



COPY
Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

CONCEPTUAL PLAN OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

1. Concept. U. S. military forces will conduct operations against North Vietnam with forces now available in order to demonstrate U. S. resolve to achieve basic U. S. objectives in Southeast Asia. Such operations would be designed to attain maximum political, military, and psychological shock, while reducing North Vietnam's over-all economic capacity and war-making capacity to the extent feasible. The operation would commence with a near-simultaneous and integrated attack against the enemy air order-of-battle and air defenses, mining of six deep-water ports, interdiction of the North-east Rail Line, and attacks against selected, critical targets. The over-all concept is based on the partial isolation and quarantine of NVN by aerial mining augmented by initial rail interdictions, and the maximum practical damage to key targets. It is characterized by boldness of action and intensity of effort and will be conducted in a period of four strike days, not necessarily consecutive if adverse weather conditions prevail. Upon completion it should represent an accomplished fact of measurable proportions.

2. Assumptions.

a. The impending onset of the northeast monsoon brings prevailing poor weather to NVN. Climatological records indicate that weather conditions may prevent effective air operations approximately 50% of the time in November, with the situation becoming progressively worse until April 1, 1970. The assumption is made that sufficient good weather will occur to permit application of tactical air power against NVN targets for the minimum time required to execute the plan successfully but flexibility in selecting D-Day will be necessary. Once initiated, attacks can be completed in a minimum of four days, extended to approximately seven if required by weather.

b. Current constraints will, in general, be altered or relaxed to permit application of force where, when, and to the extent required to achieve the stated objectives. Care will be taken in the exercise of these broadened authorities to minimize civilian casualties and damage to third-country shipping and to avoid border violations.



COPY

Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 2 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

c. Domestic and international pressures running counter to U. S. offensive military operations against NVN can be offset through governmental initiatives or tacitly ignored. The U. S. government's demonstration of indifference to such pressures might well constitute the strongest signal to Hanoi.

d. Communist-bloc countries currently supporting NVN's war-making efforts with arms and war support materiel will continue to accommodate to any U. S. offensive initiatives by rerouting their support via alternate channels, but these options will pose problems of significant proportions.

3. Phasing. Planned operations divide themselves logically into two phases, with follow-on phases as necessary. Included in Phase I are those tasks which will close NVN ports, interdict the Northeast Rail Line, disrupt or destroy her air order-of-battle, and destroy vulnerable and critical segments of the North Vietnamese economy. These tasks emphasize the isolation of NVN and the destruction of key targets wherever located, thereby confronting Hanoi with economic problems involving costly and time-consuming restoration or counter-measures. Phase I is characterized as a short strategic campaign against NVN as a society, rather than as a resumption of old bombing patterns with self-limiting attacks against widely dispersed and transient military supply lines to South Vietnam. Phase II would be subject to continuing review as the campaign progresses and as we measure North Vietnamese attitudes toward negotiation.

4. Conduct of Operations.

a. The concept for Phase I is based on the fact that North Vietnam now is completely reliant upon outside sources to sustain her civilian economy and ability to conduct effective combat operations in Southeast Asia. Although current stocks of war materiel available in NVN, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam will permit continuation of offensive military operations for at least several months without additional imports, her over-all national requirements will necessitate shifting of priorities in order to accommodate to growing shortages as outside sources are impeded. However, even if sea imports are fully denied, combat operations could be sustained in South Vietnam at a low rate for an indefinite period of time. Denial of imports by sea and rail, coupled with the destruction of maximum practicable key targets



COPY
Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 3 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

and resources, is designed to impact heavily on NVN by achieving a significant effect on her economy and desire to continue the war. These operations will reduce imports into North Vietnam to a critical point and destroy supplies that are exposed to effective attack. It envisions the maximum concentration of effort for shock effect. The credibility of this signal is enhanced by its identification with a concept which exploits the enemy's dependence upon imports. It outlines a series of inter-related military actions against NVN which, for the most part, lend themselves to implementation separately, in combinations, or as an integrated package.

b. The concept in Phase I provides for the integrated and near-simultaneous execution of the following tasks:

(1) Major air strikes against NVN's counter-air capability in order to protect the strike forces.

(2) Aerial mining of North Vietnam deep-water ports and interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line.

(3) The systematic destruction of supplies and selected logistic facilities employing a concentration of air and naval forces in a short period of time.

