

Jan 65 after Prestridge deal for 1st
time during Proj Sherwood Forest,
the first fire & storm project

1203, App III, 74

EN K-GP-A-CMDO-315-SU-RE 1961-1965

Declassified

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R.M. 6/16/65

PA 003

HISTORICAL DATA REQUESTED

BY 309th A.C.S.

8 MAR. 65 - 30 JUNE 65

PA 6/16/65

No. Q275324

PA 6/16/65

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INTERVALS:
10 YEARS.

10 YEARS

PA 6/16/65

Project Period

Downgraded
14 APR 70
Holland C. [Signature]

T-3

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SUBJECT: Summary of Defoliation Operations from 8 March 1965 to 30 June 1965.

I. Three types of targets were defoliated during the requested report period; Lines of Communications, Crop Destruction, and Safe Haven Areas.

A. Lines of Communication - Project 20-21. Operations on this project were started on 1 March 1965 and completed on 19 March 1965. The target, as described by the Historical Report the the 315th Air Commando Group, was the main shipping channel from Saigon to the South China Sea. Rung Sat Special Zone Headquarters had received reports of Viet Cong activity against ships bringing supplies to and from Saigon. Sniper activity and attempts to mine the shipping channel were common. Increased aerial surveillance due to defoliation could possibly decrease this activity. Defoliation operations began on 1 March 1965, and the period from that date until 7 March 1965 has been covered on the preceeding report, sent to the 315th Air Commando Group Historical Report. Statistical data for this report covers the period from 8 March 1965 to 19 March 1965 when operations were completed on the requested target. Seventeen sorties were flown in four days and a total of twelve hours, fifty-five minutes of flying time was used to dispense twelve thousand gallons of chemical. Note: "Orange" was dispensed for a test in conjunction with "purple". The defoliation aircraft were hit only twice by hostile ground fire.

B. Crop Destruction - Project 2-18. The purpose of the project was to destroy crops in designated areas on Binh Dinh Provience, in and surrounding the An Lao Valley. The intent of this action was to force the Villagers in the target areas to leave their homes for new ones under government control, and to create logistics problems for the Viet Cong, by destroying their immediate source of food. Nine days of defoliation operations, starting on 27 March 1965 and ending on 18 April 1965 were used to complete the requested operation. Thirty-seven sorties were flown which produced one hundred-seven hours and twenty minutes flying time. Twenty seven thousand,

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one hundred gallons of chemical were used. Enemy ground-fire resulted in nine hits on the defoliation aircraft.

C. Safe Haven Areas -- Project 20-44. This project is the largest defoliation operation attempted in the Republic of South Viet Nam. Designated coastal areas in Bac Lieu, Vinh Binh, Ba Kuyen, and Vinh Binh Provinces were to be defoliated, as requested by ARVN IV Corps Commander and the Province Chiefs of the affected provinces. Viet Cong activity in the Mekong Delta could be contributed to these coastal strongholds where arms factories and repair shops, hospitals, and training camps operated with almost complete immunity from government attack. Supplies for the Viet Cong are brought into these areas in shallow draft sampans which are easily concealed by the dense mangrove swamp which covers the area. Defoliation on these areas would improve aerial surveillance, and any Viet Cong activity could be noted and installations bombed. Defoliation operations began on 30 April 1965. ALE aircraft from 1 Hoa were used on each sortie to prebomb the area and provide close air support. A forward air controller was also utilized to mark suspected automatic weapons installations. Defoliation operations continued until 25 May 1965, and during this period, eighty four sorties were flown. Ground fire had been extremely heavy and the defoliation aircraft were hit one hundred and twenty four times. Seventy seven thousand, six hundred gallons of chemical were dispensed. One hundred forty five hours, fifteen minutes were flown. Five C-123 crewmen were slightly injured by hostile ground fire. Approximately 70% of the requested areas had been defoliated when 2nd Air Division ordered a temporary suspension of defoliation operations in lieu of heavy ground fire.

II. Conclusion - All defoliation operations were temporarily suspended on 25 May 1965. A reevaluation of defoliation was conducted by MACV J-2. Defoliation as a weapon was judged desirable however PACAF is still concerned about the safety of defoliation air crews. A study of fighter tactics determined that the only way to provide effective fighter cover would be to increase the amount of fighters now being used

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proportion to the number of defoliation aircraft and their "Exposure Time" over the target. The ALE's at Bien Hoa are presently engaged in training Vietnamese pilots and this mission has priority over support for defoliation. Defoliation aircrews and aircraft will fly cargo missions until ALE's become available.

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Jan increase to 6 crews

Stevens report p 5