As far as any future activities are concerned, those orders still are in force. I do not intend to allow any orders to go out which would involve civilian casualties if they can be avoided. Military targets only will be allowed.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE LAIRD'S NEWS CONFERENCE (EXCERPT), JULY 6, 1972 FROM THE PENTAGON TRANSCRIPT

I believe that, at the present time, the North Vietnamese are carrying on a very intensified worldwide campaign, which is accusing us of tampering with the dikes, and with their dam system. Last year, as you know, they had tremendous rains and monsoons and many of the dams and dikes were affected by the severe flooding which took place last year.

We have never targeted a dam or dike on our targeting system as far as North Vietnam is concerned. Some of the dams and the dikes may be roadways that are being used or they may be in a position where anti-aircraft weaponry is placed; and, of course, our pilots are given the opportunity and they should have the capability to take out anti-aircraft wherever it comes, or from wherever it comes.

So there have been times when I assume these pilots have gone off after primary targets which were, of course, the anti-aircraft or logistics supplies. With the road network which they have, many times, and with all the rice paddies and all of the dams, there may have been some damage. The real damage to dikes and dams of North Vietnam is the damage that was suffered weakening these dams and dikes last year during the very, very heavy flooding of North Vietnam.

I believe that the North Vietnamese are carrying on this campaign in order for them to relieve themselves of the responsibility with their own people for their failure to adequately repair this system since the major flooding of last year.

[From the Boston Globe, July 7, 1972]

LAIRD ADMITS NORTH VIETNAM DIKE DAMAGE

WASHINGTON.—Softening previous flat U.S. denials of Hanoi's claims, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird has acknowledged American war-planes may have damaged some flood control dikes in North Vietnam.

Laird charged, however, that most of the claims result from a deliberate effort by Hanoi to duck responsibility for failing to repair the dike system adequately after disastrous monsoon floods a year ago.

North Vietnam's dikes themselves have never been the target of U.S. bombs or rockets, Laird said yesterday. But he said in certain cases dikes may have suffered damage during attacks against anti-aircraft weapons firing from them or supply convoys traveling down roads built on them.

Laird said U.S. pilots are allowed to fight back against antiaircraft fire "wherever it comes from" emplacement on the dikes. He said he considers this proper, but implied it does not happen often.

In recent weeks, North Vietnam has repeatedly accused the United States of bombing the dikes. A western correspondent based in Hanoi, Jean Thoraval of the Agence France-Presse, reported June 24 he had been taken to see some of the dikes protecting the town of Nam Dinh, 90 miles south of the North Vietnamese capital, and several of the dikes had been cracked or gusted.

Defense Department officials have consistently maintained there is no photographic evidence of U.S. bomb damage to dikes but Laird deliberately backed away from any flat claims of no damage at all, which some U.S. officials have made in the past.

[From the New York Times, July 6, 1972]

ENEMY IS FACING FLOODS, U.S. SAYS, DENYING ROLE

(By Bernard Gwertzman)

WASHINGTON, July 5—State Department officials said today that there was a strong likelihood North Vietnam would be flooded later this summer, but they said North Vietnam's dike system would be responsible rather than American bombing raids.
In separate interviews, responsible State Department officers did not deny that some bombs were falling on the dikes. But they again insisted that there has been no systematic targeting of the dike system, which runs throughout the Red River basin.

In recent weeks, North Vietnam repeatedly accused the United States of intentionally bombing the dikes to cause flooding during the monsoon season, which has just begun.

**Floods Last Summer**

Last summer, when there was no American bombing of the area, North Vietnam suffered its worst flooding in years. Administration experts say the dikes were heavily damaged by those floods, and they back up their views with citations from the Hanoi press.

A State Department senior official showed a translation of an article that appeared in the June 20 issue of a Hanoi newspaper, *Hanoi Moi*. Written by Tran Duy Hung, chairman of the Hanoi Administrative Committee, the article said: "In some places, the repair of the dike portions that were damaged by torrential rains in 1971 has not yet met technical requirements."

"A number of thin and weakened dikes which are probably full of termite colonies and holes have not been detected for repair," it said.

**Warning to Population**

The article said that each individual and locality must actively take part in the current dike-building operation, because "there is not much time before the torrential rain season."

"Repair methods must be firmly grasped in case the dikes are eroded, eaten away, broken through or washed over by water," it said. "We must organize many dike repair exercises, including cases in which the dikes are attacked by the enemy."

The article also accused what it called "the warlike Nixon clique" as having destroyed parts of the dike system by bombing.

The State Department officials interviewed said that in view of the heavy air campaign against North Vietnam, accidental bombing of the dikes could not be ruled out.

One official said that such bombing could take place under at least three circumstances: the first, when North Vietnamese antiaircraft guns are situated at or near dikes, and are attacked; the second, when American fighter-bombers, engaged in aerial combat, unload their ordnance to gain speed, and the third, when air-to-ground missiles directed against North Vietnamese radar become "un-directed" when the radar is shut off.

**Probability of Floods**

Administration experts, studying the over-all situation in North Vietnam, have concluded that there is "a higher than normal probability" that floods similar to last year's may strike next month.

Because North Vietnam has charged repeatedly that the dikes have been bombed deliberately, the Administration has become sensitive to the possibility that world opinion would blame the United States for any flooding that develops.

Therefore, the State Department has been eager to publicize any internal evidence, such as the *Hanoi Moi* article, that supports, even indirectly, the American contention that flooding may occur for reasons unconnected with the bombing.

President Nixon and Administration spokesmen have regularly denied that the dikes are targets for destruction.

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*From the Baltimore Sun, July 9, 1972*

**Bombing Viet Dikes Could Kill Millions, Australians Say**

(By Edward K. Wu)

HANOI—Ten million North Vietnamese could drown if American planes continue to bomb the dikes in the Red River valley of North Vietnam, a group of Australian anti-war movement leaders said here yesterday upon return from a seven-day visit to Hanoi and Halphong.
The group, speaking at a press conference, reported that a Swedish Embassy official in Hanoi could prove with documentation that the Nixon administration was not telling the truth when it denied bombing river dikes in heavily populated areas.

From their conversations with the Swedish diplomat and North Vietnamese officials, they had the impression that the Hanoi leaders also were worried that the United States might use meteorological warfare in combination with the bombing of the dikes to cause devastating floods.

The monsoon rains have just started in North Vietnam. Any seeding of rain clouds with silver iodide could cause abnormally concentrated rainfall. In July and August last year, North Vietnam suffered from the worst floods in history as the result of heavy rains and breaking dikes.

The five Australians were Ken McLeod, of the Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament, in Sydney; Leo Lenane, of the Brisbane Waterside Workers Federation; Robert Catley, of the University of Adelaide; Deirdre Hunter, a writer from Canberra, and Harry Van Moorst, a Melbourne student leader.

They were guests of the Vietnam Peace Committee.

In their meeting with Hoang Tung, an alternate member of the Vietnam Workers (Communist) Party Central Committee and editor-in-chief of the official Hanoi daily Nhan Dan, it was indicated that Senator George S. McGovern, of South Dakota, would be welcome if he came to Hanoi as President to end the war.

Insisting that the war must be ended on the Communists' terms, Mr. Tung was quoted as saying, "Senator McGovern said he would come to Hanoi within 90 days of being elected President to solve the war, and we would welcome this."

The anti-war leaders also interviewed 14 American prisoners of war in Hanoi June 29. Among the prisoners they talked to were two pilots whose planes were shot down as recently as June 27.

They said the prisoners appeared to be in good health and made statements urging the U.S. to end the war immediately.

Mr. Lenane alleged that the object of American bombing was to terrorize the people. He cited examples of indiscriminate bombing of schools, hospitals, civilian homes and sometimes complete villages.

According to Mrs. Hunter, the group saw whole blocks of houses in a residential area in Haiphong demolished by the bombing. The only structure remaining intact in that area, they said, was a bridge, which might be a military target.

The anti-war visitors did not see panic either in Hanoi or Haiphong. People go to the air raid shelters in an orderly way when the alert siren is sounded and return to their jobs when the raid is over, they said.

The visitors were taken to the air shelters several times during their week-long stay and chatted with the Vietnamese there while the raids were on.

Among the Vietnamese was a woman who only three hours earlier had given birth to a baby.

"People in Haiphong still trim their hedges and prune the trees," Dr. Catley said. Parks and restaurants, he added, were full of people, and life was reasonably normal.

The port of Haiphong, however, appeared to be idle, with only seven ships in the harbor. The ships were registered in the Soviet Union, East Germany and Hong Kong.

