

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 1967
6:45 p. m.

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MR. PRESIDENT:

You asked for the strongest case for continuing our bombing of North Viet Nam.

1. It is true that it can be demonstrated that the bombing of North Viet Nam reduces the supply capacity from North to South Viet Nam to a level which will cut off the flow of men and supplies from the North; nor can it be proved that the flow of men and supplies from the North is less than it would be if we stopped bombing, although this is a matter on which our judgments can honestly differ.

2. It can be demonstrated, however, that the bombing of North Viet Nam has imposed these costs on North Viet Nam for its aggression:

-- At little cost in civilian casualties and at acceptable costs in our loss rates, the bombing has severely curtailed North Viet Nam's industrial and agricultural production.

-- Therefore, there has been a radical increase in North Viet Nam's requirement for foreign aid in order to sustain her war effort and to sustain her economy at minimum levels (imports up from 2,100 metric tons per day in 1965 to 4,300 in 1967; Soviet aid up from \$100 million to \$700 million annually).

-- It has required the diversion of up to 600,000 workers to defend against or counter the effects of the bombing.

-- It has increased significantly the number of men and tons which must be dispatched from the North to get one man or one ton into South Viet Nam.

In addition, bombing across the DMZ has proved an absolutely essential element in reducing the enemy pressure across the DMZ. That pressure in all its forms now constitutes about half the total war in South Viet Nam.

3. If we stopped bombing North Viet Nam without compensatory action on the other side, these are the costs we would take:

-- They would be able to put men and supplies into the South at lower cost. The resources available to the North would be increased. All these resources

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would, of course, not be immediately thrown into the war in the South; but it is virtually certain that they would be able to apply against the South some increase in pressure.

-- It would be a great deal easier for the men in Hanoi (and their allies who carry the aid burden) to prolong the war and continue the strain on South Viet Nam -- and the U.S. -- at lower cost to themselves.

4. To refresh your memory, I attach from a recent memorandum to you extracts from the CIA estimate on specific effects of the bombing of North Viet Nam.

W. J. R.

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Some Comments on: "ROLLING THUNDER: The 1967
Campaign Against LOC's"

1. Paragraphs 2 and 3 below indicate how a selective use of evidence from the CIA analysis conveys a somewhat different -- and more positive -- interpretation of the impact of the bombing campaign. Paragraph 4 indicates a number of questions which need to be considered. -- even though they may be unanswerable -- to place the impact of the air campaign in perspective. Paragraphs 5 and 6 indicate two areas in which the presentation of the analysis may be deficient.

2. The bombing has had the following measurable effects:

- ". . . has brought North Vietnam's small modern industry to a standstill." p 10

- "About 80 per cent of the central electric power generating capacity is currently out of operation." p 10

- "The country's only modern cement plant -- at Haiphong -- ceased production in April 1967. . ." p 10

- "The country's only metallurgical plant . . . has ceased production for the same reasons." p 10

- "The only explosives plant has been out of operation for two years, and the production of apatite and coal, both previously exported in quantity, has been drastically reduced. One of the country's two textile plants has been heavily damaged, production in the small fertilizer and chemical industry has been curtailed, and the production of paper has been reduced by 80 per cent." p 10

- Dollar value of bombing damage: (p 12)

<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>Jan - Aug 1967</u>
68.7	112.4	158.4

- "Up to 600,000 persons are engaged in full-time or part-time work defending against or countering the effects of the bombing." p 12 (This is about equal to ARVN strength.)

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- "The movement of men and supplies has become more difficult and time-consuming, and a substantial volume of war and war-supporting material has been destroyed in transit." p 11 (Unfortunately, we have no good measurement of the impact.)

- "Since January 1965, destruction and damage to transport equipment has included 67 locomotives, 4,792 rail freight cars, 8,371 trucks, and 19,211 watercraft." p 29

- In the northern part of North Vietnam "most of the serious damage to the railroads is probably being repaired by the professional Chinese construction (and air defense) troops numbering 30,000 to 50,000." p 68

- In 1966, because of bombing and weather, NVN's rice crops was about 300,000 metric tons short. They may experience a similar shortfall in 1967. (This point is not specifically addressed in the analysis.)

3. As a consequence of these measurable effects -- plus those we cannot measure -- there has been a radical increase in foreign aid requirements to allow North Vietnam to continue the war and to sustain the economy at minimum levels.

- Soviet aid is up from about \$100 to \$700 million annually.

- "Imports into Haiphong have increased greatly, reaching an average of almost 5,200 tons a day in the second quarter of 1967 and averaging 4,300 tons a day during the first eight months of the year, compared with 2,100 tons per day in the first quarter of 1965.) p 33

4. Nevertheless, as the analysis states: "It is clear that logistics problems have not placed a relevant ceiling on force structures or levels of combat." It is perhaps true that "even a more intense interdiction campaign in the North would fail to reduce the flow of supplies sufficiently to restrict military operations." These conclusions, however, leave some important questions unanswered:

- If there is such an excess capacity in NVN's transportation system, why are they not utilizing it more fully?

- If there is such excess capacity, why has NVN gone to such lengths to repair its transport system and defend it against attack?

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- If the requirement for military supplies in the DMZ, Laos, and South Vietnam is only 85 tons a day and if this is substantially less than transport capacity, why don't the North Vietnamese double or triple the volume of supplies so that communist units in the South could double or triple the number of days a month they can fight?

- If NVN's total military and civilian requirements are only about 3,500 tons a day, why have they been importing at the rate of 5,100 tons a day for the last eight months?

- If total requirements are only 3,500 tons a day, why did NVN move 55,300 tons a day on its transport system in 1966?

