

Bomb After Bomb: US Air Power and Crimes of War From World War II to the Present 爆撃また爆撃—米空軍力と第二次世界大戦から現在までの戦争犯罪

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“If the Nazi activities represented a kind of apex to an age of inhumanity, American atrocities in Laos are clearly of a different order. Not so much inhuman as ahuman. The people of Na Nga and Nong Sa were not the object of anyone’s passion. They simply weren’t considered. What is most striking about American bombing in Laos is the lack of animosity felt by the killers to their victims. Most of the Americans involved have little if any knowledge of Laos or its people. Those who do rather like them.” – Fred Branfman, *Liberation*, 1971.



Millions of unexploded bombs remain in Laos

“It sure is a funny way to fight a war. I mean, I have yet to even see Vietnam or Laos. I get up in the morning, have breakfast and fly off. And man, I don’t see anything – just clouds, sky and sun. I get to the coordinates on the map, drop

my load and I’m back in time for beer and lunch in the base restaurant complete with air conditioning. After a nap, I usually spend the afternoon swimming.” – American B-52 pilot, Utapao Air Force Base, Thailand.

In October 1966, in the wake of Operation Rolling Thunder, peace activist David Dellinger visited North Vietnam despite a US imposed ban on travel. He was horrified by what he saw. He met kids who had lost their arms and lost loved ones, and visited villages and towns reduced to virtual rubble, including Phy Ly, a city with a population of over 10,000 that resembled a “Vietnamese Guernica.” One woman who had lost her parents and six siblings, told Dellinger to “ask your president Johnson if our straw huts were made of steel and concrete” (as LBJ had claimed in justifying the attacks) and to ask him if “our catholic church that was destroyed was a military target....Tell him that we will continue our life and struggle no matter what future bombings there will be because we know that without independence and freedom, nothing is worthwhile.”

At the end of his article, Dellinger stated that “something, perhaps my own type of Americanism, rose up inside of me and I tried to deny that Americans would knowingly bomb and strafe civilians, at least as part of deliberate government policy. But later, when I made two extensive trips outside Hanoi, I reluctantly agreed with the Vietnamese that the US had consciously and deliberately attacked the civilian population in a brutal attempt to destroy civilian morale.”¹

The American War in Vietnam has been the subject of countless books, films and television programs, and it continues to play a role in presidential politics. The devastating impact on the Vietnamese population, however, receives short shrift and has been largely suppressed in popular consciousness at the same time that new investigations have exposed an ever wider scale of atrocities.² In a memorial day speech, president Barack Obama characterized the war as a national shame, not because of its destructive effects on Vietnamese society, but rather because “returning US troops were not always “welcomed home” as they were often “blamed for the misdeeds of a few,” and were “sometimes denigrated – despite the fact that they had made enormous sacrifices in a war that they didn’t start.”³ Repeating the trope of the spat upon veteran that has been discredited in scholarship, Obama’s historical revisionism invites comparison with that of Japanese neonationalists who belittle the atrocities carried out by their military in China during the Second World War.⁴

The US record in bombing Vietnam was particularly appalling, and deserving of greater scholarly scrutiny, especially since reliance on air power has been a feature of the “American Way of War” for over six decades. Indeed, the United States has been at the forefront in “inventing scientific devices [for the purpose of] spreading death and destruction that would have thrilled Genghis Khan,” as Gen. “Hap” Arnold, commander of army air forces in World War II and a founder of the RAND Corporation, put it.⁵ Pentagon officials claimed that new technologies could ensure “surgical precision,” though time and time again civilians have been targeted, often in futile efforts to intimidate people like the Vietnamese into submission. This essay provides an overview of US aerial warfare, with a focus on Cold War interventions in the Asia-Pacific.

War Stars: Bombing and the US Way of War- a Historical Overview

In his book *War Stars*, H. Bruce Franklin details the American infatuation with a super-weapon capable of deterring foreign invasion and making war more humane by quickly and decisively eradicating the enemy. The cult of the super-weapon was promoted by scientists like Thomas Edison and advanced through Hollywood films that glorified Marine aviators such as Gen. Billy Mitchell, who commanded allied planes over France in World War I and championed the efficacy of airpower after being court-martialed for criticizing the military command.⁶

Mitchell argued in a 1922 manual that bombing should target cities and industrial infrastructure that allowed modern nations to make war, including “factories, raw materials, foodstuffs and modes of transportation.... It may be necessary to intimidate the civilian population in a certain area to force them to discontinue something which is having a direct bearing on the outcome of the conflict.”⁷ Echoing European military strategists, Mitchell’s ideas had particular resonance, historian Michael Sherry notes, because they appealed to anti-statist and anti-militarist traditions in the US and allowed for an avoidance of the burdens of conscription, taxation and death. Bombing furthermore helped to distance executioners from victims and often prevented the kind of trauma and war guilt that manifested itself in shell shock and post-traumatic disorder.⁸

Following World War I, airpower was employed by the Western powers almost exclusively in their colonial domains to flush out nationalist opposition. French forces killed an estimated 1,400 people in Damascus in 1925 and hundreds more after a rebellion in Hama. The British meanwhile killed hundreds of civilians in subduing anti-colonial rebellions in Iraq, concluding that “within 45 minutes a full-sized village...can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed and injured by four or five planes which offer them no real

target and no opportunity for glory or avarice.”⁹

The United States relied on airpower to flush out Caco rebels resisting the occupation of Haiti. On August 4, 1920, after airplanes fired over 1,200 machine gun rounds, Colonel J. J. Meade reported that: “The planes maneuvered excellently and directed their fire with apparently good effect, taking bandits from their hiding places. . . . This demonstrates that airplanes are a success in such affairs. Bandits thought they were safe but found out there is no place that will protect them.”¹⁰ In Nicaragua, airpower helped stamp out a nationalist rebellion led by Augusto Cesar Sandino. Lt. Lawson Sanderson developed the idea of dive bombing, where pilots released bombs from a makeshift rack at 250 feet above the ground, after the plane went into a forty five degree dive.¹¹ In spite of claims of pinpoint accuracy, a village in Honduras was bombed by mistake. Strafing by American planes killed hundreds of civilians at Ocata, prompting demands for the firing of General Logan Feland, who instead was decorated by the Coolidge administration. The historian Neill Macaulay wrote, “Why much of the world should excuse the excesses of the partisans when condemning the countermeasures taken by the occupying forces was as incomprehensible to the Marine aviators as it was to the German High Command.”¹²

