

Saigon, December 19, 1972

Despite what is an apparent judgment in Hanoi that President Nixon would be unable to resume pressures against North Vietnam, the President had again made the courageous decision to renew the air war at a scale heretofore never contemplated. On Saturday last, the U.S. had reseeded all of the large magnetic mines in the Haiphong channel. Concurrently, manned reconnaissance over the entire length and breadth of North Vietnam had been reestablished. This morning, the U.S. launched a series of air raids against targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area utilizing over 120 B-52 aircraft, together with F-111 and A-6 all weather fighter bombers — strikes which would continue throughout the day.

The target list was expanded to include targets which had heretofore been forbidden to the military. President Nixon was determined to continue these strikes at this maximum intensity for a three-day period, after which a more normal but intense pace would be maintained. This action, on the part of the President, would be strongly resented by many in the U.S. and especially those in the Congress who had long opposed the bombing of North Vietnam. It was designed to again convey to Hanoi that they could not trifle with President Nixon.

More importantly, however, the action which was now underway would underline to Hanoi the determination of the President to enforce the provisions of any political settlement that might be arrived at. President Thieu also should draw appropriate conclusions from the President's actions. There is little doubt that these actions would prove to be another severe political liability in the United States.

The President was now more determined than ever to proceed with an agreement if Hanoi again demonstrated the reasonableness which it had shown in October. Were President Thieu to view the current state of affairs from any other perspective it would be a grave mistake.

Thus, as President Nixon's December 17, 1972 letter confirmed, President Thieu should take no comfort from the present turn of events.

20 Dec 72

The worst day of LINEBACKER II came on 20 December. The first wave of B-52s attacked the Gia Lam and Yen Vien railroad yards in Hanoi. Two bombers were downed by SAMs over their targets; a third was damaged and crashed in Thailand. General Meyer gave Admiral Moorer the news at 0949, adding that pilots said that the full moon and crystal-clear sky made it like daylight so that the North Vietnamese could track aircraft optically. F-4s were dropping corridors of chaff to blind the radars, but optical tracking would make the chaff useless. Three more B-52s were lost in the third wave, which again hit Gia Lam. Over 220 SAMs were fired during the day, mostly in salvos.

20 Dec 72

Excerpts from Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 859

Washington, December 20, 1972

In a brief December 20 meeting with General Haig, President Thieu Turned Down the Draft Agreement. Haig brings a letter to Washington from Thieu to President Nixon explaining why the agreement is not acceptable.

20 Dec 72

B-52 (Brass 02) crew bails out over Thailand due to battle damage received over Hanoi.

Excerpts from Backchannel Message From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) in Saigon

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1020, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Gen. Haig's Vietnam Trip, Tohaig/Haigto & Misc., December 17-22, 1972

Washington, December 20, 1972.

It appears that 4 (and possibly 5) B-52s were lost during some 100 B-52 sorties over North Vietnam today. A seventh B-52 was damaged. Three were lost in the first wave, although one

plane crashed in friendly territory. The fourth (and possible fifth) plane was lost in the last strikes of the evening. The crew may be recovered in Laos. An A-6 also was lost. The number of B-52s over the Hanoi-Haiphong complex will be thirty daily from here on but maximum pressure will be continued using all assets. A broadened target list will be attacked and HAK approved going into buffer zone with extreme care to avoid PRC overflight.

21 Dec 72

Excerpts from Message From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1020, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Gen. Haig's Vietnam Trip, Tohaig/Haigto & Misc., December 17-22, 1972

Washington, December 21, 1972

1. It appears that we may have lost three B-52s in today's 30 sorties. One is definitely down in North Vietnam and another is probably lost in the same area. A third is heading for Thailand, having sustained battle damage. It is not clear whether they will make it back to base or not. This could mean losses thus far amount to 12 B-52s which is on the high end of the 2-3% losses predicted statistically. The problem is that in the last two days the percentage of losses per sortie has been much greater.

2. The North Vietnamese today claimed that some POWs at the Hanoi Hilton had been injured by the U.S. bombing. This is undoubtedly a propaganda ploy although it is claimed that Joan Baez and others examined damaged areas of the compound. From the descriptions it seems likely that any damage may have resulted from B-52 shock waves. Defense claims the nearest target was a marshalling yard, some 700 yards away, and this was hit by visual means. DOD is making statement that we hit only military targets and that it is the responsibility of the North Vietnamese under the Geneva Convention to insure that prisoners are kept away from areas of danger.