[From the New York Times, July 18, 1972]

U.S. DISPUTES FRENCH NEWSMAN ON BOMBING OF DIKES

(By Seymour M. Hersh)

WASHINGTON, July 12—The Defense Department and a French correspondent in North Vietnam were in sharp dispute today over whether United States planes deliberately bombed dikes yesterday near a village 37 miles southeast of Hanoi.

A dispatch filed yesterday by Jean Thoraval, a Hanoi-based correspondent for Agence France-Presse, said that about a dozen United States jets staged an early-morning attack on a dike system outside the village of Namsach, in the fertile and heavily populated Red River Delta area.

Mr. Thoraval reported that he and other foreign journalists had been taken to Namsach to inspect bomb damage that the North Vietnamese said American
The attack began, he said, soon after the party arrived. "The jets went into a dive and released several bombs and rockets against the dikes on which we were standing," Mr. Thoraval wrote.

Daniel Z. Henkin, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, confirmed that United States Navy planes repeatedly bombed the Namsach area yesterday morning. But in a statement supplied to The New York Times, he denied that any dikes in the area had been assigned as specific targets. He said that the aircraft were attacking three nearby military targets—a surface-to-air missile site, a dispersed oil and petroleum area and an above-ground fuel pipeline.

Although the Agence France-Presse dispatch was received yesterday, The New York Times delayed publication while seeking further clarification from the agency and the Department of Defense. Today Agence France-Presse was unable to clarify questions raised by the original dispatch.

In his dispatch, Mr. Thoraval said that "only two or three SAM missiles were fired at the attackers." He and his fellow journalists, he wrote, unanimously agreed that the attack was clearly against the dike system and that "the pilots dropped their bombs at random" during the 10-minute raid.

The area under attack, Mr. Thoraval said, was full of dikes and irrigation-control facilities. "As far as the eye could see there was nothing but rice paddies," he added.

Among the questions left unanswered by the dispatch were whether the attack damaged any of the dikes, how far from the spectators the bombs fell, the locations of the antiaircraft emplacements from which missiles were fired at the planes, and how the newsman could know that the jets were aiming at the dikes and not at the missile sites.

Mr. Henkin said that his office had made an extended effort to obtain details of the bombing mission. "Normally, I do not discuss special military targets," he said. "The pilots on top can see 25 to 80 miles and he's got orientation," he said. "He knows what he's going after."

Speaking of Mr. Thoraval, Mr. Henkin said: "You can be sure nobody told him that there was a pipeline or a SAM site there."

Mr. Henkin also suggested that the random bombing mentioned by the French journalist might have been an attempt by the pilots to destroy the oil pipeline. Asked specifically whether any dikes had been attacked inadvertently or otherwise—in conjunction with the bombing raids on the three military targets, Mr. Henkin stated: "We have stated that there is always a possibility that dikes may be hit."

He added that he had not seen any after-action photographs of the targets at Namsach.

Mr. Thoraval's dispatch yesterday was the third within three weeks on bomb damage to the North Vietnamese dike system. On June 24 he wrote that he had visited bombed-out dike sections near the city of Namdinh, and on June 30 he filed a similar account of dike damage around Phu Ly. Both are south of Hanoi.

Similar reports were made by Jean-Christophe Oberg, Sweden's Ambassador to North Vietnam, during his home leave last month. Mr. Oberg, who is now back in Hanoi, was widely quoted in newspapers as alleging that the United States attacks were deliberate.

In addition, North Vietnam's official press agencies and radio services have repeatedly described alleged United States bombing attacks on the dike system. On June 30, for example, The Phan My, North Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Hydraulics, was quoted in official newspapers as saying 20 bombing attacks were made on dikes during the month. More than 40 specific allegations were made by the North Vietnamese in April and May.

In interviews today, officials in both the State Department and White House expressed concern over the bombing reports. "We're taking a pasting on this thing," one said.

"It's depressing," another official said, "but we know we're doing all we can and we're going to just ride it out."

In what seemed to be an attempt to counter the adverse publicity, State Department officials recently distributed copies of a Hanoi newspaper article in which the citizens were exhorted to take part in dike repair and rebuilding operations. They explained that much work was needed to repair portions of
the dikes that were damaged or destroyed by the 1971 floods, described them as the worst in more than 25 years.

"There is not much time before the torrential rainy season," the article said. That season is expected to reach its peak sometimes between July and late September.

In interviews at the Pentagon, a number of high-ranking military officers heatedly reasserted that dikes were not targets of Air Force or Navy attacks. "If we wanted to go after them, we'd go after them," an officer said.

A senior Navy pilot who recently returned from duty with the Seventh Fleet said that "it has been emphasized and reemphasized to the pilots that dikes are not authorized targets."

Details on the current rules of engagement are highly classified, but military sources agreed that Navy and Air Force pilots could legitimately attack—as so-called "targets of opportunity"—enemy missile sites or antiaircraft batteries on top of dikes.

Similarly, pilots are apparently authorized, without obtaining clearance, to attack supply convoys or equipment stockpiles on roads on top of dikes.

"A military target is targeted and if it happens to be near a dike," a military source said, "then it gets hit."

One high-ranking officer who has access to much of the daily bombing information said: "Given the number of irrigation systems up there, and given all the ordnance being dropped, there's always the possibility of an accident."

[From the Washington Post, July 11, 1972]

HANOI'S RED RIVER DIKES CALLED UNDERPINNING OF NATION'S LIFE

(By George McArthur)

SAIGON, July 10—The bombing of the dikes in North Vietnam—now being claimed by Hanoi and hotly denied by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird—has never been advocated by any of the ranking U.S. officials who have served in Vietnam.

From Gen. William C. Westmoreland to the current commander, Gen. Frederick Weyand, they have all denied any such intention. Privately, the military commanders and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker have recognized that such a campaign would risk enormous civilian casualties and set off justifiable outcries around the world.

While lower ranking officers have sometimes spoken of such bombings, official sources say such proposals have never been given any consideration.

The reluctance to consider bombing the dikes is based on the knowledge that these massive structures are literally the underpinning of life in North Vietnam.

IMPORTANCE IS PARAMOUNT

While most people might conceive of dikes as more or less ordinary construction efforts to control errant rivers, the dikes of North Vietnam are far more important.

They moved historian Joseph Buttinger to write, "They rise above the flat lands of the delta in higher praise of man than the pyramids along the Nile—true ramparts of civilization, if anything ever deserved such a name."

Visitors to North Vietnam are invariably awed by the dikes along the Red River and its tributaries. In recent months, trips along the river have been forbidden to most if not all outsiders, according to those who have visited the North.

In 1954, before the partition of Vietnam, the dikes along the Red River extended more than 1,600 miles. Under the Communist regime they have been extended and enlarged, but there are no official figures. The most important dikes, of course, are those which flank the Red River itself.

Prewar population figures show that some 6 million people live in the Red River Delta. In some areas, the population density is one thousand per square mile.

Since the beginning of Vietnamese history perhaps 2,000 years ago, these people have been dependent on the river and have labored to enlarge and strengthen the very dikes which stand today.

In Vietnamese, the Red River is often called simply the Great River (Song Cai). The reason is clear: Buttinger's history notes that the Red River carries twice the average volume of the Rhone in a bed far narrower.
GREAT FLOW VARIATION

The flow variation between dry and wet season can be as much as 40 times the low of 844 cubic feet per second. During severe floods—as happened last year—almost the entire delta was well below the river’s high water mark. Parts of Hanoi are as much as 25 feet below the high water mark.

As Buttinger noted, only a “Promethean reaction against the cruel heavens” could insure survival in the Red River Delta, and this reaction was the building of a system of dikes surpassing that known anywhere else in the world.

“The Red River now flows through the delta between two gigantic dikes, suspended, as it were, above a watchful and apprehensive population.”

Some of these dikes measure 80 to 100 feet at their base. The surface is used for major roadways paralleling the river and extending on over only slightly lesser dikes to the north and south. Some of these are defended by antiaircraft guns.

Last Thursday in Washington, Laird said that some of the dikes may have suffered damage from air strikes directed at convoys on the roads or antiaircraft guns positioned on the dikes. But he said that the dikes themselves have never been bombing targets.

Laird raised the possibility that Hanoi radio was engaging in a propaganda campaign “to relieve themselves from the responsibility with their own people for the failure to adequately repair this system since the major flooding last year.”

At the time, Hanoi admitted that those floods were the most severe in more than a century. The transportation system of the whole country was disrupted. Hanoi radio carried repeated broadcasts exhorting the river dwellers to greater work on the dikes and Communist Party dignitaries were photographed toiling alongside ordinary peasants to repair the damage.

The floods lasted approximately six weeks and struck in August and September. The flood season is once again approaching, and should the floods approach anything like the level of one year ago, the dikes in many areas might not sustain the pressures of two such successive years.

