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Pres file

Mr. President:

Herewith a message from Bill Sullivan, which states:

- trucks damaged and destroyed in Laos during November are already over 600;

- practically none of the dry-season cargo is getting as far south as Route 9; and

- if the rate continues, North Vietnam's truck inventory could be wiped out by the end of the year -- which would constitute a major but unpublicizable victory;

General Wheeler has asked DIA to evaluate the situation.

In the meantime, some preliminary observations:

- There has been a manyfold increase in trucks sighted, damaged, and destroyed compared with any previous period (Tab B).

- Most of the traffic has been in the upper panhandle.

- Truckable mileage is 600 compared to 300 last November and 400 in September 1967, although only relatively short segments are in use.

- Surveillance has been more extensive this year.

- Weather has permitted large-scale trucking beginning the last week of October, whereas last year traffic flow was restricted until late November and December.

Increased truck activity could result from a combination of the following:

- enemy intent to accelerate military activity during the current dry season (Loch Ninh and Dak To).

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- resupply effort to replace supplies expended during heavy enemy activity in I Corps this year;

- resupply to replace large amount of supplies destroyed in Laos (secondary explosions: 3,929 from Nov 1966 - Sep 1967 versus 1,224 from Nov 1965 - Sep 1966); and

- enemy effort to preposition supplies farther south in anticipation of the barrier.

W. W. Rostow