3. Conditions were good for visual bombing today and will probably be good again tomorrow. Direct hits were scored on the Hanoi thermal power plant and the downtown railroad station. In addition, it is believed 9 SAM sites were destroyed by TAC air today.

21 Dec 72

Spectre 17 (AC-130) SAR. **First NRS recovery.** 40th ARRS HH-53 manned by Captain Shipman AC, 1Lt Rabaja CP, Sgt Bryant FE, Sgt Stephens and TSgt Walker PJs. HH-53 performed a night recovery mission over hostile territory in Laos where the crew hovered within 150 feet of the rugged terrain while two downed airmen were hoisted to safety.

They recovered Spectre 17J Williams and 17I Stevens. *SAR log*

P15#4 p48-49#4

First use of AC-130 in SAR done in conjunction with Spectre 17 SAR p135#7 P93#7

The level of B-52 sorties fell sharply on 21-22 December: 30 over Hanoi / Haiphong area and 30 elsewhere in SEA. Two B-52's were downed over Hanoi.

22 Dec 72

Jackal 33 SAR, F-111, downed in NVN *SAR log*

30 B-52s bombed Haiphong. None were shot down or damaged

23 Dec 72

The Republic of South Vietnam announced a 24-hour Christmas truce commencing on December 24 at 1800 hours.

Second day on which no B-52s were downed or damaged

24 Dec 72

On 24 December, SAC made some crucial changes in tactics. The entire bomber force's time over target was compressed into fifteen to twenty minutes. That allowed chaff to be laid in an elliptical pattern blanketing the entire target area, instead of being dispensed in corridors along the bombers' entry and exit routes. Also, the North Vietnamese could fire fewer SAMs because bombers would be gone by the time launchers were reloaded. Thirty B-52s struck railroad yards without loss.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971-1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p 297

25 Dec 72

President Nixon orders a bombing pause during Christmas

26 Dec 72

The U.S. resumed heavy bombing of North Vietnam.

116 B-52s struck ten targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. One bomber was downed by SAMs; another was damaged and crashed in Thailand.

26 Dec 72

Excerpts from Diary Entry by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)

Source: National Archives, RG 218, Records of the Chairman, Moorer Diary, July 1970-July 1974

Washington, December 26, 1972

Telecon/Out—to *General Meyer* (Secure)

Hanoi reported a shoot-down over the city. We are not sure of it yet. The one that is damaged heading for DaNang is trying to nurse it back to base. Country is mighty lucky that we have got the crews that will press on to the target in the face of heavy opposition, Meyer said. In view of the general attitude of the Country it is miraculous to have this courage and determination.

We only had a four hour window in this whole time to use LGB's on the Hanoi power plant and they made it in there. I told him he had authority to keep striking Lang Dang railroad yards. We want to put it completely out of business. Told him we were looking at some of those Army training areas as targets for the B-52's.

General Meyer thinks we are really running them out of SAMs and I agree.

27 Dec 72

MACV announced that from December 18 to 25, the U.S. flew 147 B-52 missions and more than 1,000 tactical fighter strikes against 68 specific targets in North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel. Twelve B-52 bombers were lost primarily to SAMs - over 600 of which were launched against the aircraft.

27 Dec 72

HH-53 serial number 69-5788 was lost in SEA on 27 December 1972. The aircraft suffered battle damage and was forced to land in an unfriendly area of Laos. The crew was picked up by another HH-53 and HQ 7 AF decided to destroy the Grounded Jolly Green 73. An A-7 destroyed the helicopter.

40th ARRS Jolly 73 AC 788 received heavy ground fire trying to rescue Jackel 33B, near Hanoi. It had to land near the Fishes Mouth with low fuel and an inoperative probe. After the crew – Captain Shapiro, Captain Pereira, Sgt Rouhier, TSgt Carlson and A1C Jones PJs, and Sgt Cockerill photographer were transferred to Jolly 63. Jolly 63 crewed by Lt Long, Lt Ackerson, Sgt Foy, Sgt Hammock, Sgt Mueller, and Sgt Strong proceeded to Ch86 to off load Captain Pereira who had a broken arm. Jolly 54, the #4 backup bird landed near Jolly 73 to recover classified equipment but was driven off by hostile fire. Sandys received the order to destroy Jolly 73 to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. Captain Rereira, Jolly 73 CP being evacuated to Clark AB. *SAR log*

