

H/PS 315

Notes on Curtis LeMay

During WW II the operational fiction was that the USA did not engage in indiscriminate bombing of civilians. The fact was that when precision bombing was impossible the US bomber squadrons dropped their bomb loads indiscriminately.

This was termed area bombing.

Note: Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughter House Five" (the US fire bombing of the city of Dresden in February 15 and 16 1944, the US 8th Air Force sent 300 bombers over Dresden and the 200 the following day. This was after the Brits hit the city on February 14th night attack and dropped 650,000 incendiary bombs.

This was an example of what deliberate terror bombing of German population centers not necessarily connected to the Nazi war effort.

In the Pacific theatre the area bombing of Japanese cities began. The most noted commander of this aspect of the Pacific war was General Curtis LeMay, who was given the credit for devising the strategy of low-level night attacks with incendiary bombs.

The death and destruction was devastating. On night of March 9-10 1945 LeMay's XXI Bomber Command dropped 1,667 tons of incendiary bombs on 15 square miles of the most densely populated districts of Tokyo. It ignited a firestorm that killed more than 85,000 people. (That's more than were killed in either Hiroshima or Nagasaki).

Consummation or apogee of area bombing followed 5 months later with the use of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. . .

LeMay showed no remorse about the slaughter. He described the firebombing of Japan in uncompromising terms:

“We scorched and boiled and baked to death more people in Tokyo , , , then went up in vapor in Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.”

He did realize that what he was engaged in was a war crime but since he was on the winning side there would be no retribution .

* It was LeMay when he was Chief of Staff of the US Air Force during the early years of the Vietnam War that he planned to bomb the No. Vietnamese back to the Stone Age.”

In the end LeMay held onto his guns (or bombs) when in 1968 he ran as the VP candidate on the American Independent Party as George Wallace, the arch segregationist, running mate.

LeMay didn't help very much Wallace's presidential bid when he insisted that a few well placed Nukes could reverse the tide in Vietnam and thereby made himself a laughingstock.

* R. Rhodes
It's T Refused to allow massive
incendiary attacks on NO. Korean cities →
he May's Bombers carpet bombed the
countryside - producing over 2,000,000
NO. Korean civilian casualties.