The Banana Wars set the groundwork for World War II, a landmark in the development and deployment of technologies of mass destruction associated with air power, notably the B-29 bomber, napalm and the atomic bomb. For the first time, the major industrial powers would target one another, not just villagers in nations that had no air force. Though Franklin Roosevelt had condemned the bombing of civilians by the fascist powers, the US commenced systematic bombing of German and Japanese cities in late 1944. “Hap” Arnold, a disciple of Billy Mitchell, proclaimed that “this is a brutal war and...the way to stop the killing

of civilians is to cause so much damage and destruction and death, that civilians will demand that their government cease fighting...We cannot ‘pull our punches’ because [civilians] may get killed.”¹³ Dresden and Hamburg in Germany were turned into literal infernos, with Royal Air Force (RAF) commander Arthur Harris setting out to concentrate “all available forces for the progressive, systematic destruction of the urban areas of the Reich, city block by city block, factory by factory, until the enemy became a nation of troglodytes, scratching in the ruins.”¹⁴ On the night of March 9-10 1945, in a prelude to the firebombing of 66 cities that culminated in the dropping of the atomic bombs, Tokyo was pounded by B-29s equipped with gel bombs and napalm that generated immense firestorms, killing an estimated 100,000 civilians and destroying 15.6 square miles of the city. Photographer Ishikawa Koyo described the streets of Tokyo as “rivers of fire . . . flaming pieces of furniture exploding in the heat, while the people themselves blazed like ‘matchsticks’ as their wood and paper homes exploded in flames. Under the wind and the gigantic breath of the fire, immense incandescent vortices rose in a number of places, swirling, flattening, sucking whole blocks of houses into their maelstrom of fire.”¹⁵

Gen. Curtis LeMay, architect of the firebombing strategy, hailed the decisive role of airpower in the allied victory and continued to promote an ends justifies the means philosophy in the war’s aftermath, railing against the “timorousness of a civilian leadership unwilling to use its weapons.”¹⁶ Bombers were glorified in popular culture with luminaries like John Steinbeck producing puff pieces such as his book *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team*. “We were all part of the war effort,” he later reflected, “correspondents were not liars but it is in the things not mentioned that the untruth lies.”¹⁷

“As if the flyers were playing in a bowling

alley, with villages for pins:" The US Air War in Korea

Though policy-makers pushed for international standards to prevent future targeting of noncombatants, unrestrained bombing remained a feature of military strategy after World War II as the US sought to consolidate an informal empire in the Asia-Pacific pivoting on the combination of insular territories including Okinawa and Guam, and myriad military bases across Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and beyond.¹⁸ The Korean War consolidated the "permanent warfare economy" and enabled aerospace engineers to develop new super-carriers and antipersonnel weapons that were applied against revolutionary nationalist forces.¹⁹

In Korea, the Truman administration propped up the southern regime of Syngman Rhee, deploying army units to suppress wide-scale rebellions led by people's committees and the South Korean Labor Party (SKLP). Raids by both parties across the 38th parallel preceded the North's invasion of the South in June 1950.²⁰ Following the Inchon landing, US-UN forces under Gen. Douglas MacArthur carried the offensive into the North. The Air Force launched over a million sorties and 698,000 tons of bombs (compared to 500,000 in the entire Pacific theatre in World War II), including 32,357 tons of napalm. Maj. Gen. Emmett O'Donnell Jr. testified before the Senate that the goal of the air war was to "put a very severe blow on the North Koreans for going too far in what we all recognized as a case of aggression....we now have at our command a weapon that can really dish out some severe destruction, and now let us go to work on burning five major cities to the ground and destroying completely every one of about eighteen major strategic targets."²¹

Much of North Korea was left, in O'Donnell's words, a "terrible mess," with an estimated million civilian casualties and hundreds of

thousands of refugees, some of whom were napalmed by pilots under orders to "hit anything that moved." Eighteen out of 22 cities were obliterated, including 75 percent of Pyongyang and 100 percent of Sinaju. LeMay stated that we "burned every town in North Korea - and South Korea too." Hungarian journalist Tibor Meray reported: "we traveled in moonlight, so my impression was that I am traveling on the moon, because there was only devastation...every city was a collection of chimneys. I don't know why houses collapsed and chimneys did not, but I went through a city of 200,000 inhabitants and I saw thousands of chimneys and that - that was all."²²



Bombing Wonsan, 1951

The bombing targeted all industrial plants in Northeast Korea as well as railroads, communications centers and the country's electrical system. 1,200-pound bombs targeted DPRK leaders who hid in deep bunkers, while villagers were forced to live in caves where disease proliferated. Thousands of leaflets were dropped warning civilians to stay off roads and away from facilities that might be bombed, but independent observers felt the American ground forces were much too "quick to call in overwhelming close air support to overcome any resistance in flammable Korean villages."²³

An official army history reported that “we killed civilians, friendly civilians, and bombed their homes, fired on whole villages with occupants – women and children, and ten times as many hidden communist soldiers – under showers of napalm, and the pilots came back to their ships stinking of vomit twisted from their vitals by the shock of what they had to do.”²⁴

British journalist Reginald Thompson described “holocausts of death and jellied petroleum bombs spreading an abysmal desolation over whole communities.... In such warfare, the slayer merely touches a button and death is in the wings, blotting out the remote, the unknown people below.” I.F. Stone stated that sanitized reports of the air raids reflected a “gay moral imbecility utterly devoid of imagination – as if the flyers were playing in a bowling alley, with villages for pins.”²⁵

Racial dehumanization accounted in part for the lack of restraint in targeting civilians. Douglas MacArthur believed that “the Oriental dies stoically because he thinks of death as the beginning of life.” In May 1953, in blatant violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, article 56, US bombers struck three irrigation dams in Toksan, Chasan and Kuwonga, and then attacked two more in Namsi and Taechon. The effect was to unleash flooding and to disrupt the rice supply. An Air Force study concluded that “the Westerner can little conceive the awesome meaning which the loss of this staple commodity has for the Asian – starvation and slow death.” After the war it took 200,000 man days of labor to reconstruct the reservoir in Toksan alone. “Only the very fine print of the New York Times war reports mentioned the dam hits,” Bruce Cumings notes, “with no commentary.”²⁶