[From the New York Times, July 18, 1972]

EXCERPT FROM REPORT OF SECRETARY LAIRD’S NEWS CONFERENCE

Mr. Laird said that air force and navy pilots were under instructions not to bomb any of the six or seven major dams and dikes in North Vietnam that control most of the flood waters in the north. He said one or two “minor” dikes or sluice-ways might have been inadvertently struck if they had antiaircraft weapons on them or roads or bridges passing over them carrying military traffic.

“But there are no dams or dikes that are authorized as military targets,” he stressed.

[From the Washington Post, July 26, 1972]

HANOI VOICE IS HEARD, U.S. ADMITS

The White House acknowledged yesterday that North Vietnam is achieving “some success” in spreading charges around the world that the United States is deliberately bombing its dikes.

“Without question there is a propaganda effort that they are working very hard on and with some success,” said press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler. He again denied that the United States is “purposely undertaking a policy of bombing the dikes,” as North Vietnam charges.

“Our bombing policy has been spelled out,” said Ziegler: “We have never had a policy of bombing dams and dikes. We have a policy of not hitting dams and dikes.”

Ziegler was responding to newsmen’s questions about the unusually sharp language used the day before in a statement by Secretary of State William P. Rogers criticizing comments made by United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim. The U.N. chief had said he received information through private channels, that American air attacks on North Vietnam are hitting dikes. Rogers replied that all claims that the United States is engaged in “deliberate bombing” of dikes are “false.”
At the Defense Department yesterday, spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim also assailed what he called "Hanoi's propaganda campaign." He repeated that U.S. bombing is directed only against "military targets." When reporters asked if American planes fire at targets on dikes, Friedheim replied, "If a U.S. plane is attacked it will respond to protect itself."

On July 17, Defense Secretary Melvin B. Laird said, "There are occasions... when a dam or dike could possibly be hit when an anti-aircraft installation is placed on a dam or dike or when there is a roadway or a bridgework that is also tied in with a dam or dike formation." But Laird said there is "no targeting of dikes or dams in North Vietnam."

[From the New York Times, July 21, 1972]

ZIEGLER COMMENT CITED

WASHINGTON, July 20—Gerald Warren, deputy press secretary at the White House, said tonight that the Administration had no immediate comment on Dr. Blake's charge that United States planes were deliberately bombing North Vietnamese dikes.

But the called attention to comments this morning by Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, in response to questions about similar charges made by others.

"It is obvious the North Vietnamese are attempting through their normal propaganda to claim that we are purposefully bombing dams and dikes," Mr. Ziegler said in part. "Every year there is some flooding in Vietnam. We have a policy: There is no targeting of dikes and dams in Vietnam. There will be no such policy."

[From the Washington Post, July 20, 1972]

WALDHHEIM MUM ON VIET DIKE ISSUE

Secretary General Kurt Waldheim has nothing more to say for the time being on the question of possible U.S. bombing of dikes in North Vietnam, a spokesman at the United Nations said yesterday.

The spokesman said he was not authorized to comment on a statement made by U.S. Ambassador George Bush Monday night that he was convinced Waldheim, in a news conference yesterday, did not intend to lend credibility to a worldwide Communist charge of deliberate bombing of the dikes, which could trigger flooding.

Waldheim said at the press conference that he had "private and unofficial" information from Hanoi that the United States is bombing the North Vietnamese dikes.

In Washington, White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler reiterated the statement Secretary of State William Rogers made Monday that the reports were part of Hanoi's propaganda campaign, and added that the North Vietnamese are "meeting some degree of success."

[From the Washington Post, July 27, 1972]

VIET DIKE DAMAGE "MINOR," U.S. SAYS

(By Murrey Marder)

A Nixon administration study shows only "the most incidental and minor impact" on North Vietnam's dike system from American bombing, the State Department said yesterday.

This was the first specific U.S. acknowledgement that any bomb damage was caused to North Vietnam's flood control system. The admission, intended to refute Hanoi's charges, also illustrated the administration's dilemma about how to respond to the accusations without focusing greater attention on them.

Until yesterday, U.S. officials publicly have said only that dikes "may have been hit" unintentionally by American bombs aimed at military installations or military traffic on or near the massive earth levees that extend nearly 2,000 miles across North Vietnam.

Some officials have been convinced that the best thing to do about North Vietnam's charges that the United States is engaged in a "systematic" campaign to
destroy the dikes is to reply to them as briefly as possible. But other officials fear that if North Vietnam this year experiences anything similar to the extensive August-September flooding of last year, Hanoi's charges could do great political damage to the Nixon administration in the midst of the presidential election campaign.

The inconclusive outcome yesterday of this divided counsel was fragmentary disclosure of a dam-survey assessment based on aerial reconnaissance and studies of Hanoi's accusation.

In New York, George Bush, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said in a television interview on NBC's "Today" show that:

"I believe we are being set up by a massive propaganda campaign by the North Vietnamese in the event that there is the same kind of flooding this year—to attribute it to bombs whereas last year it happened just out of lack of maintenance."

Bush added that, "There's been a study made that I hope will be released shortly that will clarify this whole question."

He said this study "would be very helpful because I think it will show what the North Vietnamese are up to in where they place strategic targets..."

He was suggesting, in other words, that some North Vietnamese military installations are located on or near the dikes in order to gain immunity from attack by subjecting the United States to charges of "genocide" if bombing results in flooding the countryside.

In North Vietnam that is a clear risk. According to North Vietnamese statistics, more than half of its 20 million people live in areas that would be flooded if the dikes were breached.

A recent Hanoi article said that at flood crest many rivers are as much as "six to seven meters" above the surrounding fields, and "any dike break, especially in the Red River delta, is a disaster with incalculable consequences."

"I think you would have to recognize," Bush told his interviewer yesterday, "that if there was any intention to attack the dikes, "it would be very, very simple to do exactly what we are accused of—and that is what we are not doing."

State Department officials had contemplated making public yesterday a summary of the study to which Bush referred, with accompanying photographs.

Some officials privately claimed that this would provide "conclusive evidence" that there was no deliberate dike-bombing program because it would show only "minor" bombing of dikes in the area east and southeast of Hanoi, rather than north and northwest of Hanoi, the logical area for deliberate dike-busting strikes.

But other administration officials—who prevailed—were concerned that the resulting world debate would only play into North Vietnam's hands.

As a result, State Department press officer Charles W. Bray attempted to invoke the thrust of the study without getting into any detail.

Bray told newsmen:

"There has been no indication of any but the most incidental and minor impact on the system of levees as a result of our strikes against military installations. That is a fact. The root cause of Hanoi's concern with respect to the dikes, it itself has described in its own Communist newspaper."

[From the New York Times, July 28, 1972]

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRESIDENT'S NEWS CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON, July 27—The following is a White House transcript of the news conference held today by President Nixon:

The President: We will go ahead with some questions if you like.

1. WORLD OPINION ON DIKES

Q. Mr. President, you have said that it is against U.S. policy to bomb the dikes and dams in North Vietnam. Yesterday, the State Department acknowledged there had been incidental and inadvertent damage from the bombing nearby. My question is, is it worth the risk of possible flooding and having world opinion turned against us as a result of bombing dams?

A. I think your question would be better answered by my discussing the policy toward bombing of civilian installations of North Vietnam generally, and then coming down to the specifics of your question, in giving a general answer.
Some of you who were in Texas with me will recall that that question was raised on the Connally ranch, and it was raised, actually, by an advocate of bombing dikes as to why we did not bomb dikes. I said it had not been United States policy even before the bombing halt of 1968 to bomb the dikes; that it was not our policy now, and it would not be in the future, because it is the policy of the United States in all of its activities in North Vietnam to direct its attacks against military targets only.

This was the policy in the sixties and it is now the policy since we have had to resume the bombing for the reasons that I mentioned in my speech of May 8th.

With regard to the situation on the dikes, let us understand what we are confronted with here. This is approximately a 2,700-mile chain of installations, including perhaps a half-dozen major dams, which are the heart of the system, and then peripheral areas getting down to mounds, which have, of course, the purpose of controlling the floodwaters in that particular area.

If it were the policy of the United States to bomb the dikes, we could take them out, the significant part of them out, in a week. We don't do so for the reasons that I have mentioned, because we are trying to avoid civilian casualties, not cause them.

Now, with regard to the reports that have come from Hanoi that there had been some damage to some parts of the dike system, I think it is important to note two things: One, there has been no report of any flooding and second, there has been no report of any strikes on the major dike areas.

What I am referring to is the big dams, which are the heart of the system. There have been reports of incidental damage to some of the peripheral installations in this 2,700-mile system, which covers the country of North Vietnam.

