



# Richard Nixon The Rug Puller

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PRESIDENT NIXON has a dangerous habit of putting out particularly lush and tempting-looking rugs, for his enemies to assemble upon. When there are enough of them on the rug, he then briskly pulls the rug out from under, causing inevitable disarray. It is a game that he plainly enjoys, as he also greatly enjoys the disarray of his enemies.

No one seems to have noticed it as yet, but Nixon-the-Rug-Puller is at it again. The rug in question is of course the recent picture of the President as secluded, reclusive and cut off from all normal contacts. This was painted last month, on all sides, when the President made one of the most difficult and lonely decisions of his years in office.

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THIS WAS the decision to resume bombing North Vietnam until the Hanoi leaders signified they were ready to sign an acceptable cease-fire agreement.

The Senators who suggested the President might well be going mad when he took that decision, have not yet come forward to admit the decision got the exact result the President desired.

No one has remarked, either, that seclusion was the President's only sensible course in December. If he had consulted the appropriate Senators about the bombing decision, they would not have changed his mind. And they would certainly have breeched his confidence within half an hour of leaving the White House.

By the same token, he could not hold press conferences or talk to the country

on the subject. The sole aim of the President's bombing decision was to get a specific result — the message from Hanoi giving way on a long series of disputed points. When that message came, the bombing was stopped.

Now that this highly delicate matter is out of the way, the rug-pulling has already begun. Starting with the meeting before his short television announcement of the coming cease-fire agreement, the President held no less than four bi-partisan meetings, with congressional leaders prior to leaving for Florida.

When the President gets back to Washington, the leaders' meetings at the White House will of course continue: They will be amplified, too, by more meetings with individual Senators and Representatives.

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IN ADDITION, the word has gone out that the President will soon begin holding press conferences again. There will be several radio addresses explaining the White House decisions behind sections of the State of the Union Message and the message to Congress on the budget.

In short, the much-touted seclusion and reclusiveness are coming to an end. The need for them has passed. The President has the cease-fire agreement behind him. The prisoners will soon be coming home. The President has plenty to talk about.

So the picture of Richard M. Nixon as a kind of presidential Howard Hughes, with an added penchant for using B-52s just for the hell of it, will soon begin to fade away.