According to a UN estimate, one out of nine North Korean women and children were killed during the war. J. Donald Kingsley, head of the reconstruction agency, called Korea “the most

devastated land and its people the most destitute in the history of modern warfare.”²⁷ For all the firepower and barbarism, the DPRK government was able to mobilize people quickly to rebuild roads and bridges destroyed in aerial attacks. General Matthew Ridgeway noted in a 1956 interview in *Look Magazine* that he had “seen whole sections of railroad bombed into scrap iron by aircraft and yet the enemy rebuilt the tracks in a single night and the trains ran the next day.” While inflicting serious damage on Chinese forces supporting the North Koreans, bombing did not “halt their offensive, nor materially diminish their strength. [Like the Vietnamese] the Chinese traveled light, with each man carrying his arms, his food and his weapon on his back. In a striking admission, Ridgeway added that “there is nothing in the present situation or in our code that requires us to bomb a small Asian nation back to the ‘stone age’...There must be some moral limit to the means we use to achieve victory.”²⁸

“Putting the fear of god into the Vietcong:” Overkill and the US Crucifixion of Vietnam

Five years after Ridgeway’s comments, the United States military turned its attention to South Vietnam, where the National Liberation Front (NLF) enjoyed wide support in its effort to expel the US client Ngo Dinh Diem and unify the country. On November 22, 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized the use of US forces “to avoid a further deterioration of the situation,” providing helicopters, light aviation and transport equipment,” and personnel “for aerial reconnaissance, instruction in and execution of air-ground support and special intelligence.” Defoliation campaigns using the dioxin-laced Agent Orange to destroy forest cover and the NLF food crop and napalm strikes began soon after. Army commander Paul Harkins boasted that napalm “really puts the fear of god into the Vietcong.”²⁹

In 1965, following the Gulf of Tonkin incident providing the pretext for dispatch of US forces,

the Johnson administration launched Operation Rolling Thunder against the North, its goal being to force a halt to the insurgency in the South and cut off supply lines. Rolling Thunder delivered 643,000 tons of bombs destroying 65 percent of the North's oil storage capacity, 59 percent of its power plants, 55 percent of its major bridges, 9,821 vehicles and 1,966 railroad cars.³⁰ Policy-makers claimed surgical precision; however, eyewitness reports pointed to the bombing of hospitals, schools, Buddhist pagodas, agricultural cooperatives, fishing boats, dikes and sanitariums, resulting in the death of an estimated 52,000 civilians. Nam Dinh, North Vietnam's third largest city, was "made to resemble the city of a vanished civilization," according to *New York Times* reporter Harrison Salisbury, despite being a center for silk and textile production, not war-related production. Vinh (population 72,000) was subjected to 4,131 attacks over a four year period, resulting in the destruction of nearly of all of its homes, 31 schools, the university, four hospitals and two churches.³¹



F-105 Thunder Chiefs in Rolling Thunder

Historian Jonathan Neale notes that "in most parts of North Vietnam, hospitals, schools and churches were the only brick or cement buildings of two stories or higher and pilots

thought they were military barracks."³² Pilot Randy Floyd attested that "virtually anywhere in North Vietnam was a free drop zone. We bombed the cattle because we were told that anything out there was North Vietnamese controlled and we figured that was part of the food supply."³³ Some of the worst atrocities resulted from the use of cluster and antipersonnel bombs which released smaller bombs the size of a grape fruit that were designed to cripple and maim. According to David Dellinger, "Doctors told me that they have trouble operating on any patients wounded by bombs because the steel is so small. Some of the bombs are timed and go off later. They interfere with relief operations and kill those trying to flee."³⁴

South Vietnam, which was bombed at four times the rate of the North, had 21 million bomb craters by the end of the war and 3.8 million acres of defoliated forestland. While policy-makers agonized over the decision to bomb the North out of fear of drawing in the Soviets or Chinese, there was no such constraint on bombing the South. In 1967, military analyst Bernard Fall warned that South Vietnam as a "cultural and historical entity" was threatened with "extinction... [as]...the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size."³⁵

A primary goal of the bombing was to force the Vietnamese populace into strategic hamlets or into the cities where some social scientists believed they could be won over through modernizing reforms. "The Maoist inspired rural revolution is undercut by the American sponsored urban revolution," wrote Samuel Huntington, a State Department adviser and Harvard professor. South Vietnam furthermore served as a laboratory for new counter-insurgency techniques and weapons, including electronic sensors and night vision devices used for target selection.³⁶ Napalm laced with phosphorus contributed to the terrorization of

the populace. One Canadian doctor testified that she had seen patients “so disfigured [from napalm] as to make it impossible to verify whether they were men or women. I have seen skin and bone sizzling on a child’s hand from phosphorus burns for 24 hours resisting any treatment.”³⁷

Author Jonathan Schell described the policy of overkill in guerrilla controlled free fire zones outside Saigon where pilots sent “their bombs on the deserted ruin [the village had already been hit once], scorching again the burned foundations of the houses and pulverizing the heaps of rubble in the hopes of collapsing tunnels too deep and well hidden for the bulldozers - having once destroyed it, we are now bent on annihilating every possible indication that the village [of Ben Suc] had ever existed.”³⁸

Truong Nhu Tang wrote in *A Vietcong Memoir* about the “undiluted psychological terror” experienced by revolutionary fighters operating under the constant threat of B-52 attack. “From a kilometer away, the sonic roar of the B-52 explosions tore eardrums, leaving many of the jungle dwellers permanently deaf. From a kilometer, the shock waves knocked their victims senseless. Any hit within half a kilometer would collapse the walls of an unreinforced bunker, burying alive the people cowering inside.” The first few times he experienced a B-52 attack, Truong felt as if he had been “caught in the apocalypse. The terror was complete. One lost control of bodily functions as the mind screamed incomprehensible orders to get out.... Sooner or later though, . . . people just resigned themselves - fully prepared to ‘go and sit in the ancestors corner.’”³⁹

In the last years of war, the strength of the antiwar movement and rebellion among US troops forced the Nixon administration to rely increasingly on air power to sustain the war. In spring 1972, bombs were dropped at a rate of

55,000 tons per month in the attempt to force Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) leaders to the bargaining table. Senator Edward Kennedy, whose committee on refugees relied on official reports, estimated civilian casualties at a minimum of half a million people, with over 5 million refugees. Journalist Neil Sheehan concluded that “the employment of American air power in Indochina reached a level of calculated slaughter which may gravely violate the laws of war, laws the US itself has pledged to uphold and enforce.”⁴⁰

The Vietnamese, with Soviet and Chinese support, developed sophisticated anti-aircraft weaponry that led to hundreds of bombers being shot down, and had an uncanny ability to camouflage trucks carrying equipment down the Ho Chi Minh trail and rebuild bridges and other infrastructure. They created an elaborate underground tunnel system, in which even medical operations could be carried out.⁴¹ After the war ended, the country would be rebuilt, though its ecology was ravaged and the prospects of socialist development, curtailed. In this latter respect, US policy proved successful.