Now, under these circumstances, I think that it is well to keep in context first what our policy is, and second, what its effect has been. Our policy is not to bomb civilian installations and second, our restraint, it seems to me, rather than being subject to criticisms, should be subject to objective analysis and, it seems to me, a considerable amount of support.

As far as this matter is concerned, I think, too, it is time to strip away the double standard. I noted with interest that the Secretary General of the U.N., just like his predecessor, seized upon this enemy-inspired propaganda, which has taken in many well-intentioned and naive people, to attack the American bombing of civilian installations and risking civilian lives, and yet not raising one word against deliberate bombing of civilian installations in South Vietnam.

Just so the record will be kept straight—and it should be stated at this point—all of you ladies and gentlemen are aware of it, of course; you have printed it, and perhaps you will see fit to again in this context:

I just got a cable from Ambassador Bunker. I had asked him what had happened to civilians in the new offensive. You recall in my speech of May 8th, I said 20,000 civilian casualties, including women and children, have resulted because of the deliberate shelling of the cities and the slaughter of refugees indiscriminately by the North Vietnamese.

The number is now 45,000, including women and children, of which 15,000 are dead.

I asked him for the number of refugees. It is higher than I had thought. There have been 800,000 made homeless by the North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam, this newest invasion to date; 600,000 of them are still in refugee camps, away from their homes.

Looking back over the period of this very difficult war, we find that since 1955, there have been 600,000 civilian casualties in South Vietnam as a result of deliberate policies of the North Vietnamese Communists, not accidental, but deliberate.

In North Vietnam, in the period from 1954 to 1956, in their so-called land reform program, a minimum of 500,000 were murdered, assassinated and, according to the Catholic Bishop of Danang, whom I talked to when I was there in 1956, in South Vietnam, in addition to the 800,000 refugees who came south, there were at least a half-million who died in slave labor camps in North Vietnam.

Now, I did not relate this series of incidents for the purpose of saying, because they did something bad, we can do something bad.

What I am simply saying is, let's not have a hypocritical double standard. The United States has been restrained, greater restraint than any great power has ever shown in handling this war. We will continue to be restrained. We have to bomb military targets in order to accomplish the objectives I have described in my goal, in my speech of May 8th.
On the other hand, as far as this particular matter is concerned, I can only say that if damage did occur that we are making every possible effort to see that it will not occur again, which gets to your question. Military commanders, aircraft commanders and so forth, in terms of where military targets are, are instructed to avoid civilian damage where they can.

That is why some targets in the heart of Hanoi, for example, major power installations, fuel installations, in the heart of Hanoi have not been hit, because I have not wanted to have civilian casualties if we could possibly avoid it.

I will simply close by saying that this is a major propaganda campaign; it is one that does concern us. But let us keep the record straight. In the event that the United States followed the course of action recommended by some of those who have voted for the so-called end-the-war resolution in the Senate of the United States, it would mean that there would be visited upon South Vietnam the same atrocities that were visited upon North Vietnam, with perhaps at least one million marked for assassination because they had fought against the North Vietnamese attempts to conquer South Vietnam.

I will add one other thing. As far as the negotiations are concerned, we are negotiating. We have negotiated in public. We have had one private conference a week ago, lasting approximately six hours. We hope to continue to negotiate.

We have made fair offers on withdrawal, on a cease-fire, on political settlement. We have not made them on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

We made fair offers on exchange of prisoners of war and unaccounted missing in action.

Having done this, there is one thing we have not offered and this is one hang-up in the settlement today. That is the demands of the enemy directly or indirectly to do what they cannot accomplish themselves, impose a Communist government in South Vietnam. That would be the height of immorality to impose on the 17 million people of South Vietnam a Communist government with the blood bath that would follow.

8. MISSILE SITES ON DIKES

Q. Mr. President, to follow up the first question, if I may, there had been reports that SAM sites have been put on top of some of those dikes or dams. Does your policy rule out the bombing of that particular area where there are SAM sites?

A. I have seen those reports, Mr. Liasgor. As you know, the Secretary of Defense has made some indirect comments about it. The situation there is one that we would lean against taking out SAM sites on targets that would result in civilian casualties of a substantial amount.

However, I have not seen in recent days any reports indicating that any such SAM sites will be hit and in view of the present debate, I think we are going to be very careful with regard to hitting them. We would do so only if we had to do so in order to protect American fliers who otherwise would be hit down by the SAM's.

5. BOMBING AS POLITICAL ISSUE

Q. Mr. President, are we to understand that now that stop bombing the dikes has been made a political slogan this year, perhaps those who have gotten behind it have not thoroughly checked the background of those accusations?

A. I did not use the word "naive" unintentionally. The North Vietnamese are very skillful at propaganda. They have, of course, brought those who have been invited into the country to the areas where they have found bomb damage. They have not gone to any great pains to fill those holes, which they would naturally want to do before the possibility of rain and flood again comes to the North.

In my view, this is a deliberate attempt on the part of the North Vietnamese to create an extraneous issue, to divert attention from one of the most barbaric invasions in history, compounded by a violation of all concepts of international law in handling the prisoners of war. For them, with their policy of deliberate murder and assassination, and otherwise attacks on civilians for the purpose of killing civilians, for them to try to seize on this and divert attention from that, first, is a patent propaganda effort, and it is one that I think needs to be answered.

We have to, of course, be responsible for what we do. But it is time that in this terribly difficult war some Americans, or that most of us, should perhaps realize that when we talk about morality that it is never an easy question. If I can digest for a moment, and then I will come to your follow-up question on the other matter, I remember one of the first conversations I had with Presi-
dent Eisenhower about war. We were riding back from Quantico. You may remember it. Charlie Wilson used to have those meetings in Quantico of the defense establishment people. He asked me to ride back with him. It was very early in the Administration, the first year.

He was talking a little about the decisions he had to make in World War II. One of the questions I raised with him was: Here, on our part, the deliberate bombing of German cities, the tragedy of Dresden, of Essen, of Hamburg, not to mention Berlin. General Eisenhower said that was a terribly difficult decision for us, the strategic bombing of civilians in Germany. But, he said, "On the moral question, we had to answer to ourselves this fundamental problem." He said, "The height of immorality would be to allow Hitler to rule Europe."

Now, in our case we have not gone that far. We are not going to bomb civilian targets in the North. We are not using the great power that could finish off North Vietnam in an afternoon, and we will not. But it would be the height of immorality for the United States at this point to leave Vietnam, and in leaving, to turn over to the North Vietnamese the fate of 17 million South Vietnamese who do not want a Communist government, to turn it over to them.

That is what this is about. That is the only issue that is left. Those who say "end the war" really should name their resolution "prolong the war." They should name it "prolong the war," not because they deliberately want to. They want to end the war just as I do, but we have to face this fact: We have only one President at a time, as I said in 1968. At that time, as you may recall, I was pressed quite often by you ladies and gentlemen, "What do you think we ought to do about negotiation?" I didn't think there was much chance for successful negotiation then.

But I said, correctly, we had only one President, and I didn't want to destroy any chance we might have to end this war. At this point, the chance for a negotiated settlement is better now than it has ever been. It is not sure, and I am not going to raise any false hopes, but the enemy is falling in its military offensive, although there is still some hard fighting to take place in the Quangtri-Hue area. But the enemy is also, of course, suffering the consequences of mining and cutting the roads and other systems that would bring in supplies to North Vietnam.

Under these circumstances, the enemy because also we have made a very fair offer—has every incentive to negotiate. But when you put yourself in the position of the enemy, and they hear that the Congress of the United States says, in effect, "We will give you what you want regardless of what the President has offered," why not wait?

This is the problem, and I would hope that as Senators and Congressmen consult their consciences, they would realize that we have just three months left before the election. In those three months we hope to do everything we can to bring this war to an end, and they should take no action which would jeopardize those negotiations. I can only say that the resolutions to this point cannot help. They can only confuse the enemy, at best; and at the worst, they will prolong the war.

Q. Mr. President, on the bombing of the dikes and dams, would you say that you have been resisting pressure from the military to bomb such installations?

A. No. The pressure does not come from the military. I have talked this over with Admiral Moorer and, naturally, General Abrams. As a matter of fact, let me just say one thing about our military because somebody ought to speak up for it now and then.

We get the idea they are a bunch of savage flyboys and they love to get down and machine-gun all the innocent little civilians and all the rest. We can be very proud of our military, not only the men who are flying—they are brave and courageous—but also the men on the ground. We can be very proud of the marines—all of them have gone now—for what they have done—the Marines, the Army and the ground soldiers—for the civilians and refugees there. It is a story of generosity in a country that has never been equaled by American fighting men or anybody else.

