

Nixon Viet Bombing Tops All of LBJ's

WASHINGTON (CDN) — More bombs have been dropped on Indochina since President Nixon took office with an announced policy of winding down the war than were dropped during the four years of escalation under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

This fact has been established by figures made available by the Pentagon.

A record total of 3,414,555 tons of bombs have been dropped under President Nixon compared to 3,179,808 tons under President Johnson during his four-year term.

The Nixon tonnage covers the first three years of his presidency plus the first four months of 1972. The Johnson tonnage was accumulated over the four years of 1965 through 1968.

April 6

Like Johnson, Nixon is now conducting a sustained bombing offensive against North Vietnam. It began April 6 — a week after the North Vietnamese launched a massive offensive in South Vietnam.

Although figures are not yet available for May and June, the 3.4 million tons of bombs dropped through

April exceeds by 300,000 tons the 3.1 million tons dropped during World War I and the Korean war combined.

President Nixon's air war, like President Johnson's, is continuing the cratering of the country. From 1965 through 1971, some 26 million craters were created by the bombing of Indochina according to an expert estimate.

From 1971 on, it is estimated B-52 bombers alone have been adding about 100,000 new craters each month.

Professors

These estimates were published in the May issue of

the Scientific American by Arthur H. Westing, biology professor at Windham College, and E. W. Pfeiffer, professor of zoology at the University of Montana, after visiting Indochina to study the long-term ecological effects of the bombing.

Nixon has cut the U.S. forces in Vietnam from nearly 550,000 to 61,900. Army troops make up 40,900 of this figure. However, to prosecute the air war, he has had to increase the off-shore Navy from 13,000 men in January to 43,000.

At the same time, the Air Force personnel in Thailand have increased from 32,500 in January to about 40,000. The Air Force, which operates F-4s and B-52s out of Thailand, has reopened a base making a total of six in use now.

For the first time in the history of the Vietnam war, there are more American airmen involved than American ground troops.

'Major War'

It has become, in the words of Vice Adm. William Mack, former commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, a "major war." Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird estimates it is costing the United States \$500 million a month — or more than \$16 million a day.

The Navy now has a fleet of 61 warships on station, including six aircraft carriers, 50 destroyers, and five cruisers. Last January there were only two carriers in a fleet that comprised not more than 15 to 20 ships.

Last January there were only 45 B-52 bombers on duty in Thailand and Guam. Today there are 200. This is twice the number used under President Johnson and it represents about half the total B-52 force in the Strategic Air Command.