

*for file*

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Wednesday, April 3, 1968  
9:40 a. m.

MR. PRESIDENT:

Herewith, as requested, the reasons why we had to continue bombing up to the 20th parallel:

1. At this time of year, the primary supply routes to the frontiers of South Vietnam run through Laos. Specifically, Route 8 running through the Nape Pass; Route 15 running through Mu Gia, are critical for the enemy's supply of the front against Khe Sanh; A Shan valley, which is a supply route for attack against Hme; and the so-called B-3 front including supplies for attack against Kontum, Pleiku, and Ban Me Thuot.

2. In addition, we have to attack Route 7, which runs northwest from Vinh into the Plaine des Jarres in Laos. For Souvanna Phouma, this is critical, notably because an attack is expected in the Plaine des Jarres area at any time by North Vietnamese regulars. It is tactically important to include Thanh Hoa for two reasons:

First, because it is a major concentration and trans-shipment point for both men and supplies going into South Vietnam and Laos;

Second, because it has an airfield which, along with the airfield at Vinh, has recently been active. We have good intelligence that they have been trying to move some MIGs south to attack our B-52's which have done critically important work in breaking up the siege of Khe Sanh and will continue to operate heavily in the northern part of South Vietnam, including the major supply base in A Chau valley.

3. The reason that the President had to take this matter so seriously was because we have the firmest kind of evidence that the enemy is using the supply routes to the South with an intensity we have never seen before, probably in an effort to mobilize forces for a second major wave of attack before the end of the winter-spring offensive. Specifically, Gen. Momyer has told the President that they are for the first time running their trucks at night with their lights on. We have [REDACTED] evidence that they are sending down replacement forces to make up their losses before this second wave of attack, perhaps up to 20,000 men (see Tab A).

1.3(a)(4)

4. So urgently do they regard this requirement that they are even uprooting and sending South, North Vietnamese Regional Forces normally engaged in local defense (see Tab B).

5. In making a proposal at this time, therefore, the President had to balance the most forthcoming offer possible with his responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief.

W. W. R.

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