27 Dec 72

B-52 (Ash 02) crew bails out due to battle damage over Thailand. Crew rescued by Jollys and Pedros except for one crewmember who caught a Thai commercial bus back to NKP

28 Dec 72

Excerpts from Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 45, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Cables, Dec. 1972–Apr. 1975

Washington, December 28, 1972

1. We plan to make following announcement at 10:00 a.m. Washington time on Saturday, December 30: "Negotiations between the United States and NVN will be resumed on January 8. Technical talks between experts of the two sides will be resumed on January 2".
2. We plan to cease bombing above the 20th parallel at approximately 1900 hours (Washington time) on Friday, December 29.
3. President would like you to give advance word of these developments to President Thieu. You should give no other explanation but be sure that there is no mistaking our firm intention to proceed along the lines which Haig told him and that we expect cooperation.

29 Dec 72

Sixty B- 52s struck 3 Hanoi/Haiphong targets without loss. Crews sighted only four MIGs and very few SAMs. The North Vietnamese were running out of SAMs

Linebacker II ends when the North Vietnamese agree to return to peace talks in Paris and negotiate seriously for an end to the war. These massive air strikes help persuade North Vietnam to conclude Paris peace negotiations. A total of 15 B-52's and 13 other aircraft were shot down in a twelve day period between 18 – 29 December.

During the 11 days of the attack, 714 B-52 sorties and more than 1,000 fighter-bomber sorties dropped roughly 20,000 tons of bombs, mostly over the densely populated area between Hanoi and Haiphong. On 29 December 1972, after 11 days of intensive bombing, the North Vietnamese agreed to return to the talks. When the negotiators met again in early January, they quickly worked out a settlement. The Paris Peace Accords were signed on 23 January 1973 and a cease-fire went into effect five days later.

The cost included 15 B-52s lost; 42 crewmen were killed and 24 captured. A total of 1,321 SAMs were launched at American warplanes over North Vietnam, all but 71 of which were directed to counter Linebacker II operations. B-52s attracted 1,032 SAMs. All of the B-52 losses were hit by SAMs within ten miles of Hanoi.

29 Dec 72

37th ARRS deactivated at DaNang. The Pedro unit at DaNang is the last ARRS unit at DaNang and becomes a detachment of the 40th ARRS

Comments by Bill Preble: Tom Stone has an interesting final story about going back into DaNang a few years later with another PJ and crew to fly an H-3 back to Osan. The aircraft had been assigned to the JCRCC as part of that initial POW/MIA effort. They were there just one night but that little bit would sure make for an interesting story.

30 Dec 72

President Nixon announced a halt to the bombing above the 20th parallel

The Republic of South Vietnam announced a 24-hour New Year's truce commencing on December 31 at 1800 hours

31 Dec 72

A total of 15 B-52s and 13 other aircraft were reported shot down during Operation LINEBACKER 11 (a 12-day period from 18 through 29 December)

U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam was reduced to 24,000

In SEA during 1972, 109 aircrew members were rescued under combat conditions, while another 30 were saved under non-combat conditions. During the same time period, ARRS saved 167 other people under combat conditions and saved 70 more non-aircrew under non-combat conditions.

It has been argued that a new US strategy, initiated during 1968-1969, reached a successful culmination in 1972 by showing that the South Vietnamese could stand on their own. The weight of evidence in JCS records—particularly the material in Admiral Moorer's diary—does not support that argument. For President Richard

Nixon, Dr. Henry Kissinger, and Admiral Moorer, the outcome of the 1971 Laotian incursion raised grave doubts about whether American efforts to “Vietnamize” the war would succeed. In May 1972, the collapse at Quang Tri convinced them that the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces could not cope with the North Vietnamese attack and that American air power had become indispensable to the Saigon government’s survival. Thereafter, the administration’s actions can be characterized as attempts to insure that there would be at least a “decent interval” between the signing of peace accords and the dissolution of South Vietnam.

Walter S. Poole

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The War in Vietnam 1971–1973, Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, Office of Joint History, Washington, DC 2007, p. vii

¹ United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam. *1972 – 1973 Command History*

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam. *1972 – 1973 Command History, Vol. 1* (Saigon: History Branch Joint Staff, 1973), 2.