

RELEASE OF AIR STRIKE INFORMATION

The release of information on air strikes in North Vietnam must take into account considerations of military security. Official briefers as well as all other U. S. and Vietnamese civil and military personnel are under instructions to observe necessary security requirements in providing information to correspondents.

However, under the circumstances existing in Vietnam, correspondents frequently will come into possession of such information. In order to provide the maximum protection possible to our military forces, the American Mission requests all correspondents on a voluntary basis to refrain from filing such information or discussing it over communications facilities. This request is made purely for reasons of military security and is based on the assumption that the press corps is prepared to cooperate in observing necessary military security.

The following represents a listing of ground rules on information pertaining to air strikes which must be observed by official briefers and other American and Vietnamese official personnel. It is made available to correspondents in order to provide a guide to their own observance of what falls under the heading of military security and also to forestall questions which may not be answered at briefings.

The following information will normally be released as soon as available:

1. Target or target hit, giving location and general category of target.
2. Statement as to whether it was VNAF, U. S. or joint VNAF/U. S. strike.
3. Whether aircraft were land-based and/or naval aircraft. Names of carriers when naval aircraft are involved.
4. Number of crew members who have been picked-up. Total number of aircraft down will not be released as long as it can adversely affect SAR efforts on behalf of crew members not yet retrieved.
5. Time of attack.
6. General characterization of success of the mission.
7. Ordnance expended in general terms such as 250 lb frags, 500 lb general purpose bombs, rockets, 50 calibre ammo, 20mm. Tonnage of ordnance in round numbers.
8. Number of strike aircraft in mission in round numbers. Number of associated support aircraft in round numbers but differentiated from strike aircraft figures.
9. Type of aircraft involved.
10. Weather enroute and over the target during the strike.

11. Enemy anti-aircraft ground fire in general terms as to volume and type.
12. Pilot sightings of unfriendly aircraft.

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The following restrictions will be observed for security reasons:

1. No information on aircraft taking off for strikes, or on strikes actually in progress or on aircraft enroute to or returning from the target areas. Strikes will be confirmed and available information released as soon as possible after the return of aircraft to their bases.

2. No official comment or identification of names of land bases, either in or out of Vietnam, or any indication of location of bases from which aircraft launched.

3. No information on number of aircraft damaged. Total aircraft lost will be released only when SAR operations have been completed and release of information cannot adversely affect SAR efforts on behalf of crew members not yet retrieved.

4. No tactical specifics such as altitudes, courses, speeds, angle of attack. May use general terms such as "low and fast."

5. No information on planned or future strikes.

6. No confirmation or discussion of planned strikes which do not take place for weather or other reasons.

7. No official comment or discussion on rules of engagement.

8. No information on enemy air reaction other than that actually seen by strike personnel, or on effectiveness on anti-aircraft ground fire and damage to U. S. aircraft.

Members of the Military Assistance Command press information office are available to discuss with you any questions you may have in regard to the above request.

/ s / t / Barry Zorthian
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