“Anything that Flies on Anything that Moves:” The Secret Wars of Laos and Cambodia

In the fall of 2000, President Bill Clinton released Air Force data which showed that the United States dropped far more ordinance on Cambodia than was previously revealed; 2,756,941 tons in 230,516 sorties, 3,580 of the sites being listed as “unknown targets.” The bombings began in 1965 and supported Special Forces incursions and efforts to overthrow the neutralist Prince Norodom Sihanouk.⁴²

In March 1970, Sihanouk was deposed in a CIA-backed coup led by General Lon Nol. American and South Vietnamese forces invaded the country to bolster Lon Nol’s brutal rule, while the Nixon administration launched covert bombing attacks with the goal of flushing out

Khmer Rouge guerillas.⁴³ White House tapes reveal that President Nixon told Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to “go in there and I mean really go in....I want everything that can fly to go in there and crack the hell out of them.” After the conversation ended, Kissinger called General Alexander Haig to relay the new orders from the president: “He wants a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia....Anything that flies on anything that moves.”⁴⁴

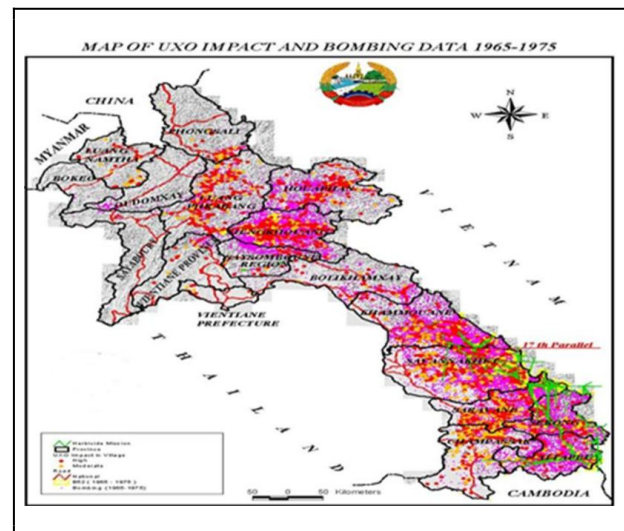


Soldiers patrol ruins of bombed out town in Cambodia

Immense devastation was inflicted on the Cambodian countryside, with at least 150,000 civilians killed and hundreds of villages leveled. Journalist William Shawcross reported in 1973 that “refugees [were] swarming into the capital from target areas,” with “dozens of villages, both east and southwest of Phnom Penh destroyed and as much as half their population killed or maimed.”⁴⁵ Chhit Do, a former Khmer Rouge official noted that “the ordinary people sometimes literally shit in their pants when the big bombs and shells came. Their minds just froze up and they would wander around mute for three or four days. Terrified and half crazy, the people were ready to believe what they were told. It was because of their dissatisfaction with the bombing that they kept on co-operating with the Khmer Rouge, joining up with the Khmer Rouge, sending their

children to go off with them.”⁴⁶

Based on such testimony, historians Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan concluded that, “civilian casualties drove an enraged population into the arms of an insurgency that had enjoyed relatively little support until the bombing began, setting in motion...the rapid rise of the Khmer Rouge, and ultimately the Cambodian genocide.” Popular historical representations, however, such as the 1987 Academy Award winning film *The Killing Fields*, helped to obscure the underlying conditions of US bombing in which the Khmer Rouge rose to power and became radicalized. A Finnish commission characterized the 1970s as a “decade of genocide,” with Nixon and Kissinger’s crimes rivaling those of Pol Pot, whom the Reagan administration supported after the Vietnamese overthrew him in 1979.⁴⁷

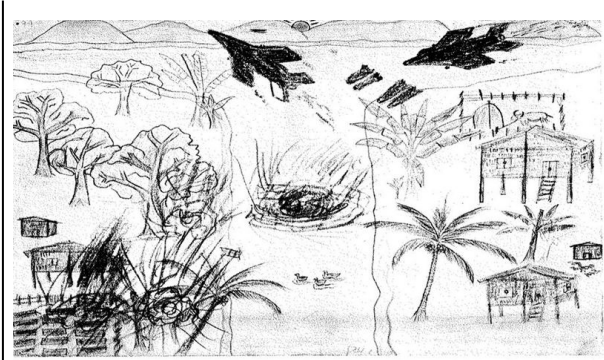


The bombing of Laos was almost entirely invisible at the time and has remained opaque ever since. Laos became enmeshed in conflict as a result of close ties between the Vietminh and Pathet Lao, who were driven underground in 1958 after the CIA helped subvert elections in which they won the majority of seats.⁴⁸ In March 1964, as the CIA began building a clandestine army among the indigenous Hmong to fight the Pathet Lao, Secretary of State Dean Rusk sanctioned the use of Royal Lao Air Force

T-28s manned by employees of the CIA subsidiary Air America and Lao and Thai pilots for bombing missions along with the use of napalm at the discretion of Ambassador Leonard Unger. Unger told Rusk, "We will keep the US entirely out of this matter with the press, indicating if pressed, that the bombs were in the FAR [Laotian army] arsenal and they apparently have taken the decision if necessary to use them."⁴⁹ In May, American aircraft began bombing strategic Pathet Lao encampments and road networks.

The United States dropped up to three million tons of bombs from launching pads in Thailand, predominantly along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the northern Plain of Jars, with the aim of interdicting supply routes and breaking enemy morale.⁵⁰

On the Plain of Jars, a Pathet Lao stronghold, countless villages were leveled and thousands of civilians were wounded or killed. Their livestock and cattle depleted, peasants sought to survive by living in underground caves and farming their fields at night. Over a quarter of the population was forced to flee to refugee camps, where malnutrition and disease were rampant.⁵¹ Expressing himself in verse, one refugee lamented, "What terrible sadness, so many loved ones killed, because of the huge bombs the airplanes rained down upon us, so many loved ones forced to leave their native villages, leaving behind spacious ricefields and gardens now turned to dust." Another lamented: "human beings, whose parents brought them into this world and carefully raised them overflowing with love despite so many difficulties, these human beings would die from a single blast as explosions burst, lying still without moving again at all."⁵²



My house and village were destroyed in the eleventh month of 1968. Two F-4H planes flew over and bombed my village for forty-five minutes, causing the destruction of many houses in my village. I was impoverished. All of my belongings were burned, and I was caused great difficulties. Our clothing was lost and we faced the future without hope and built small shelters in the forest and jungle. But I had nothing with which to make a living because everything was destroyed by the bombs. So I had to leave my village with great sadness.