As far as our military commanders are concerned, while they do give me their judgment as to what will affect the military outcome in Vietnam, they have never recommended, for example, bombing Hanoi. You have seen some of these signs "Bomb Hanoi." In fact, they were around in '68 even, a few, as well as '64.

Our military doesn't want to do that. They believe it would be counterproductive, and secondly, they believe it is not necessary. It might shorten the war,
but it would leave a legacy of hatred throughout that part of the world from which we might never recover. So our military have not advocated bombing the dikes; they have not advocated bombing civilian centers. They are doing their best in carrying out the policy we want of hitting military targets only.

When, as a result of what will often happen, a bomb is dropped, if it is in an area of injury to civilians, it is not by intent, and there is a very great difference.

[From the Evening Bulletin (Philadelphia), July 27, 1972]

U.S. WON'T SHOW FILMS OF 'MINOR' DIKE HITS

(By Ray Moseley)

WASHINGTON—The State Department says U.S. bombing of military targets in North Vietnam has had only "the most incidental and minor impact" on dikes and dams in that country.

But it refuses to release reconnaissance photographs that might show the impact of bombing on these installations, or even to admit that it has such photographs.

Still, the statement by spokesman Charles W. Bray 3d yesterday that the bombing has had some impact represented a small step away from the virtual news blackout the Administration has imposed on the subject.

NO FLAT ADMISSION

It was the closest any official has come to acknowledging that dams or dikes have been hit. But Bray refused to say flatly, "I can't take it any further," he said after repeated questioning at a news conference.

[A State Department official said later, according to the New York Times Service, that the conclusion that the dikes were not seriously damaged was the consensus of various intelligence agencies on the basis of photos and other unspecified information.]

United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim rekindled the controversy over U.S. bombing policy on Monday when he asserted that he had received unverified information that dams and dikes had been bombed.

Administration spokesmen reportedly that the United States has not "purposely" or "deliberately" bombed dikes or dams.

They have been saying for several weeks that such facilities may have been hit if they were near antiaircraft guns, radar and roadways.

PROPAGANDA EFFECT

Their refusal to go beyond that apparently is due to reluctance to give Hanoi what officials call "a worldwide propaganda campaign" against U.S. bombing policy.

But the Administration's silence nonetheless gives ammunition to those who suspect that damage to the dikes and dams, accidental or otherwise, may be more extensive than the Administration cares to acknowledge.

The Peking People's Daily joined the attack Tuesday, asserting that there have been more than 100 raids on 58 sections of major dike systems and 46 irrigation works along the Red River and other rivers in North Vietnam.

Bray said he couldn't comment on those figures.

FILMS SHOWN IN PARIS

Actress Jane Fonda, just returned from Hanoi, also kept up her accusations about the bombing. At a Paris news conference, she showed film taken by a French television crew showing cratered dikes at two villages near Hanoi, called Nam Sakh and Nam Dinh.

Bray refused to comment on her report.

Nam Sakh is the same village where French correspondent Jean Thoraval reported seeing bomb damage to dikes on July 11. The Pentagon acknowledged July 12 that military targets around Nam Sakh had been bombed, but it denied that dikes had been "targeted."

Ironically, the Hanoi newspaper Nhan Dan appeared to take some of the steam out of Hanoi's propaganda drive by reporting that "our dikes are now big, high and solid" in preparation for the coming monsoon season.
The newspaper said hundreds of thousands of persons have worked at bolstering the dikes over the last six months so that they could withstand floods and typhoons.

The Nixon Administration has contended all along that Hanoi's accusations about bombing of dikes is intended to blame the United States for damage that will result from the monsoon later this summer.

Last September, North Vietnam reported heavy damage to food crops, roads and communications from severe floods. In May and June it reported work was still underway to repair dikes damaged by floods.

The latest Nhan Dan article suggested the dike system was in relatively good shape and sections damaged by bombing have been repaired. But it said U.S. planes and warships continue to hit the dikes "night and day."

WASHINGTON, July 28—The Administration today released a Government intelligence report finding the American bombing had damaged North Vietnam's dike system at 12 points. But the report concluded that the hits were unintentional, their impact was minor "and no major dike has been breached."

The eight-page report, put together largely by the Central Intelligence Agency, was given newsmen by the State Department to buttress the Administration's contention that North Vietnam was falsely charging the United States with bombing the dikes systematically and deliberately.

Although the report was based on photographer reconnaissance, the State Department refused to show newsmen any of the photographic evidence. A department official said that it was decided today not to issue the photograph because it was felt by the Administration that this would only provoke North Vietnam to issue its own photographs in rebuttal, some of which might be "fabricated."

This report, including the photographs, prepared earlier and presented on Monday to Kurt Waldheim, secretary general of the United Nations, by George Bush, the United States delegate. Mr. Waldheim had said he had unofficial information that the United States was bombing the dikes.

Senator J. W. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was briefed along with other Senators by the C.I.A., a few days ago. He said today that he had no quarrel with the conclusion of the report. He said that the photo evidence he was shown seemed to support the view that the dike damage was near military targets.

WASHINGTON, July 28—In recent weeks Hanoi has tried to convince the world that its elaborate dike system is a direct and deliberate target of U.S. attacks. This is not true. Photographic evidence shows conclusively that there has been no intentional bombing of the dikes. A few dikes have been hit by stray bombs directed at military-associated targets nearby. The damage is minor and no major dike has been breached. The damage can be easily repaired—in a matter of a few days—and has not been sufficient to cause any flooding. No damage has been observed in the Hanoi area or against the primary dike system protecting that city. Hanoi no doubt is genuinely concerned about the dike system. North Vietnam's rainy season will soon reach its peak and damage in the dikes caused by last year's very extensive flooding have not yet been fully repaired.

NORTH VIETNAM'S WATER CONTROL SYSTEM

North Vietnam's elaborate network of dikes, dams and locks controls the water of the heavily populated Red River Delta. The delta farmland depends on irriga-
tion during the dry months and is endangered by floods in the wet months. The country's major transportation waterways—the Red River, the Thai Binh River and the connecting Canal des Rapides and Canal des Bambous—link the principal urban centers. Fertilizer, foodstuffs, petroleum and other commodities are moved, in part, by these waterways, as is the coal mined in the Hongon and Camphe areas. Southern North Vietnam also contains rivers necessitating a dike and lock system for water control and navigation, but the system is less important than that of the delta.

Dikes to control flooding and the course of the waterways are most fully developed along the Red River. The Red River system begins near Viettri, only 43 feet above sea level, although about 100 miles inland. The great amount of silt brought down from the mountains and deposited along the river beds in the delta has raised the waterways above the surrounding countryside in many places and requires a constant elevation of the restraining walls. In some areas—particularly around Hanoi—the height of the dikes reaches 40 feet. Some are as broad as 80 feet at the flood line and spread to 200 feet at the base. A secondary system between 4 and 22 feet high running parallel to the main dikes is designed to localize and minimize damage if the primary dikes are breached. A tertiary system of smaller dikes divides the rice-growing plains into compartments, assists irrigation and controls the level of small and local waterways. In addition, small natural or man-made dikes along the coast keep out brackish sea water.

Dams and locks play a lesser role. Only a few large dams are constructed of concrete with gates to permit passage of watercraft, and only one major waterway in the Red River Delta has navigation locks to control water levels and facilitate transport.

The river rise to a seasonal peak during July and August, when unusually heavy rains frequently cause breaches in the levees. Extensive floods and destruction to property and agricultural crops result. Although there have been only a few major breaches since the mid-1940's, minor breaks occur almost every year.

The floods of last August rank with the most serious ever recorded. Four major breaches occurred in the primary dikes along the Red River. An estimated 1.1 million acres of rice—enough to feed a quarter of the country's rice acreage—were seriously flooded and the entire crop in that area destroyed. Storms took out a half-mile section of a levee outside Hanoi and closed the railroad north to Dongdang. The area of heavy flooding continued to expand through late September, probably because prolonged soaking and high water pressure had undermined the secondary dike systems.

Apart from immediate rice losses, the floods produced extensive longer-term physical damage. The enormous force of water unleashed through breaches in the primary dikes caused widespread erosion far beyond obvious scouring effects near the breaks. Long stretches of irrigation canals were cut; and the press reported many washed-out pumping stations. Flood water everywhere deposited silt in drainage ditches. The prolonged inundation during the floods may have caused subtle undermining of the primary dike systems that will not show until late this summer. The possibility that the dike system has been weakened thus adds to this year's flooding threat.

