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Pres file

Monday, September 11, 1967 -- 8:25 a.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith the pros and cons of attacks on the port of Haiphong and the four airfields (Phuc Yen, MIG base; Cat Bi, MIG capable; Mac Bai, air defense center; Hoc Mon, MIG capable and transport).  
*Graham*

Against bombing port of Haiphong:

- Difficult to avoid hitting Soviet and other ships.
- Alternative offloading facilities available with inconvenience, either across the beaches or at other smaller ports.
- Weather prospects make it likely that attacks could only be intermittent and, therefore, closing of the Haiphong port by bombing may not be possible unless accompanied by intensive mining of harbor approaches.
- Bombing debate would intensify, both here and abroad, as risks of confrontation with Soviet Union and Communist China increased or were judged to have increased.
- Heavy civilian casualties probably unavoidable.

Pro:

- Bombing of North Viet Nam has increased normally large dependence on imports for both military and civilian purposes, notably food imports;
- Haiphong warehouses probably contain substantial stocks of military and civilian goods.
- Effective bombing of Haiphong may bring Hanoi close to necessity for decision on ending the war -- or asking USSR and Communist China radically to enlarge war under circumstances where a positive response from Moscow and Peiping is not foregone conclusion, given state of war in the South and difficulties of intervening effectively in the South.

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-360

By 18, NARA, Date 4-13-95

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Airfields:

Pro:

- Would reduce not merely MIG attacks on our aircraft but free attacking aircraft from anxiety and diversion, increased bombing accuracy, reduce number of jettisoned bombs and improve pilot morale.
- Although remaining MIGs may operate from CHICOM bases thereafter, their effectiveness would be reduced because of their short range.
- Little civilian damage and few, if any, casualties.
- Little or no increase in public controversy over bombing in U. S. or abroad.

Against:

- Attacks are not essential: direct and indirect effects of MIGs are not a vital factor.
- Dispersal of MIGs on airfields, revetments, etc. make it possible that strictly military cost benefit ratio of attacks unfavorable: aircraft and pilot losses may outweigh direct and indirect military gains.
- Possible shifting of aircraft to CHICOM bases would raise issue of sanctuary and increased pressure for airfield attacks inside Communist China.

W. W. Rostow

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