—Artist: sixteen years old

Drawing reproduced from Fred Branfman, *Voices From the Plain of Jars*

For all the devastation, the bombing failed to break the revolutionaries, whose cadres hid deep in the forest and made use of effective spying networks. The CIA's clandestine army meanwhile was decimated and forced to recruit child soldiers for a "one-way helicopter ride to death," as journalist T.D. Allman characterized it. CIA operative Edgar "Pop" Buell told correspondent Robert Shaplen: "Here were these little kids in their camouflage uniforms . . . [who] looked real neat. . . . But Vang Pao [head of the Hmong army] and I knew better. They were too young and they weren't trained and in a few weeks 90 percent of them will be killed."⁵³

By the end of the war, much of the northeastern part of the countryside had been turned into a "wasteland" reminiscent of "the pocked, churned earth in storm-hit areas of the North African desert," according to T. D. Allman. Fred Branfman, an International Voluntary Service employee, whose book *Voices from the Plain of Jars* is a rare work written from the perspective of the Lao peasants, characterized it as a "lake of blood" where "after a recorded history of 700 years, civilized society had ceased to exist." He added that "a new type of warfare had been

developed fought not by men but machines and which could erase distant and unseen societies clandestinely, unknown to and even unsuspected by the world outside.”⁵⁴



Removed from the devastation, policy-makers considered the bombing a success as it was cost effective and involved few American casualties. “It is conceivable,” Noam Chomsky wrote that “even the modern day Metternich [reference to Kissinger] might be shaken by a face to face confrontation with refugees from the Plain of Jars, if one of his jaunts happened to bring him to the place where the fun and games are ‘transformed into operational reality.’”⁵⁵ A number of American historians have provided accounts sanitizing the record and defending US policy.⁵⁶ In June 2012, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton became the first American official to visit Laos in four decades and was confronted by people who had lost limbs from undetonated ordinance. She pledged \$9 million for clean-up, a pittance of money in light of the magnitude of the problems, which nevertheless represents a step towards acknowledging responsibility for turning Laos into a wasteland.

The Empire Strikes Back: Air Power in the Persian Gulf Techno-Wars and Afghanistan

After the American defeat in Indochina in 1975, a culture of denial swept the United States,

with neoconservatives blaming peace activists and ineffectual bureaucrats for the nation’s defeat.⁵⁷ Air power took on special significance in the planning for future wars, as policy-makers recognized that they could not count on domestic support for long-term troop commitments. The Vietnam antiwar movement had contributed to the resignation of Lyndon Johnson, to ending the draft, and to a permanent culture of skepticism towards military adventurism, which raised the political cost of intervention. In 1983, the Reagan administration bombed Grenada after a left wing coup and then bombed Libya for allegedly supporting terrorist attacks.⁵⁸ George H.W Bush subsequently relied on airpower in removing Panamanian General Manuel Noriega and inaugurated a massive blitz over Iraq to halt Saddam Hussein’s offensive into Kuwait and “kick the Vietnam syndrome.”

According to historian Mahmood Mamdani, the Gulf War was “the first time the US applied the military doctrine it had forged in Laos during the long war from 1964 to 1974: ‘to compensate for the absence of ground forces by an aerial bombardment of unprecedented intensity, without regard for collateral damage.’”⁵⁹ The United States launched 11,160 ‘surgical’ strikes and over 88,000 tons of explosives, targeting mainly industry, with 70 percent of bombs missing their targets.⁶⁰ The Bush administration, learning bitter lessons from the Indochina Wars, effectively censored the media, which presented the war as a triumph of US technology.⁶¹ By contrast, an investigation convened by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark found “severe damage to homes, electrical plants, fuel storage facilities, civilian factories, hospitals, churches, civilian airports, vehicles, transportation facilities, food storage and testing laboratories, grain silos, animal vaccination centers, schools and communication towers. Most of the bridges we saw destroyed were bombed from both ends.”⁶²

On February 17, two American bombs struck

the Amariyah shelter, killing an estimated 1,500 civilians, mostly women and children. The heaviest bombing took place over the city of Basra, which was transformed into a "hellish nightmare of fires and smoke so dense that witnesses say the sun hasn't been clearly visible for several days at a time....The bombing is leveling some entire city blocks...and there are bomb craters the size of football fields and an untold number of casualties." Paul W. Roberts, testified at Montreal commission hearings that the air attack was unlike anything that he had witnessed as a war correspondent in Vietnam: "after 20 minutes of this carpet bombing there would be a silence and you would hear a screaming of children and people, and then the wounded would be dragged out. I found myself with everyone else trying to treat injuries, but the state of the people generally was one of pure shock."⁶³

The destruction of Iraq's infrastructure, coupled with economic sanctions through the 1990s, led to a severe humanitarian crisis, including rampant malnutrition and child mortality. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright conceded that half a million children had died, a price she said was worth paying to contain Saddam Hussein.⁶⁴ The Gulf war served as a preview of the March 2003 shock and awe campaign in which 1,800 aircraft flew 41,000 sorties over two days in an attempt to bomb Hussein's government into submission.⁶⁵ After Hussein was overthrown and an insurgency broke out, the Bush administration promoted a doctrine of "collective punishment" in which civilian infrastructure and populations were targeted for supporting guerrillas. In dense urban areas, the US relied on Laser guided missiles directed against "terrorists" identified by Marine intelligence.⁶⁶ Bombing sorties reached 1,440 per day at their peak. During the 2004 siege in Fallujah, 75 percent of homes and buildings were destroyed, schools were flattened and hundreds were killed or maimed, with others left in a terrified state. Ahmed

Abdulla, a 21-year-old Fallujan told reporter Dahr Jamail that "every night we told each other goodbye because we expected to die. Every night there was extremely heavy bombing from the jets. My house shook when bombs hit the city, and the women were crying all of the time."⁶⁷