(4) Subsequent enforcement of the quarantine by periodic reseeded of the minefields and continuing interdiction of NVN lighters and waterborne logistics craft.

c. Subsequently, within available resources, and as required, Phase II operations will be commenced with increased intensity as follows:

(1) The destruction of selected logistics target systems and industrial targets in order of military importance, employing both tactical air and B-52 as appropriate, together with naval gunfire attacks on coastal watercraft and shore logistics installations.

(2) Intensified interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line from Hanoi to Communist China.

(3) Breaching of the levee system in the Red River

Delta



COPY
Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 4 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

d. Operations are sensitive to several factors which dictate the need for flexibility in execution:

(1) Weather. During the ensuing six months, weather will be the most critical factor. Bad weather can be expected to inhibit attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong areas for days at a time, making it difficult to predict the achievement of given objectives within a fixed number of days. Maximum flexibility should be considered in the selection of the day for the initial attacks. The planned duration of any action should permit continuous operations until at least a given minimum effect has been attained. In the event that weather permits achievement of the desired effect in less than the planned time, the action could be terminated early or additional attacks undertaken for increased effect.

(2) Surprise. Surprise in the initial attacks will enhance optimum results, particularly in the initial strikes on the enemy's air defenses. Early success in this task will generate a greater shock effect, free aircraft for other tasks at an earlier time, and broaden U.S. options for subsequent action. Uncertainties surrounding the possible impact of the modified Fan Song radar or modifications to the SA-2 missile must be accepted as calculated risks.

(3) Concentration of Effort. This concept emphasizes concentration of effort. Concentrated attacks against target areas or target systems have the advantages of greater shock value, greater long-term damage to the enemy, and require less assets to protect strike forces.

(4) Enemy Defenses. Since the cessation of bombing operations north of the 19th parallel on 31 March 1968, enemy defenses have been increased to formidable proportions. Any attack against well-defended targets will require large numbers of suppressive-fire aircraft. The disadvantage in conducting attacks over relatively short periods of time is that in addition to the strike aircraft, aircraft are required for MIG protection, air defense suppression, and electronic countermeasures. In the initial phases, until these threats can be appreciably diminished, losses to friendly aircraft approximating three per cent can be anticipated.



COPY

Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 5 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

5. Tasks. The following tasks will be undertaken:

PHASE I

a. Conduct Major Air Strikes Against NVN Counter-Air Capability. Air strikes will be directed at H-Hour against active NVN airfields, aircraft, and other air defenses in order to protect strike forces and run down the enemy MIG inventory. Simultaneously, those SAM sites posing the greatest threat to strike forces will also be struck. The counterair effort and strikes against SAM sites will be continued against other key target systems, and will terminate upon completion of Phase I. Reduction of NVN's air defense will expose vital targets to concentrated air attacks and permit U. S. air and naval forces to operate against NVN with fewer losses. This action can be expected to possess shock value beyond that which could be attributed directly to loss of NVN aircraft, because degradation of the enemy's air defenses broadens the scope of military options open to the U. S. for follow-on actions.

b. Mine NVN Ports. Employing aerial delivery, mines will be seeded in the approaches to six NVN deep-water ports. Once seeded, these minefields would be fuzed to activate approximately 72 hours later. Delayed activation will permit third-country shipping to exit the ports safely. Diplomatic message will be dispatched to all noncombatant governments engaged in maritime trade with NVN to advise them of the hazards to ships remaining in port or attempting to enter port. If NVN attempts to accommodate to this quarantine by over-the-beach off-loading or lightering of cargo, the initial mining effort will be expanded to seed alternate off-loading areas and shallow-water ports. Lighters will be interdicted by a combination of naval gunfire and armed aerial reconnaissance. Minefields will be reseeded as required to maintain their effectiveness. These actions will have the combined effects of closing the ports to ships importing arms and war-supporting materiel to NVN and disrupting the country's economy and foreign trade reserves. Faced with the prospect of having to prosecute the war without the substantial quantities of outside help upon which his very existence depends, the enemy would be forced to reassess his capabilities with a view toward adapting alternatives. Additional shock effect could accrue through the enemy's recognition of our willingness to confront third countries.



