

Dear Historian,

12/28/72

This is the kind of note I'd have made if I planned to go ahead with the book the early files of which you have, on SEAsia.. There is little thinking behind it, some of the time it took me to shave. Its real purpose is to provoke your thinking. I've got about a half-hour before breakfast, so it won't be detailed.

The bombing of RVN may mark one of the turning points in the conduct of war. There has never been anything like it.

Yet as long as it has been going on, there is no reduction in B52 losses. To anyone besides the kind of military we have and Nixonians, the losses are already intolerable.

They have not accomplished their alleged purposes.

However, they may have had domestic purposes, if these are minister enough people, and they may well succeed in those purposes, generally the further dulling of the national conscience and tendency to be more willing to accept authoritarianism.

They show, if it is true that all these planes have been shot down by SAMs, that intensive bombing can't take out all SAM sites and that even in the modern world, with all its sophisticated gear and with an effective naval blockade, a country that does not produce them can be supplied with enormous quantities of them, in this case I would say without detection.

This also reflects enormous USSR production, especially if these SAMs had been delivered before the blockade. The Pentagon says they are ~~25%~~ 2-3% effective. Take either figure for planes lost and you've got lots of SAMs already used.

And this is by a country with no aviation to amount to anything. It means that an attack of this sort against a country with any aviation at all, while it could be terrible devastating, would extort such losses from the attacker that he would not dare, except with atomic weaponry, and that would be absolutely insane when he could do it with rockets without such losses. Or, the end of old-fashioned war except in retaliation against national-liberation movements. This shows that there is can't work against a determined people. Or, the end of the kind of thing we have done in SEAsia/ I am aware this may seem optimistic, and it may be.. However, as of this moment and after this little thought I think it means that aviation can be a decisive factor in wars of national liberation only in Congo-like situations. You should remember that this is the culmination of the greatest bombing in history, which preceded it, and after all the long years of aerial supremacy. It means the militarist dream of bombing back into the stone age can be done with nukes only.

There were those in the AF who so conceived years ago. After it was developed and had been in use for some years they had a project for developing special radar that would permit the B52 to bomb from tree-top level, a terrain radar that at its great speed would lift it above obstructions. Although our military and politicians considered the Russians barbarians, they never engaged in such bombing in World War II, despite the 2,000,000 mostly-civilian casualties they sustained. They also believed it ineffective, and one of the big military secrets of our post WWII studies is that even our own military studies confirmed the Russians - the intensive bombings of Germany were not a decisive factor. And we virtually wiped some cities out. The damage was incredible.

I don't think that under Nixon and with the commitment the military has to its VN policies and its self-concepts we'll be hearing what I say now, but I believe it will become military thinking of only because they have to realize they have come to the point where the economy can't sustain these kinds of costs that are wastes. At some point someone will do the rest of the counting of what the military is now costing, like the retirement costs. With the officer corps alone in a few years this will exceed the national budgets of a number of modern countries, I'm sure. Or, we are raving maniacs, despite our self-concept, and the military are the most maniacal.

If the losses are as great as RVN claims, we may have a chance for a test in the coming Congress, for the military, unless it has learned, will be seeking replacements. The aviation interests, of course, will lend their considerable support to it. But it provides the opportunity for a fight and the statistics. Then it will depend on how the press treats it, to a degree. The economy of each constituency is now largely influenced by military spending and it is more difficult for a legislator to survive military opposition.

Meanwhile, we make Genghis Khan look like Jesus Christ. In time, that should take its toll. I hope soon!.