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Asia War

Staggering U.S. Bomb Tonnages

Washington

Pentagon statistics show that bombs dropped by the United States in Southeast Asia in the first nine months of 1972 already exceed the tonnage dropped during all of the previous year.

Data obtained from the Defense Department yesterday disclosed that more than 800,000 tons of "air ammunition" has been used over South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30, 1972, as compared with 763,160 tons during all of 1971.

The increase, Defense Department officials contended, resulted chiefly from stepped-up tactical air action over South Vietnam in support of Saigon's troops since the start of the Communist offensive last March 30, and from resumed systematic bombing of North Vietnam for the first time since 1968.

Up-to-date figures on

U.S. air operations in Indochina were supplied by the Pentagon to the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees and were then made available to the New York Times.

Assessments by U.S. intelligence agencies last month emphasized, however, that while American air activities played a key role in blunting the Communist offensive in South Vietnam, the intensive bombings of the north have failed to interfere meaningfully with the flow of troops and supplies to the south.

Aggregate figures for the years show that U.S. aircraft launched 7,550,800 tons of bombs and other ordnance — rockets, cannon shells and machine gun bullets — on Indochina between February, 1965, and Aug. 30, 1972.

This is estimated to be roughly three and a half times the tonnage of explosives used during all of World War II by all the allies in all the war theaters.

An analysis of U.S. air op-

erations in Indochina — mainly over Vietnam — also shows that American planes have dropped more bombs on this region in the last 21 months than the total British and American tonnage released over Germany between 1940 and 1945.

Thus, according to Pentagon figures, "air munitions" expended over Southeast Asia between Jan. 1, 1971, and Sept. 30, 1972, added up to about 1,560,000 tons.

The precise total for the last month is not yet available, but the confirmed figure through Aug. 31 is 1,465,287 and estimates for September are roughly 100,000 tons.

The total during the three years of the Korean war, between 1950 and 1963, was 635,000 tons — less than the tonnage dropped on Indochina in any year since 1966. In that year, 496,319 tons of "air munitions" were used.

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