In Afghanistan, air strikes have contributed to a climate of terror breeding support for the Taliban. In the first six months after the US-NATO invasion, Prof. Marc Herold estimated on the basis of careful compilation of news reports that bombing had resulted in the death of 3,000-4,000 civilians, with B-52 strikes hitting targets without any military significance such as a city bus and residential neighborhood in Kandahar, a mountain village on the Khyber Pass, the news agency Al-Jazeera, schools, health clinics, mosques and fleeing refugees. Herold concluded that high civilian casualties stemmed from faulty intelligence, the fact that Taliban military facilities inherited from the Soviets were largely based in cities, and from the racism of US-NATO commanders "willing to sacrifice darker Afghans for the benefit of probably saving American soldier-citizens."⁶⁸ The bombing became so indiscriminate that even US client Hamid Karzai pleaded for greater restraint in the wake of B-52s striking wedding parties and killing seventy-three children in the village of Bola Boluk in Afghanistan's Western Farah province.⁶⁹

Since 2009, the Obama administration has escalated use of robotic drones, which have killed approximately 3,000 people in Pakistan, nearly one-third civilians including 176 children, with at least 1,200 injured. The number of high value targets killed is estimated at two percent. The director of a charitable organization stated that "an entire region [Waziristan] is being terrorized by the constant threat of death from the skies....kids are too terrified to go to school, adults are afraid to attend weddings, funerals, business meetings or anything that involves gathering in

groups.”⁷⁰

The drones represent the latest phase of American-style technowar, which has evolved from area and firebombing of German and Japanese cities in World War II, the bombing of irrigation dams and napalm strikes during the Korean War, and the use of B52's, chemical defoliants and cluster bombs in Indochina. The human cost of bombing has been extraordinary throughout, having resulted in the decimation of countless towns and villages and deaths of scores of thousands of civilians. Contrary to popular myth, the “American way” of war is in no way humane and the concept of humanitarian intervention an oxymoron. Yet for all its destructiveness, bombing has often proved futile militarily and driven the population into the arms of insurgents. Policymakers have yet to learn lessons from the Korean and Vietnam conflicts about the limits of American technology and power, or to recognize that technological advances cannot compensate for a failed diplomacy or reverse the political dynamic ensuring support for independence forces.

The public has often been kept in the dark about the consequences of bombing. The Truman administration and occupation censorship prevented the world from seeing the leveling of urban landscapes and frying of countless civilians in Japan. During the Indochina War, the loosening of censorship helped ignite antiwar opposition. Subsequent administrations learned from this the necessity of controlling the press and images of the human toll of bombing.⁷¹ Prior to his death in 2010, historian-activist and a World War II bombardier Howard Zinn expressed the belief that “if people could see the consequences of the bombing campaign [in Afghanistan] as vividly as we were all confronted with the horrifying photos in the wake of September 11, if they saw on TV night after night the blinded and maimed children, the weeping parents, they might ask: Is this the way to combat

terrorism? Surely it is now time, half a century after Hiroshima, to embrace a universal morality, to think of all children, everywhere as our own.”⁷² His words are ones that we should heed as we contemplate the violent history of US foreign policy since World War II. The notion that super-weapons can save the United States from destruction and vanquish American enemies has proven chimerical time and time again and has caused much suffering once these weapons have been unleashed. It is time to develop new cultural and political traditions and to channel American scientific genius unequivocally towards peaceful pursuits, including the solving of pressing social and environmental crises at home and abroad.

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Notes

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¹ David Dellinger, “North Vietnam: Eyewitness Report” *Liberation*, December 1966, 3-15.

² See Deborah Nelson, *The War Behind Me: Vietnam Veterans Confront the Truth About U.S. War Crimes-Inside the Army's Secret Archive of Investigations* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

³ “Notes from the Editors,” *Monthly Review*, September 2012, 64.

⁴ On the myth of the spat upon veteran, see Jerry L. Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: New York University Press, 1998). On US and Japanese historical revisionism, see *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States*, eds. Mark Selden and Laura Hein (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).

⁵ Sahr Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage: Americans, Noncombatant Immunity, and Atrocity After World War II* (London: Routledge, 2006), 47. On Arnold, see Flint Dupre, *Hap Arnold: Architect of American Airpower* (New York: McMillan, 1972).

⁶ H. Bruce Franklin, *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination*, rev ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008).

⁷ In Beau Grosscup, *Strategic Terror: The Politics and Ethics of Aerial Bombardment* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 23. See also Alfred Hurley, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Airpower* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

⁸ Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 53; Mark Selden, “[A Forgotten Holocaust: US Bombing Strategy, the Destruction of Japanese Cities and the American Way of War from World War II to Iraq](#),” *Japan Focus*, May 2, 2007 ; *Bombing Civilians: A 20th Century History*, eds. Marilyn B. Young and Yuki Tanaka (New York: The New Press, 2009). Some pilots were emotionally affected. Howard Zinn and Senator George McGovern developed pacifist views after serving as bombers in World War II.

⁹ Quoted in Rashid Khalidi, *Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 27. See also

Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 146.

¹⁰ “Report of Activities,” July 1, 1920–June 30, 1921, Records of the Department of State, Related to the Internal Records of Haiti, 838.105, National Archives, College Park Maryland; Irwin R. Franklyn, *Knights of the Cockpit: A Romantic Epic of the Flying Marines in Haiti* (New York: Dial Press, 1931), 227, 228.

¹¹ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas 2003), 28.

¹² Gregorio Selser, *Sandino* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981), 82; Richard Grossman, “The Blood of the People,” in *When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror*, ed. Cecilia Menjívar and Néstor Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Neill Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 116.

¹³ Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower*, 151.

¹⁴ Selden, “A Forgotten Holocaust.” Harris previously headed the RAF in Palestine. He stated that the “solution to Arab unrest was to drop one 250 pound or 500-pound bomb in each village that speaks out of turn...The only thing the Arab understands is the heavy hand, and sooner or later it will have to be applied.” Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 65.

¹⁵ Selden, “A Forgotten Holocaust;” Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower*, 274; John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York; Pantheon, 1986). On the atomic attacks and psychological effects on survivors, see Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York: Vintage, 1967).

¹⁶ Marilyn B. Young, “Bombing Civilians: From

the 20th to the 21st Centuries,” in *Bombing Civilians*, 155. In contrast to LeMay, “Hap” Arnold told the *New York Times* that the potential destructiveness of future wars meant that the US must not let another occur. In Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage*, 47.

¹⁷ John Steinbeck, *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009); Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower*, 137.

¹⁸ Richard Falk provides an excellent discussion of the weakness of humanitarian laws aiming to protect civilians and the gap between US rhetoric and its promotion of state terrorism in “State Terror Versus Humanitarian Law” in *War and State Terrorism: The United States, Japan, and the Asia-Pacific in the Long Twentieth Century*, eds. Mark Selden and Alvin Y. So (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 41-63. In the 1940s, air force officers also set about improving the aerial warfare capabilities of proxy regimes in the Philippines and Greece fighting leftist guerrillas. Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 109, 125.

