

SF Examiner

# The Cost SEP 3 1972 Of Viet Air War

## 106 Planes

## In 5 Months

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WASHINGTON — The stepped-up air war the United States is conducting over North and South Vietnam to help the South Vietnamese ground forces has cost more than \$400 million over the last five months.

Figures made available by the Pentagon disclose that 106 planes have been lost by the Air Force, Navy and Marines. Eighty-one of these were shot down over North Vietnam and 25 over South Vietnam.

Most of these are F-4 fighter bombers which cost an average of \$2.5 million each, according to the Pentagon.

### Total Cost

Thus, the total cost of the 106 lost planes comes to \$265 million.

In addition, 62 helicopters were destroyed in battle over South Vietnam. Most of these were the Huey all purpose chopper, which cost an average of \$250,000. Thus, the 62 lost helicopters cost a total of \$15.5 million.

Together, the 106 lost planes and 62 lost helicopters cost a grand total of \$280.5 million.

The B-52 bomber has played a large part in both the sustained bombing campaign against the North and in air operations over South Vietnam. It costs more to operate than any other plane now in service in Southeast Asia.

### Final Cost

It is estimated, on the basis of Pentagon statistics, that the operating costs of the B-52 missions for five months total \$113,380,000.

Add the \$280.5 million cost of planes and helicopters lost to the \$113,380,000 cost of flying the B-52s, and the bill totals \$413.8 million.

Even this, however, is an

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incomplete figure for no figures were available at the Pentagon on how much it has cost to operate the F-4s and how much the bombs and other ammunition have cost.

### \$800 Per Hour

Some small idea of F-4s operating costs can be gained from the Pentagon's statistic that each time one of these fighter bombers goes on a mission it costs anywhere from \$800 to \$1600. That is because it costs \$800 an hour to fly one and the average mission lasts from one to two hours.

The B-52 bomber costs \$1300 an hour to fly. From Thailand, an average mission takes four hours; from Guam, 13 hours. So a single B-52 on a mission out of Thailand costs \$5200 — more than the average American pays for a new car.

A single B-52 on a mission out of Guam costs \$16,900 more than many an American earns in a year.

### 81 Sorties

The Air Force estimates that the B-52s have been flying an average of 81 sorties a day for the last five months. On the assumption that roughly half of these have come out of Thailand and the other half out of Guam, the total daily cost of operating the B-52s has been \$889,200.

Multiply this by 30, and the cost per month comes out at \$26,676,000. Over a five-month period, then, the total for B-52 operations is an estimated \$133,380,000.

### Vital Mission

Bombing critics in Congress say that the U.S. bombing offensive has been vital. Without it, the South Vietnamese could not have held off the invading enemy force from the North.

They brand it as a failure, however, in the sense that enough enemy supplies and soldiers are getting through, despite it, to carry on a

small-scale war in the South.

They are dismayed at President Nixon's assertion that he plans to continue the bombing until the enemy agrees to negotiate a settlement of the war. They are convinced this will not force a settlement but will, instead, result in the continued expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars with nothing to show for it but a military stalemate.