

Highlights of the Period

OCTOBER, 1966

McNamara, returning from South Vietnam, tells President in memorandum that "pacification has if anything gone backward" and air war has not "either significantly affected infiltration or cracked the morale of Hanoi." Recommends limit or increase in forces, and consideration of halt in bombing, or shifting targets from Hanoi-Haiphong to infiltration routes, to "increase the credibility of our peace gestures."

Joint Chiefs, also in memorandum to President, oppose any cutback in bombing; propose "sharp knock," including strikes at locks, dams and rail yards.

NOVEMBER, 1966

McNamara gives Joint Chiefs new troop authorization: 469,000 by end of June, 1968, below military requests. Study comments that from now on "the judgment of the military . . . would be subject to question."

McNamara tells President there is "no evidence" that addition of more troops "would substantially change the situation," and that bombing "is yielding very small marginal returns" with "no significant impact" on war in the South.

JANUARY, 1967

Central Intelligence Agency study estimates 1965-1966 air-war casualties in North Vietnam to be 36,000—"about 80 per cent civilians"—making civilian-casualty total about 29,000.

FEBRUARY, 1967

President approves "spring air offensive" including attacks on power plants, mining of rivers, relaxation of restrictions on air raids near Hanoi and Haiphong.

MARCH, 1967

General Westmoreland asks 200,000 more troops, for a total U.S. force of 671,616.

APRIL, 1967

Joint Chiefs transmit Westmoreland troop request, call for mobilization of reserves, propose "an extension of the war" into Laos and Cambodia and possibly North Vietnam.

President asks Westmoreland if enemy cannot increase troop strength and adds: "If so, where does it all end?"

MAY, 1967

Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy opposes ground operations against North Vietnam as likely to provoke China; also warns—as does C.I.A.—of possible Soviet reaction to mining Haiphong.

Walt W. Rostow, in memo to President, urges cutback in bombing.

McNamara-McNaughton memo to President recommends cutback to 20th Parallel, troop increase of only 30,000 and what study calls basically "a recommendation that we accept a compromise outcome" and "scaled-down goals."

Joint Chiefs, in four memorandums within three days, renew proposals for troop increases, air attacks and possibly "limited ground action in North Vietnam." They say McNamara's "drastic changes" in policy "would undermine" U.S. presence.

JUNE, 1967

McNamara and Westmoreland agree on compromise troop increase of 55,000; approved by President.

JULY, 1967

President approves new bombing targets within previously restricted areas around Haiphong and Hanoi.

AUGUST, 1967

President authorizes 16 more targets "and expansion of armed reconnaissance"; new targets include rail line in formerly proscribed China buffer zone only eight miles from border.