COPY

Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 6 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

c. Interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line and Air Strikes Against Other Key Targets. To complement the mining and closure of the seaports and further impede the import of war-supporting materiel into NVN, the Northeast Rail Line between Hanoi and Dong Dang in Communist China will be severed by air strikes. To the maximum extent practicable, rail and highway traffic will be disrupted at strategic locations, and any large concentrations of rolling stock and supplies which develop as a result will be attacked and destroyed. Following hard upon closure of his ports, disruption of this vital artery will severely reduce NVN's imports and materially impair his capability to support both his economy and aggressive military operations in Southeast Asia. It will cause the enemy to face the prospect of pursuing his aggressive aims without adequate outside support to sustain him. Major air and naval gunfire attacks will be launched against additional target complexes as strike resources permit. Such targets will be of high economic value, the destruction of which will bite deeply into the available cushion of supplies and resources.

PHASE II

a. Isolation of NVN: Actions initiated in Phase I will be continued as necessary to isolate NVN from outside resources. Particular emphasis will be given to intensified interdiction efforts against NVN.

b. Air Strikes Against NVN. Major air strikes will be launched against critical target complexes in NVN. Among such targets are thermal power plants, industries, and large concentrations of stored vehicles, and rolling stock. A surprise attack against these targets will exploit vulnerabilities which can be expected to exist in several pertinent target categories only at the beginning of hostilities. Strikes will be concentrated against these targets to the maximum extent required to ensure their destruction. Fixed targets will be attacked in a systematic program to reduce depot stocks, port facilities, transportation, and distribution systems. Targets will be struck in a pattern such that the strike effort will be concentrated against the highest priority targets until their destruction is assured before the effort is shifted elsewhere. These actions can have a profound shock effect upon all segments of North Vietnam and the effect can be heightened through careful selection of targets.



COPY
Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 7 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

c. Breaching of the Levee System in the Red River Delta.

6. Target Selection.

a. Careful study of vulnerability factors, sensitivity to critical resupply problems, duration of operations, and availability of strike aircraft will determine final target selection. A number of critical facilities have been identified which meet one or more of the following criteria, and will be examined for inclusion in either a Phase I or Phase II target list:

- Achieve a high degree of damage or disruption to an important military or economic function.

- Require costly and time-consuming restore or countermeasures.

- Have strong psychological impact upon Hanoi's leadership.

b. Possible targets.

- Five complexes in the Haiphong port area, the destruction of which would eliminate a significant fraction of the 50,000 tons of supplies stored there and would cause widespread and severe disruption of the established distribution systems.

- Six electric power stations, the destruction of which would cripple most of NVN's modern industry and require one to two years for restoration with external support and assistance.

- Four jet airfields, on which are deployed all but one of the 119 NVN combat aircraft in country.

- One cement plant which currently provides most of the NVN domestic requirements of about 400,000 tons of cement annually and would require more than a year to repair.



COPY

Reproduced at the
National Archives and Records Administration

- 8 -

TOP SECRET--SENSITIVE

- One coal preparation plant which is the basis for Hanoi's effort to revive its hard currency export trade.
- One machine tool and engineering plant which is a significant factor in maintaining the NVN transportation system and producing a large share of the country's mechanical equipment.
- Five storage facilities which house some 50,000 tons of high-value supplies, up to 37,000 tons of petroleum (40% of the estimated NVN stockpile), and about 1,000 trucks (10% of the estimated NVN inventory).
- Three key bridges which maintain the flow of imports to Hanoi from Haiphong or China and which, if interdicted simultaneously with the mining of Haiphong, would be highly significant.
- Two major rail yards which not only contain large quantities of materials but also account for the bulk of the NVN capacity to repair rolling stock.
- The levee system in the Red River Delta which, if successfully attacked during the high water period of July-August, could destroy as much as 25% of the annual rice crop of 100,000 tons, temporarily halt most of the military and economic activity in the Hanoi area, and divert significant manpower to repair flood damage.

It would be neither feasible nor desirable to include all of these targets in one short air and naval bombardment. On the other hand, it is essential to include a substantial number of these whole target groupings in the first phase to complement the sea quarantine and to achieve the maximum over-all military, economic, and psychological impact on the DRV. Subsequent phases, if necessary, would not only deal with the NVN reactions to counter or moderate the effects of the first phase, but would include the remaining target groupings for greater effect.

7. Reaction Time. In order to complete the necessary preparation actions and reposition forces required to implement this concept plan fully, a minimum of 86 hours prior notice is required. Without the mining option, a minimum of 72 hours' notice will be required.