

March 2, 1965

Source 007.

Luncheon today -- BACKGROUND ONLY -- with [REDACTED]

Today's raid on N. V-nam is a major step, ending the retaliation phase and entering the phase which is expected to go on until there is some change of heart by Hanoi and/or Peking. Hence the prospect is for more raids with greater intensity aimed essentially at bringing a political response and only secondarily at military damage on the North as such.

The anti-aircraft fire is intense though so far it is from WW II equipment updated with lock-on radar and other new devices. The logic is that the US probably -- though it is not clear whether LBJ has yet approved -- go to high level bombing out of AA range, by B-47s and ~~B-52s~~ B-52s safely based in and flying from such places as the Philippines ~~uncontestedly~~ and Okinawa or more likely Guam which is undisputed US territory.

Escalation is clearly under way; LBJ is committed to keep at it until Hanoi cracks in some form. But it seems evident that no one here is certain when or how that might come or in what form. Much discussion here of what might be acceptable but apparently no agreement.

It also appears that some new types of weaponry in the US arsenal are now being trotted out -- the anti-personnel cluster bomb about which we wrote Sunday and (I am not sure whether this has yet been employed) delayed action bomb clusters which can be timed to go off immediately, an hour or a day or more later. Theory here is that masses of such stuff, apparently already stockpiled in V-N, will give the Viet Cong pause going through the jungles especially in coming down from the North. May be other items in the works, too. A Rand group, I know from other sources, a while back recommended numerous such steps even then within the rules of staying in the South only.

As to Soviet SA-2s, their best AA: estimate here is that they probably could be brought into N. V-n in three weeks; if ordered by Moscow at time Kosygin was in Hanoi that would be about now. Presumably by sea from Vladivastock. Possibly by air, too, as the Soviets have enough large transports to carry SA-2s knocked down and some of these ac have recently been sighted in the area. High level bombing could not get above the SA-2s and presumably Soviet crews would be involved. Cuban experiences produces estimate that it take 6 months to a year to train inexperienced crews (incidentally, estimate now is that the Cubans today do have complete control of the SA-2s without a Soviet key as a veto).

Backdrop of LBJ's new orders: ~~which~~ it seems he is riding herd on personally in each raid thus far - also Joint Chiefs pressed so hard he long resisted them until he felt secure in terms of (a) polls showing US public approval (b) he could twist some Congressional arms, as is now evident from Hill comments (c) feeling that foreign reaction would not be too bad, especially after State's white paper made a case of Hanoi's control of V.C.★

Further, feeling here that Soviets are in awkward box too; that power situation in Moscow is far from certain after Khrushchev. Belief here Soviets do not consider SEA area of ~~major concern~~, hence odds perhaps 9 ~~to~~ to 1 vs. whole thing ending in nuclear confrontation.

Possibility taken seriously that US air attacks could lead Hanoi to employ its well trained army (250,000 I think is the figure of regulars) by sending them into South but odds felt to be against this.

Basically, issue is whether US pressure on Hanoi can be sufficient to counteract erosion of war in South they winning (where our estimate is V.C. hold about 30% of land area. n.b.: other estimates considerably higher).

Special effort was made by sending mission to London to convince British Hanoi really is running the show, UK grateful, it's said, for White Paper in terms of UK public opinion. Top officials, including Foreign Secretary Stewart, were given classified fill in as well on US evidence which was not disclosed in white paper ~~in~~ to protect intelligence sources. No effort made to ~~persuade~~ persuade French who rated unpersuadable. Source swears no bit of evidence, despite reports from Paris, of any approach as yet from Hanoi.



National Security Archive,
Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University,
2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037,
Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, nsarchiv@gwu.edu