North Vietnam's water-control system includes a large number of widely dispersed individual components which could be substantially affected only by a large-scale, coordinated air offensive. Such attacks would be necessary against
specific locks, dams, and dike areas, and bombing would have effect only during the relatively short periods of high water. Even then, the North Vietnamese, long accustomed to battling against floods, could be expected to act promptly to mend breaches in the system.

[8]

Damage to the locks would have little effect on neither North Vietnam’s transport or its water control systems. Inland craft could be diverted to waterways not dependent on locks, and some cargoes could be sent by the many alternate land routes. Accidental bomb damage during the 1965-68 period made some locks inoperative, but had little effect on water transport or flooding in the area. Similarly, breaching of dams, even during period of high water, would not cause significant disruption because most are small and easily repaired.

[9]

Dikes are particularly resistant to bomb damage. Those in the primary system could be breached only by a series of overlapping craters across the entire top of a dike, and the lips of the craters would have to be sufficiently lower than the river surface to initiate the flow and subsequent scouring action of water rushing through the breach. The dikes along the Red River near Hanoi are approximately 80 feet wide at the flood line.

[10]

North Vietnam’s official press agencies and radio services have repeatedly described alleged U.S. bombing attacks on the dike system. In April and May, the North Vietnamese made more than 40 specific allegations, and 30 June the official press quoted the Deputy Minister of Hydraulics as saying that 20 bombing attacks had been made on dikes during that month. Foreign diplomats, newsmen, and most recently, actress Jane Fonda have been escorted to dikes to view damage—most of it around Haiduong, southeast of Hanoi.

[11]

A detailed examination has been made of photography of mid-July of the North Vietnamese Red River Delta and bomb craters were detected at 12 locations. None of the damage has been in the Hanoi area, where destruction of the dikes would result in the greatest damage to North Vietnam’s economy and logistics effort. Nearly all the damage has been scattered downstream from Hanoi, as well as downstream from the areas of major breaks resulting from the 1971 floods.

[12]

There are no signs of destruction of vital dike portions stretching to a length of several kilometers—as reported by Hanoi-based newsmen. In comparison to the dikes, the craters are small, and no flooding has occurred as a result of the damage. Although water levels are not yet at their highest, the absence of leakage through the craters indicates that damage was limited.

[13]

All identified points of dike damage are located within close range of specific targets of military value. Of the 12 locations where damage has occurred, 10 are close to identified individual targets such as petroleum storage facilities, and the other two are adjacent to road and river transport lines. Because a large number of North Vietnamese dikes serve as bases for roadways, the maze they create throughout the delta makes it almost inevitable that air attacks directed against transportation targets cause scattered damage to dikes.

[14]

The bomb craters verified by photography can be repaired easily with a minimum of local labor and equipment—a crew of less than 50 men with wheelbarrows and hand tools could repair in a day the largest crater observed. Repairs to all the dikes could be completed within a week, as the necessary equipment is
available throughout the delta. Local labor historically mobilizes to strengthen and repair dikes to avoid serious flooding. An occasional bomb falling on a dike does not add significantly to the burden of annual repair work normally required. North Vietnam must, however, complete the repair of damage caused by the 1971 floods before next month when this year's rainy season will reach its peak.

[From the New Republic, June 3, 1972]

PART IV. DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY AND REPORTS

BOMBING THE DIKES

(By D. Gareth Porter*)

North Vietnamese society, based on agriculture and a highly motivated and resourceful labor force, has one major vulnerability—the vulnerability of its food supply to destruction by floods. The destruction of that food supply by flooding is Mr. Nixon's only remaining military option. He's bombing the ports, power transformers, rail lines and bridges; next he can bomb the dams and dikes of the Red River Delta.

The possibility arises because of the extreme unevenness of precipitation in the North; about 85 percent of its annual rainfall will come during the coming months, peaking in July, August and September in the most fertile rice-producing area. During the rainy season the Red River becomes swollen, often nearing the top of its dikes. If these dikes are breached or broken, floods will cause paddy fields to become waterlogged and the rice crop to be lost, even if other damage is minimized. And if the Red River overflows, it will probably mean serious floods in the other river valleys of Central North Vietnam as well.

North Vietnam's people have suffered floods during the rainy season—and droughts during the dry season—many times in their history, but the worst of all was in 1944 when 25 sections of the Red River dikes were broken and some 225,000 hectares of paddy, or about one-fourth of the total under cultivation, were ruined. That natural calamity became an atrocity when the Japanese occupation authority requisitioned much of the available paddy for its own purposes, leaving an estimated two million Vietnamese to starve to death.

Last year, flood waters smashed through a 30-mile section of the delta's dikes, wiping out large parts of the 1971 autumn rice crop, which was then being harvested and the 1972 winter crop, which is only now being harvested. Because of the importation of food from Russia and China and relief efforts, there apparently was no starvation. When systematic US bombing of the North began in 1965, a civilian army of 200,000 men and women was formed to patrol the branches of the Red River for any ruptures in the dikes, whose destruction would threaten mass starvation.

Air attacks on the dike system would have to be combined with all-out bombing to prevent the import of sufficient foodstuffs overland from China. The Johnson administration gave serious consideration to just such a plan, based in part on the analysis of the Central Intelligence Agency, which said in January, 1967, "Bombing the levee system which keeps the Red River under control, if timed correctly, could cause large crop losses and force North Vietnam to import large amounts of rice. Depending on the success of the interdiction efforts, such imports might overload the transport system. But the military effects of such a policy, the CIA correctly observed, would be "limited and short-lived." Such proposals were rejected, and Secretary McNamara's memorandum of May 16, 1967 explained why: "There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and most of the world would not permit the United States to go," he wrote.

Although the systematic targeting of the Red River dikes and dams was ruled out, this did not mean that they were never hit. Attacks on dikes surrounding the city of Namdinh in 1966 were reported by New York Times correspondent

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Harrison Salisbury during his trip to the North. According to city officials, US planes dropped six bombs on a two-kilometer section of the dike on May 31 and again on July 14. As the water level of the DaD River continued to rise, American planes returned on July 20 and July 31 to hit the dikes repeatedly. The Pentagon responded to Salisbury's report by saying the real target was a transshipment facility in Namdinh, and that, in any case, "repairs would not be dificult and accidental damage inflicted on it would not necessarily show up on later intelligence photography taken subsequent to repairs." Many such accidents occurred from 1965 through 1968, seemingly intended to force North Vietnam to divert manpower to repairing the damage. (In the case of Namdinh, the population worked for 20 straight days to repair the dike.)

Nevertheless, US bombing was not intended to cause major flooding in the Red River Delta. As we know from the Pentagon Papers, the joint chiefs were never satisfied with this restriction and presssed for both the removal of restraints on the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, "with the expected increase in civilian casualties to be accepted as militarily justified and necessary," and the systematic targeting of dikes and dams as well.

The precedent for striking flood control systems as "strategic targets" for the purpose of starving the enemy into submission was set near the end of the Korean War, when the US air force was authorized to destroy all North Korean irrigation dams. On May 13, 1958, 20 air force F-4s destroyed the Tolsan irrigation dam, causing a flash flood which inundated 27 miles of valley farmlands. Two other dams were bombed for the same purpose; the remainder were scheduled for attack when the armistice intervened.

American memories are short. Only a few years before, the flooding of agricultural land by a Nazi enemy had been considered a heinous crime. The German high commissioner in Holland, Seyss-Inquart, who opened the dikes of that country at the end of 1944 and flooded approximately 500,000 acres of land, was hanged as a war criminal by the Nuremberg Tribunal—despite the fact that he stopped the flooding after being warned by the Allied High Command and agreed to help in relief efforts.

But that was a crime against white Europeans. In North Vietnam, as in North Korea, the distinction between military and civilian targets is barely perceptible. As marine Commandant Wallace M. Greene, Jr., testified before the Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee on October 23, 1967, "We are at war with North Vietnam right now . . . and we shouldn't be so much interested in [the North Vietnamese people's] anger as we are in bringing the war home to every one of them up there." Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson was more blunt: "I put 'innocent civilians' in quotation marks," he said.

The joint chiefs, having lost in the previous administration, are now renewing pressures on the President to attack the dams and dikes. With the fear of direct Soviet and Chinese Intervention receding, the Nixon administration may not be as constrained as its predecessor. At any rate, Mr. Nixon has publicly kept this option open. In Texas on April 30, he was asked about bombing the dams and dikes of North Vietnam. His answer, carefully phrased, could be interpreted both as a warning to Hanoi and a trial balloon at home. First he called the dikes and dams "strategic targets," indicating his acceptance of the joint chiefs' doctrine that they are legitimate targets. He went on to say that bombing the dikes and dama could cause "an enormous number of civilian casualties" and that this was something which "we need to avoid." But he did not rule out such attacks at some future time.

