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# Indochina Bomb Total Expected To Continue Dip From '68 Peak

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President Nixon's policy of covering American troop withdrawals from Vietnam with air power has kept the intensity of bombing in his first two years at about the same total level as the last two years of the Johnson administration.

But early 1971 figures indicate there will be a sharp downturn in the amount of explosives to be dropped by warplanes in Indochina, with a significant drop expected in the annual bomb tonnage rate. The rate fell sharply in 1970 as compared with 1969.

The total tonnage dropped on North and South Vietnam, on Laos and on Cambodia from 1965 through 1970 is 5.6 million tons.

This is more than twice the 2.7 million tons the United States dropped throughout both World War II and the Korean War.

Some critics charge that the massive bombing in Indochina amounts to "forced-draft urbanization" by driving the Asians out of their villages into cities or refugee camps.

But Nixon administration officials, as did those in the Johnson and Kennedy administrations, say that never before has such care been taken to spare civilians in bombing raids.

Further, the White House briefer on President Nixon's Vietnam speech Wednesday night said that the intensity of the Indochina air war is abating as American involvement decreases.

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In President Johnson's last two full years in office, 1967 and 1968, Pentagon records show a total of 2,369,489 tons of bombs dropped in Southeast Asia. This compares with 2,364,725 tons for Mr. Nixon's first two years, 1969 and 1970.

The bombing lingers as one of the most controversial aspects of the Vietnam war. Part of the reason for this is that President Nixon has declared he will not hesitate to use air power to cover the American troop withdrawal from Vietnam.

The two Navy aircraft carriers stationed off Vietnam are expected to be among the last forces to leave Indochina. Their fighter-bombers not only support ground troops in South Vietnam but also attack anti-aircraft sites and related facilities in North Vietnam as well as traffic along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

Air Force fighter-bombers and B-52 bombers based in Thailand are used for the same purposes.

Pentagon statistics show little decrease in bomb tonnage after President Johnson halted the air war against North Vietnam on Nov. 1, 1968. A big step-up in the bombing of Laos offset the reduction in Vietnam.

For all of 1968, Pentagon figures show the United States dropped 1,437,370 tons of bombs in Southeast Asia compared to 1,387,259 tons in 1969 — Mr. Nixon's first year in office.

The Defense Department will not release the breakdown by country, although most of the tonnage in 1970 was dropped on Laos.

Thus, the bombs dropped on Laos so far in the war probably exceed the 1,554,463 tons American planes dropped on North Africa and Europe during all of World War II. The Pentagon lists 502,781 tons of bombs dropped in the Pacific Theater in that war for a World War II total of 2,057,244 tons.

In the Korean War, U.S. forces dropped 635,000 tons of bombs — or less than the 977,466 tons dropped on Indochina in 1970 alone.

The trend so far in 1971, however, indicates a slight downturn for the year from the 1970 level. The figures for January, February and March total 212,118 tons—or 848,472 tons projected for the full year of 1971.

The White House briefer on Mr. Nixon's Vietnam speech of Wednesday talked about sorties, not bombs dropped, in portraying a sharp decrease in the air war. (A sortie is one plane flying to the target and back.)

These are the Pentagon's bombing figures in tons for all of Southeast Asia:

1963	360,000
1966	496,319
1967	932,119
1968	1,437,370
1969	1,387,259
1970	977,466
Total	5,590,533 tons