

## Paper Radio

# Operation Popeye: using weather to kill people

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The idea first took hold in Saigon in August, 1963. The Diem regime was plagued by protesting Buddhists. Police would hurl tear gas at them, but the Buddhists would stand around, apparently unaffected by the noxious fumes. The Diem regime, frustrated and perplexed, did what it usually did when it had problems in those days. It asked the CIA for help.

A former Central Intelligence agent, in a recent interview for the NEW YORK TIMES, recalled that the agency then began taking notes on Buddhist demonstrations and found that while tear gas might have had little effect on the protestors' behavior — rain did. Whenever there was a rainstorm — and there are plenty of them in Vietnam — the Buddhists would duck for cover, or leave. And so, says the former CIA agent, "The agency got an Air America Beechcraft and had it rigged up with silver iodide. There was another demonstration, and we seeded the area. It rained."

Well, thought the masterminds of war in the Pentagon, if rain could work against the Buddhists, why not use it against enemy troops as well? And so Operation Popeye was born.

Since 1964, cloud-seeding operations have taken place experimentally at intermitten phases of the war, to muddy up the roads being used by enemy forces, to provide rain and cloud cover for our own operations, and to foul up enemy raids.

But during the most recent phase of the war, the cloud-seeding operations have intensified — leading some scientists and environmentalists to speak out, warning that the result of continued tam-

pering with the environment of Vietnam could lead to terrible flooding and ultimate human disaster.

When Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island got wind of the rain warfare, he began circulating a resolution around the Senate, calling on the United States to join in an international treaty that would outlaw "any use of environmental or geophysical modification activity as a weapon of war, or the carrying out of any research or experimentation with respect thereto." He persuaded thirteen other Senators to co-sponsor that resolution.

In recent months the concern over weather modification as a war technique was heightened by news of the development of a chemical, which when dropped into warm stratus clouds, produces a rain that has an acidic quality that promptly begins destroying mechanical equipment such as radar, trucks, and tanks.

Even U.S. State Department ex-

perts have warned that the effect of weather-warfare could have a far greater impact on civilian populations than on military combatants — and could in fact wipe out the food supplies in areas of the country where so-called "subsistence agriculture" is practiced.

The Pentagon, while refusing to comment officially on the reports of weather warfare (most of the information concerning it was disclosed in the latest batch of Pentagon Papers leaks), does comment unofficially: "What is worse, dropping bombs or rain?"

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Pacific News Service has now uncovered the robot plane.

In an article prepared for Aviation Week magazine, Pacific News Service has revealed how such robot planes will begin bombing North Vietnam within THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS.

Ah, the miracles of modern

technology. The bombers — modifications of Teledyne-Ryan 147 drones — will be launched from the South. The pilots of the drones will be able to watch their journey from a control station on the ground. In front of each pilot will be a television set that will give him virtually the same view that he would get if he were actually seated in the plane. Once the plane is over the target area, he'll simply press some control knobs next to the TV set, and — bombs away (the planes can carry payloads of 500- to 2,000-pound bombs). The robot bombers will then be returned to home base again — all by radio.

Pacific News Service says that the robot bombers were not expected to be available until 1974 — but the Pentagon ordered a speedup in development and production, and it has now been assured that the drones will be ready to do their duty in Indochina within the next 30 days.

Use of the robot planes will again enable the President to promise the American people that the Vietnam war can be carried out with minimal risk to American lives.

But, comments Pacific News Service: "As the Pentagon pours more and more money into the development of remotely controlled weapons, war will increasingly become a contest between machines — which do not bleed, die, get addicted to drugs, shoot their officers or refuse to fight. A pilot flying an RVP (Remotely Piloted Vehicle) does not look out of his window and wonder, 'Why am I doing this?' He does not watch the flak coming at him and swear he will never fly again."