Twelve days later, after serious reversals had been suffered by the Saigon army, Hanoi radio reported that US bombers had knocked out a section of the dike protecting Hanoi from the waters of the Red River. "Nham Dam," the Lao Dong Party's newspaper, reported that flood control dikes in many areas of the country's four southern provinces had been hit. These breaks, which could presumably still have been repaired in time to avoid flooding from the coming heavy rains, might have been accidents, but they might also have been intended to remind Hanoi that the dikes could be breached. If the President does choose to use this remaining option, he will move swiftly and secretly. Congress and the public would once again he faced with a fait accompli, and left once again, with nothing to do but express regrets. Those in Congress who want to prevent this crime would be well advised to raise the issue now—while there is still time.
In an attempt to stem the total failure of American policy in Indochina, President Nixon has chosen once again to escalate. When it became apparent that bombing the South—and this with unprecedented violence—was not working to halt the collapse of "Vietnamization," Nixon ordered the resumption of raids on the North and decided simultaneously on a series of actions which surpass anything his predecessors had dared to undertake. While many of these actions, such as the mining of the ports, have already been carried out, others are still "being considered." And once again, as in 1966-67, The American aggressors are toying with the idea of destroying the Red River dike system.

If in his recent declarations President Nixon has excluded the possibility of recourse to nuclear arms, the risk of genocide by flooding is very much greater and imminent. American aviation can carry it off without Nixon's having to issue an explicit order.

During the coming week the dikes may break without having suffered direct attacks. To realize how this is possible some understanding of the bombing strategy as worked out by the Americans during the summers of 1965-66 is necessary. (These observations are based on hundreds of declarations of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and are compiled in a report which I edited in 1967 for the Russell Tribunal.)

Huge bombs are dropped, not directly on the dikes but at some distance from them on the alluvial crest over which the rivers flow. In this way, enormous hollows are produced which shock and weaken the base of the dike system and could cause the entire river's flow to spill out into the plain. This strategy has the "advantage" of apparently not touching the dikes and of being infinitely more destructive. It is completed by a series of steel pellet bomb attacks on the workers who have come to repair the damage.

To grasp the full horror of this menace, it is necessary to recall the basic geographical context: the Tonkin Plain, where the great majority of the population of the North is concentrated, is bordered by huge mountains which each spring receive enormous amounts of precipitation from the monsoon. Thus, the rivers which flow into the plain are characterized by powerful swellings during the summer months and carry along with them great quantities of alluvial deposits from the erosion of the mountain sides. This alluvial substance tends to settle on the plain, particularly on the river beds, which have thus been progressively built up over the centuries. The Red River flows then on a kind of mud crest, 5 or 6 meters above the level of the plain, which would be regularly submerged if the Vietnamese peasants had not built and constantly reinforced an entire network of dikes since the Middle Ages. Part of the network is erected directly on the alluvial crest, bordering the river bed and thus containing the periodic swellings; other dikes, running more or less perpendicular to those just described, form a rupture at any one point in the protective network. Finally, there are the coastal dikes designed to prevent the invasion of sea waters blown inward by typhoon winds. In other words, the more than 4,000 kilometers of dikes in all must be constantly reinforced to protect the crops and lives of some fifteen million people who live in the plain, which today groups some eight hundred inhabitants per square kilometer.

If the bombing simultaneously opened a series of breaches in this network (it is not necessary to destroy the entire network in order to obtain a nearly total submersion of the plain) during the period of river swellings (from June to October), it is highly likely that this catastrophe would cause more deaths than the explosion of several atomic bombs on the Tonkin Plain.

These sorts of actions were carried out repeatedly against the dikes during the summers of 1965-66-67. It is true that they were not followed by catastrophic floods. The point to these earlier raids was probably to allow American aviation to perfect its strategy against the dikes, as well as to threaten the population, rather than to try to provoke a major catastrophe.

The fact that these bombings were carried out at very specific moments would seem to be proof of their premeditated character: most of these raids took place just before a particularly violent swelling of the rivers—something which meteorological observations can easily predict. The clearest example of this premeditated
intent is offered by the series of fourteen attacks against the coastal dikes in the
Tien Lang and Vinh Bao districts (Haiphong region) from July 27 to 31, 1966.
At this time the swelling of the river waters was combined with the pressure of
sea waters being pushed towards the land by winds from the typhoon Ora; vast
surfaces were submerged as a result of the attacks.

Today the difficulties of the American government in Indochina have become
so overwhelming that we must begin to fear the worst. Even before the period of
major river swelling American aviation has begun to attack the dike system e.g.,
the raids of April 24 against the River Ma which crosses the Thanh Hoa plain.
Unlike the use of nuclear weapons where the responsibility would be too obvious,
flooding the plains in the North can be caused indirectly and then attributed to a
series of “natural accidents.” Propaganda would then insinuate that the North
Vietnamese ought to have attended to their dikes rather than engage in combat.

One cannot wait for another spectacular decision from the White House before
beginning to protest. In effect the decision to flood the North has already been
taken. In a few weeks time the period of the large swellings will have begun. We
must make clear that if the dikes break this summer in the North, the responsi-

bility for this genocide falls directly on President Nixon, no less directly than if
he had ordered a nuclear attack.

[From the New York Times, June 26, 1972]

BOMBING THE DIKES

(By Anthony Lewis)

LONDON, June 25—The Tonléap plain of North Vietnam is hemmed in by
mountains to the north and west, the sea to the southeast. In the rainy season
every summer vast amounts of water pour out of the mountains and down the
rivers that lace the plain. The principal river gives its name to the area: the
Red River Delta.

Over thousands of years peasants have made the delta habitable by building
and maintaining an enormous system of dikes. There are nearly 2,000 miles
of dikes on the plain, and more along the sea. Without them, it would be a desolate
land of marsh and flood.

From the beginning of American intervention in the Vietnam war, some
strategists have suggested bombing the dikes. Presidents have successively re-
jected each such proposal, on the ground that it would be an act of terror un-
worthy of the United States. At least that has been true until now.

Over the last month North Vietnam officials and diplomats have said repeat-
edly that American planes are bombing dikes. The charges have been extremely
specific and detailed.

On May 26, for example, North Vietnam’s Ministry of Water Conservancy
listed in a statement 42 alleged raids on dikes in the Hanoi area and seven other
provinces, giving dates and places. On June 22 in Paris, a North Vietnamese
diplomat gave further details of asserted dike bombings, and shelling by Amer-
ican ships, and appealed to world opinion to stop it.

Even with all the details, the statements from North Vietnam could of course,
be just propaganda. But now, over the last few days, two pieces of evidence
have come to hand that make it harder to dismiss the charge that the dikes are
being deliberately attacked.

One item is a report from the correspondent of Agence France-Presse in
Hanoi, Jean Thoraval. On June 24 he and some other foreign reporters visited
Nam Dinh, a town sixty miles south of Hanoi. He found its textile mills and
commercial center in ruins from bombing. Then he went to some of the dikes
protecting Nam Dinh, about fourteen miles from town, He reported:

“One of the dikes was completely cut. Several were gutted, with gaps in the
dike itself and hollows, evidently caused by bombs, alongside. Deep cracks were
visible everywhere. The landscape was almost what one might have expected
to find on the moon.”

The second piece of evidence is a report from a highly reliable, non-Com-
munist diplomat, who has had confidential information on North Vietnam. This source has
concluded that “without doubt there is now systematic bombing of the dikes.”

The rainy season is just under way in North Vietnam; the rivers usually rise
toward the top of the dikes between July and September. No one should be in
any doubt about what systematic destruction of the dikes at this time might
mean. It would bring into play, justifiably for once, that much-abused word
genocide.
Fifteen million people live on the Tonkin plain, one of the more densely populated areas of the world. Some would drown in floods if the dikes failed; many more would be in danger of starvation after flooding of the rice paddies.

After dinner at John Connally's ranch in Floresville, Tex., on April 30, President Nixon answered questions from other guests. One asked about the idea of bombing "dams" in North Vietnam. According to the official transcript, the President first rephrased the question to refer to "the dams and dikes." Then he said:

"Now, the problem that is raised with regard to dams or dikes is that, while it is a strategic target, and indirectly a military target, it would result in an enormous number of civilian casualties. That is something that we want to avoid. It is also something we believe is not needed."

That answer seemed at the time to be carefully calculated to alarm the North Vietnamese, to put more pressure on them to negotiate on American terms. While indicating that he wanted to avoid anything that would kill so many civilians, Mr. Nixon listed the dikes as "indirectly a military target." And by saying that bombing was "not needed" then, he logically left that step open if it ever were "needed."