¹⁹ Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern American Library, 2010). On the US political economy after World War II, see Paul A. Koistinen, *Arsenal of World War II: The Political Economy of American Warfare* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Seymour Melman ed., *The War Economy of the United States: Readings on Military Industry and Economy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1971).

²⁰ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

²¹ Conrad Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 23; Young, “Bombing Civilians: From the 20th to the 21st Centuries,” in *Bombing Civilians*, 157.

²² Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 117-118. According to Cumings, a partial table of the destruction shows: Pyongyang - 75%; Chongjin - 65%; Hamhung - 80%; Hungnam - 85%; Sariwon - 95%; Sinaju - 100%; Wonsan - 80%. The napalming of refugees is discussed in John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America’s Wars* (New York: Oxford, 2011), 104-05. Orders were given from Ambassador John Muccio, via Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk, to use lethal force against refugees who blocked US tanks or had the potential of fomenting insurrections in US controlled zones. At No Gun Ri, refugees were strafed and killed by US planes and shot. See Charles J. Hanley, Sang-Hun Choe, and Martha Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Holt, 2000) and Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage*, 96-102.

²³ Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*, 40, 41, 43; Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage*, 149. One 60-year-old man, too sick to brush away hundreds of flies that swarmed him, told a *New York Times* reporter that he “wanted to die - I would rather die than live like this.”

²⁴ Cumings, *The Korean War*, 160. Air strikes were also called in frequently in the South to help clear out villages. One in Seoul struck an orphanage killing over 100 children.

²⁵ Reginald Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 2nd ed. (New York: Reportage Press, 2009); I.F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, rev ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 258; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol. II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 706-07. Gen. Douglas MacArthur hatched a plan to drop between 30 to 50 atom bombs across the neck of Manchuria and spread radioactive cobalt capable of wiping out animal and plant life for at least 60 years. “We can then be

sure of no land invasion from the north," he said.

²⁶ Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Vol II*, 705; "Attack on the Irrigation Dams in North Korea," *Air University Quarterly Review*, 6 (Winter 1953-1954), 41. On biological warfare allegations and experiments, the most fiercely debated issue of the war, see Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare: Secrets from the Early Cold War and Korea* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); "United States Biological Warfare during the Korean War: Rhetoric and Reality" ; Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, *Korea Since 1850* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 115-18.

²⁷ Marilyn B. Young, "Bombing Civilians: From the 20th to the 21st Centuries," in *Bombing Civilians*, 160.

²⁸ Quoted in Wilfred G. Burchett, *Vietnam North* (New York: International Publishers, 1966). The Air Force claimed that air power "executed the dominant role in the achievement of military objectives," with the threatened devastation of North Korea's agricultural economy forcing Kim Il-Sung to the bargaining table. Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 141.

²⁹ Noam Chomsky, *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 50, 51. The orders for the food destruction program are available in the National Security Files at the JFK presidential library. E.g. Dean Rusk, memo for the president, "Defoliant Operations in Vietnam," November 24, 1961, Papers of President Kennedy, National Security Files, Meetings and memoranda, Box 332, Defoliant Operations in Vietnam. Fred Wilcox, *Scorched Earth: Legacies of Chemical War in Vietnam* with an introduction by Noam Chomsky (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011).

³⁰ Michael Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (London: The Free Press, 1989), 134; Ronald B. Frankum, Jr. *Like Rolling Thunder: The Air War in Vietnam, 1964-1975* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 19-66 details the air war over North Vietnam, 1965-68. As early as April 28, 1965, a memorandum from CIA Director John McCone criticized the limited scale of bombing and called for expansion of the air war

³¹ Harrison Salisbury, *Behind the Lines: Hanoi December 23-January 7* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 100; Harrison Salisbury, "No Military Targets, Namdinh Insists," *New York Times*, December 31, 1966, 3; *The Wasted Nations: Report of the International Commission of Inquiry of US Crimes in Indochina*, ed. Frank Browning and Dorothy Foreman, introduction by Richard Falk (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 91; *Against the Crime of Silence: Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal* (Stockholm, Copenhagen), ed. John Duffet (Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1968).

³² Jonathan Neale, *A People's History of the Vietnam War* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 78; Burchett, *Vietnam North*, 13. See also John Gerassi, *North Vietnam: A Documentary History* (London: George Allen, 1968). Burchett reported that planes bombed a TB hospital in Than Hoa, killing 40 patients and doctors and wiping out 50 buildings in what appears to be a typical act.

³³ *The Wasted Nations*, 134, 135.

³⁴ David Dellinger, "North Vietnam: Eyewitness Report" *Liberation*, December 1966, 3-15. See also Eric Prokosch, *The Technology of Killing: A Military and Political History of Antipersonnel Weapons* (London: Zed Books, 1995). Some cluster bombs had fiberglass pellets which were invisible to Xrays. This incapacitated the wounded even more because of the difficulty of finding an extracting it.

- ³⁵ Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, rev ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 183; Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); James W. Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 225.
- ³⁶ Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (New York: Harperperennial, 1991), 177; Christian G. Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: 2003); Eric Norden, "American Atrocities in Vietnam," in *Crimes of War*, ed. Richard Falk, Gabriel Kolko and Robert Jay Lifton (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 265-284.
- ³⁷ Quoted in *The Wasted Nations*, xi.
- ³⁸ Jonathan Schell, "The Village of Ben Suc" In *The Real War: the Classic Reporting on the Vietnam War* (London: Corgi Books, 1989).
- ³⁹ Truong Nhu Tang, *A Vietcong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and its Aftermath* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 167, 170.
- ⁴⁰ *The Air War in Indochina*, ed. Norman Uphoff and Raphael Littauer, with a preface by Neil Sheehan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 1; Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998). On the GI rebellion see David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, rev ed. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005) and David Zeiger, *Sir no Sir!: The Suppressed Story of the GI Movement to End the Vietnam War* (Displaced Films, 2006).
- ⁴¹ See e.g. Young, *The Vietnam Wars*; Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1985). The best depiction that I have seen of the tunnel system is in the documentary *The Cu Chi Tunnels*, produced by Mickey Grant (1990).
- ⁴² Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, "[Bombs Over Cambodia: New Information Reveals that Cambodia was Bombed far More Heavily Than Previously Believed](#)," *The Walrus*, October 2006; Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, "[Bombs Over Cambodia: New Light on US Air War](#)," *Japan Focus*, May 12, 2007,
- ⁴³ See Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
- ⁴⁴ Owen and Kiernan, "Bombs Over Cambodia."
- ⁴⁵ See William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Pocket Books, 1979); Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, 350; Noam Chomsky, *At War with Asia: Essays on Indochina* (New York: Vintage, 1970). Starvation and disease pervaded the country, with the Nixon administration failing to provide adequate relief support.
- ⁴⁶ Owen and Kiernan, "Bombs Over Cambodia."
- ⁴⁷ Kimmo Kiljunen, ed. *Kampuchea: Decade of the Genocide: Report of a Finnish Inquiry Commission* (London: Zed Books, 1984); Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology* (Boston: South End Press, 1979) and later works by Chomsky.
- ⁴⁸ See Thomas L. Ahern Jr., *Undercover Armies: CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos, 1961-1973* (Washington, DC: CIA, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2006), 10.
- ⁴⁹ American ambassador, Vientiane, to Secretary of State, August 4, 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson library (LBJL), Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), Laos, box 268; Dean Rusk to American embassy, Vientiane, and American embassy to Secretary of State, August 18, 1964, LBJL, National Security Files,

