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EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs  
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Mandatory Review

Case # NLJ 99-55

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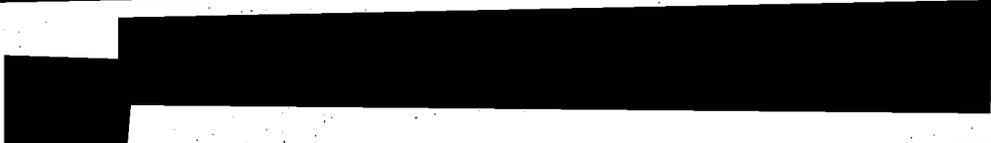
TEXT OF CIA REPORT



SUBJECT: North Vietnamese Civilian Reaction to U. S. Air Strikes



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When some villagers in the coastal areas of North Vietnamese provinces between the 17th and 20th parallels were asked specifically, most of the fishermen linked the bombing of North Vietnam to the active pursuit of the war in the South by the Hanoi regime. The crew of a fishing boat from the Quang Xuong district believe that if the North Vietnamese Government stopped infiltrating troops and supplies into South Vietnam, the American bombing of North Vietnam would cease. None of the fishermen demonstrated any spirit for the war and none volunteered the opinion that the reunification of the two Vietnams was a cause worth fighting for. Their principal interest in the war is having the bombing stop.

Local Lao Dong Party Cadre tell the villagers that the bombing is in revenge for the terrible losses the United States and its "puppet"

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South Vietnamese Army are sustaining in the South. The villagers give progressively less credence to this claim as the war drags on, more men are drafted and never heard of again, and rationing becomes more acute. Although village officials report that many of the attacking aircraft are being shot down, the villagers do not believe this because they have witnessed little, if any, effective defense measures, and the air raids continue. One of the few who witnessed the downing of an American aircraft related how the aircraft flying protective cover took a heavy toll of militia and army troops who were attempting to capture airmen from the plane which had been shot down.

The North Vietnamese regime's inability to end the air attacks by counteractions has caused some villagers to seriously doubt the Government's oft-repeated boast of "the inevitability of victory." Many judge the decision to continue fighting in the South as a lack of official concern for the dangers and hardships the bombing is causing the people in the coastal villages.

Although many of those questioned described the bombing as "indiscriminate," when pressed most admitted that principal targets for attacking aircraft appeared to be security posts, bridges, radar installations, and coastal and inland waterways traffic. (Comment: Off-target bombs and flimsy construction of nearby structures seem to cause the majority of civilian casualties.)

The villagers, especially in areas that have been bombed repeatedly, are terrified by the raids. The populace, therefore, holds daytime activity to a minimum, and many of the Government-operated economic and administrative units, including the fishing cooperatives, have been either damaged, abandoned, or evacuated to areas that have not been bombed.

Because of air attacks on fishing boats, Government confiscation of boats for use in coastal and inland waterways cargo shipping, and breakdowns because of the lack of spare parts, fish production has been reduced in many areas to a point where the fishermen cannot turn in enough fish to the cooperatives in exchange for sufficient rice to support their families. The fishermen admitted that in such cases they often resort to hiding a portion of their catch for sale on the black market. The hours they spend fishing are dependent on considerations of safety from air attacks rather than on when the fish are likely to bite. The size of the crews on those boats remaining operative have accordingly increased.

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In spite of monetary incentives offered by the Government to professional fishermen to serve as coastal shipping laborers, the fishermen avoid this service whenever possible because of the dangers involved from air strikes.

People in the coastal villages are resentful of the time they are required to spend, with no compensation, in repairing bomb damage and digging coastal defensive trenches and air raid shelters.

The fishermen frequently mentioned that Regular Army units in their villages were withdrawn after the village was bombed and that militia units are now providing internal security and manning anti-aircraft artillery sites. In at least one village the militia disregards orders instructing it to fire at all enemy aircraft because it assumes the ground fire will draw retaliatory attack.

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