5. The analysis also concludes that "Prospects are dim that an air interdiction campaign against LOC's leading out of Haiphong alone could cut off the flow of seaborne imports and isolate Haiphong." However, the analysis points out that:

- "Layover times of freighters at Haiphong averaged ten days in the first six months of 1966, but increased to nearly 17 days in the third quarter of 1966. . . Similarly, the large increase in imports in the second quarter of 1967 was followed by increased layover times that reached a peak average of 33 days for freighters clearing the port in August." p 37

- "Over the past 18 months, there has been a notable spillover of cargoes into areas adjacent to the port area at Haiphong. Vacant lots, parks, and even streets and sidewalks have been utilized for storage of cargoes." p 37

Furthermore, according to DIA, "air strikes have made it progressively more difficult for North Vietnam to move imports out of Vietnam." (TAB A) Reduced capacities of key lines of communication leading out of Haiphong have caused a shortfall of 1,700 short tons per day (according to our in-house mathematics, it should be almost 1,900 metric tons per day). Although DIA indicates that it would take only seven out of NVN's inventory of 300 lighters (250-ton capacity), the CIA analysis indicates that the extended delays already being experienced in unloading ocean freighters "are attributable primarily to poor port management and a possible shortage of lighter capacity." p 37. I do not see how CIA can then conclude that: "Attacks on transport routes around Haiphong almost certainly have not contributed significantly to the accumulation of goods in the port area." p 37. In my opinion, the bombing has been an important factor in port congestion in that:

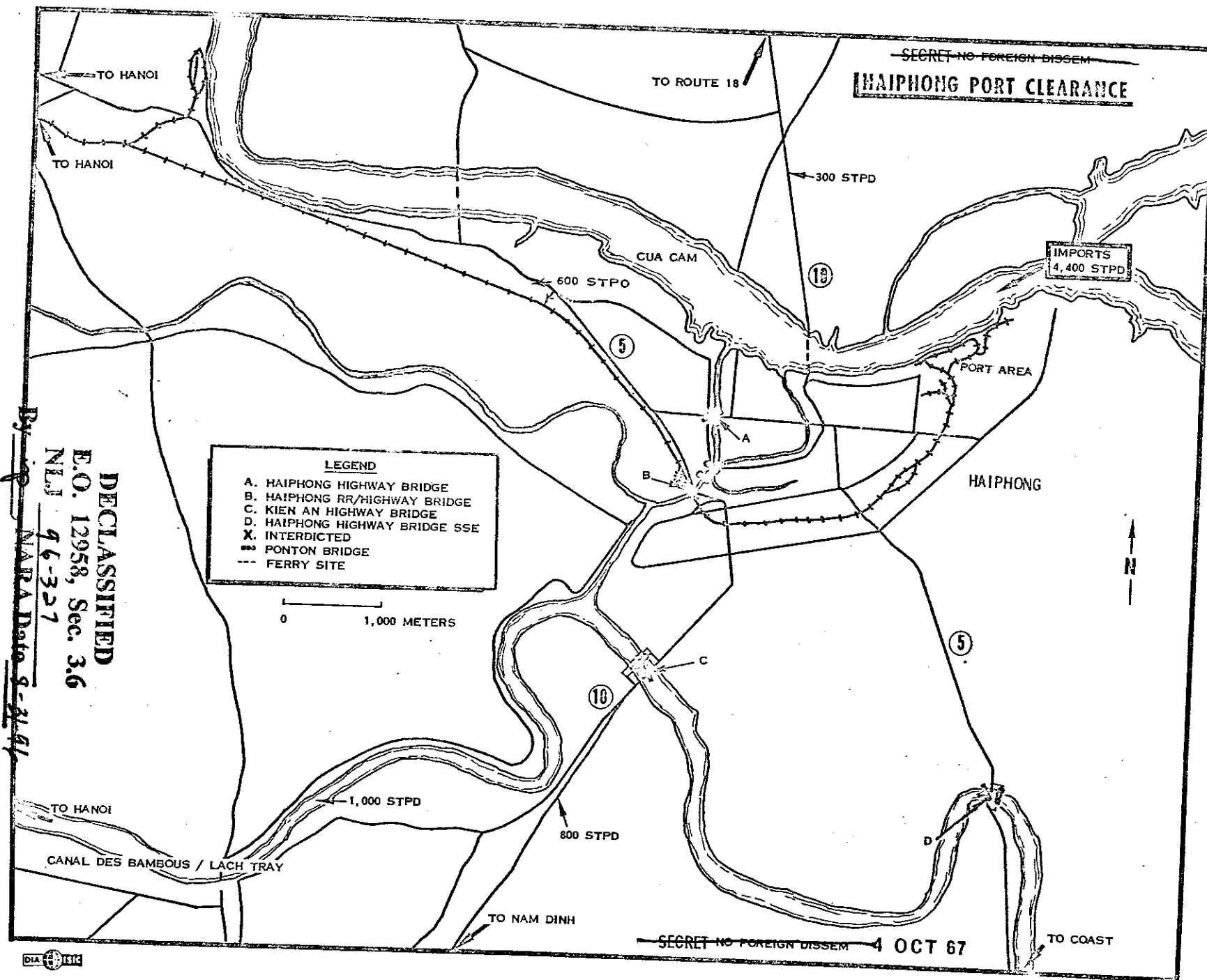
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- It created the need for additional imports in the first place.
- Attacks on the LOCs leading out of Haiphong have compounded the management problems of clearing the port.

6. The analysis states: "Through service has been maintained on all major rail lines with the exception of the rail connections in the immediate Hanoi area and the heavily pounded Hanoi-Vinh line." The attached chart (TAB B), however, shows a different way of looking at the picture -- length of time rail lines are closed is down -- but number of days on which shuttle operations are required is up.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLIJ 96-327
By NARA Date 8-21-94

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NLJ 96-327
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