Country File Asia and the Pacific, Laos (NSF), box 265; Bromley Smith to President, December 14, 1964; and George Denney Jr., U.S. Department of State, to Secretary of State, January 27, 1965, LBJL, NSF, box 269; American embassy Vientiane to Secretary of State, March 20, 1964, LBJL, NSF, box 265.

⁵⁰ Alfred W. McCoy, "The Secret War in Laos, 1955-1975," In *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, ed. Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco (UK: Blackwell, 2002), 195; Perry L. Lamy, "Barrel Roll, 1968-1973: An Air Campaign in Support of National Policy," Maxwell Air Force Base, May 10, 1995; Bromley Smith to President, December 14, 1964, LBJL, NSF, Laos, box 269. Operation Barrel Roll focused on northern Laos, while Operation Steel Tiger took place in the eastern portion of the country along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

⁵¹ Noam Chomsky, introduction to *Laos: War and Revolution*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Leonard P. Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), xviii; Fred Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars: Life Under an Air War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 23; Martin Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144; G. Chapelier and J. Van Malderghem, "Plain of Jars, Social Changes under Five Years of Pathet Lao Administration," *Asia Quarterly* (Winter 1971).

⁵² Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, 35, 38-39.

⁵³ Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, 48-49, 81; Robert Shaplen, *Time Out of Hand: Revolution and Reaction in Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 348.

⁵⁴ T. D. Allman, "Ruined Town a Vignette of War in Laos," *New York Times*, October 17, 1969; T. D. Allman, "The War in Laos: Plain Facts," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 8, 1972, 16; Fred Branfman, "A Lake of Blood," *New York Times*, April 7, 1971; Branfman, *Voices from*

the Plain of Jars, 4.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Noam Chomsky, "The Backroom Boys," *For Reasons of State*, rev ed. (New York: New Press, 2003), 7, 9.

⁵⁶ Timothy Castle rationalizes the US bombing of Laos in *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955-1975* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). See also Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Harvard University Press, 2007). An important counterweight to these studies is Nick Turse's forthcoming book, *The Real Vietnam War* (New York: Metropolitan, 2013) and Bernd Greiner, *War Without Fronts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Alfred W. McCoy has also written poignantly on the bombing in "The Secret War in Laos" in *A Companion to the Vietnam War*.

⁵⁷ See e.g. H. Bruce Franklin's discussion in *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ See Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1992) and Gordon K. Lewis, *Grenada: The Jewel Despoiled* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987).

⁵⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 183.

⁶⁰ Barton Gellman, U.S. Bombs Missed 70% of Time; 'Smart' Munitions Far More Accurate," *The Washington Post*, March 16, 1991, A1.

⁶¹ Douglas Kellner, *The Persian Gulf TV War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992). See also *Triumph of the Image: the Media's War in the Persian Gulf - A Global Perspective*, ed. Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner and Herbert I. Schiller (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).

⁶² Ramsey Clark, *The Fire This Time: U.S. War Crimes in the Gulf* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992).

⁶³ Clark, *The Fire This Time*, 68. Pentagon analysts rejected or evaded the Clark commission findings. John F. Jones, "Giulio Douhet Vindicated: Desert Storm, 1991" *Naval War College Review*, 45 (Autumn 1992), 97-102 and Col. Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell, 1992). Robert Pape skirts over the humanitarian consequences in *Bombing to Win*.

⁶⁴ See *Iraq under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*, ed. Anthony Arnone (Boston: South End Press, 2000).

⁶⁵ See Harlan Ullman et al., *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (National Defense Institute, 1996); Tirman, *The Deaths of Others*, 227.

⁶⁶ Michael Schwartz, *War Without End: The Iraq War in Context* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008); Seymour Hersh, "Up in the Air: Where is the Iraq War Headed Next?" *The New Yorker*, Dec 5, 2005. The few articles in the mainstream press on the air war primarily emphasized the danger to US pilots.

⁶⁷ Dahr Jamail, "[Living Under the Bombs](#)," February 2, 2005. See also Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and Assault on Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 47; Nick Turse, "Bombs over Baghdad: America's Secret War in Iraq," Feb. 6, 2007;

Patrick Cockburn, "[Toxic Legacy of US Assault on Fallujah 'Worse than Hiroshima:' The Shocking Rate of Infant Mortality and Cancer in Iraqi City Raises New Questions About Battle](#)," *The Independent*, July 24, 2010.

⁶⁸ Marc Herold, "[A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan](#)," Durham, N.H.: unpublished manuscript, Departments of Economics and Women's Studies, University of New Hampshire, December 2001. See also Malaila Joya, with Derrick O'Keefe, *A Woman among Warlords: The Extraordinary Story of an Afghan Who Dared to Raise her Voice* (New York: Scribner, 2009); Kathy Kelly, "Cold, Cold Heart," *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*, <http://vcnv.org/cold-cold-heart>.

⁶⁹ Patrick Cockburn, "['120 die' as US bombs village](#)," *The Independent*, May 7, 2009; Tom Engelhardt, "[The Wedding Crashers](#)," June 13, 2008.

⁷⁰ [Living under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practices in Pakistan](#) (NYU and Stanford School of Law, September 2012); Nick Turse, "Terminator Planet" May 31, 2012; Tom Engelhardt, *The American Way of War: How Bush's Wars Became Obama's* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2010).

⁷¹ See Chomsky and Herman, *Manufacturing Consent*.

⁷² Quoted in Martin Duberman, *Howard Zinn: A Life on the Left* (New York: New Press, 2012), 297.