Is the United States now systematically bombing the dikes of North Vietnam? Americans know from experience that such things can happen without a President informing the public—or even without the President knowing. Those American officials or members of Congress who care about the possibility of causing mass civilian deaths in North Vietnam might want to ask.

**ABC TELEVISION JUNE 30, 1972**

Ted Koppel, ABC News, Washington, D.C.:

"There is also some question about other facts presented by the President last night. He denied reports that U.S. planes have bombed North Vietnamese dikes, dams and other civilian targets. That statement was challenged today by the Swedish Ambassador to Hanoi, who was among a group of foreign diplomats taken on a tour of the Red River area last Sunday.

"Other diplomats on that tour were contacted by ABC news through various embassies here in Washington. We were provided with the following details: two bomb craters at the Phu Ly dike. The main water sluice is jammed in a half-open position by bomb damage; the dike itself has major cracks in three places. Eight direct hits on the Minh Chan water sluice and dike. Four sections of the dike, totally destroyed. Again, according to foreign diplomats, a 2-square-mile area of workers' homes around a textile plant in the provincial capital of Nam Dinh, has been completely flattened by the U.S. bombs.

"Almost by definition, diplomats accredited to Hanoi are less than sympathetic to the U.S. position in Viet Nam; but the similarity in reports from a variety of sources has raised questions that could deserve a more complete answer from the Nixon Administration."

[From the New York Times, July 1, 1972]

**MUST CARthAGE Be DESTROYED?**

(By David Marr* )

WASHINGTON.—If there is a cardinal principle among what we loosely call the laws of war, it is that one antagonist does not have the right to wreak Carthaginian peace upon the other. In other words, to try to force the enemy to give in by methodically devastating his land, his crops, his people is now regarded as barbaric and deserving of punishment.

Already a case can be made against those responsible for the systematic bombing, shelling and defoliation of rural South Vietnam. Now, however, we see a series of events developing around the intricate dike system of North Vietnam that is potentially even more sinister and destructive.

Surely, it won't happen, we all say with an incredulous gasp. After all, we know from the Pentagon Papers that although the generals in 1966-67 con-

*David Marr, assistant professor of Vietnamese studies at Cornell University and director of the Indochina Resource Center in Washington, is author of "Vietnamese Anti-colonialism." He served as a Marine Corps intelligence officer for five years.
templated full-scale breaching of the North Vietnamese dikes, the idea was eventually rejected by Robert McNamara. And while American aircraft did indeed drop bombs on the dikes during the Johnson period, as confirmed by Western witnesses, such attacks apparently did not aim at initiating a general flood.

The simple fact is that if the right time and right target coordinates are selected, U.S. aircraft can inundate North Vietnam's entire alluvial plain in a matter of 48 hours. The "right" time, of course, is during the heavy monsoon rains of July-September, and sophisticated meteorological intelligence can even establish the precise day when water will be rushing highest and hardest against the dikes. The optimum targets are sluice gates, dams and canal junctures. According to Vietnamese sources, precisely these locations have been the object of regular U.S. photo reconnaissance in recent months. New "smart" bombs would make the operation quite surgical, and no amount of public outcry after the fact would do a bit of good.

How then explain Hanoi's assertion that up to 700 bombs have damaged more than thirty specific segments of dike in the past three months? Some of this may be exaggeration, but not much, since North Vietnam knows that the Pentagon could simply distribute aerial photographs of the same areas to counter any gross misrepresentations. Some hits may have been accidental, and still others due to the macabre whims of individual pilots. But that would still leave hundreds of craters to account for.

President Nixon in his Thursday press conference said that bombing reports of the Swedish Ambassador and others were "inaccurate," but he did not repudiate them entirely. Also, the President's statement that he had not approved orders for bombing dikes needs to be put in the context of a greatly loosened targeting procedure whereby Air Force generals up to now have been given much more operational leeway than was the case in previous years. For example, rather than baldly list "dikes" as a target, it might be more convenient for the moment to subsume them under "interdiction of communications" or "elimination of power supplies."

French and Vietnamese observers have speculated that bombing on or close to the dikes is designed to seriously weaken them. Thus if and when they collapse the Pentagon can picture it to the world as a natural disaster. Somehow, howeye!!, this appears too ambivalent for the mood of the Joint Chiefs these days; it probably overrates their interest in world opinion.

I think there are two much simpler explanations. Tactically, the generals are hoping to force Hanoi's leaders to divert tens of thousands of workers, hundreds of trucks and bulldozers away from repairing roads and rail lines and toward frantic patching up of the dikes. Strategically, the Administration is sending a grim diplomatic signal to North Vietnam: either change your ways, or during peak water flow—now only weeks away—we may blast open the dikes once and for all.

Fifteen million people reside within areas vulnerable to such threats. Our recent East Coast floods pale in comparison. The North Vietnamese areas are totally flat and hence liable to total inundation for months after the initial surge. Tens of thousands might be drowned in the Hanoi area alone, where the U.S. Army Handbook on Vietnam ominously points out that even the floor of the river lies above surrounding terrain, and dikes have to be built forty feet high. More serious indirect losses might well occur among the rural people, since the water would have to drain off gradually of its own accord. Meanwhile they would be without homes, their livestock dead, their crops ruined.

Is the President as Commander in Chief really prepared to join his Roman predecessors in invoking such a peace of the dead? Like other Americans these days I hold my breath and say, "I hope not."

[From the New York Times, July 10, 1972]

"THE DIKES ARE BEING HIT"

To the Editor:

A June 28 dispatch in The Times gives the impression that we at Project Air War do not believe that the United States is frequently bombing locks and dams in North Vietnam. In fact, we are convinced that in all likelihood the North's irrigation system is presently being bombed.

It must be noted that:
Jean Thornaval of the semi-official Agence France-Presse reported on June 24 that he visited dike sectors near the city of Namdinh which had just been bombed, and on June 30 he filed a similar report concerning dikes around Phu Ly. Erik Erikson, a Swedish journalist, has recently returned from Hanoi with photographs and film of bombed-out dike sections and numerous bomb craters around dams with no other buildings anywhere nearby.

There is well-documented evidence of bombing of the dikes during the 1968–69 period: reports by Times correspondent Harrison Salisbury in 1966 of attacks against dikes around Nam-dinh; an eye-witness report of attacks on Red River Valley dikes in an Associated Press dispatch dated Sept. 8, 1967; the revelation in the Pentagon Papers that eight locks and dams had been targeted, one heavily damaged, as early as January 1966.

The Pentagon Papers reveal that the military favors bombing the dikes, presumably because it is tactically useful in diverting manpower to repair dikes and strategically desirable as a means of forcing Hanoi to capitulate because of the threat of flooding and mass starvation. The Pentagon announced on May 24 that it will bomb "any" target it deems relevant to Hanoi's war effort. We are engaged in a massive bombing campaign, including strikes against population centers in the Red River Valley. Military commanders in the field now have a freer hand from Washington than under President Johnson. This all makes it far more likely than not that dams are being struck.

The question of whether or not dikes are deliberately targeted on paper may be somewhat beside the point. Our research has indicated that particularly sensitive targets are often not officially designated as such on paper, perhaps for fear of possible political repercussions if revealed.

North Vietnam's fragile dike system in the Red River Valley protects a population of nearly ten million people. The rains will reach a peak in the next few months. Destruction of part or all of the dike system could mean drowning or starvation for hundreds of thousands of peasants.

Only time will tell whether dikes are being struck due to pilot error, the massive nature of the bombing campaign which makes such strikes inevitable, or deliberate targeting.

In the meantime, however, all indications are that they are being hit and that only the strongest sort of public protest will prevent even greater attacks in the months to come. It took two years and Harrison Salisbury's trip to Hanoi to reveal to the world that the Johnson Administration was bombing far more than purely "military" targets, as it was claiming back in 1966. We cannot afford to wait that long this time.

FRED BRANFMAN, Director, Project Air War.

WASHINGTON, July 5, 1972.

[From the Washington Post, July 11, 1972]

HANOI'S RED RIVER DIKES CALLED UNDERPINNING OF NATION'S LIFE

(By George McArthur)

SAIGON, July 10—The bombing of the dikes in North Vietnam—now being claimed by Hanoi and hotly denied by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird—has never been advocated by any of the ranking U.S. officials who have served in Vietnam.

From Gen. William C. Westmoreland to the current commander, Gen. Frederick Wey and, they have all denied any such intention. Privately, the military commanders and U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker have recognized that such a campaign would risk enormous civilian casualties and set off justifiable outcries around the world.

While lower ranking officers have sometimes spoken of such bombings, official sources say such proposals have never been given any consideration.

The reluctance to consider bombing the dikes is based on the knowledge that these massive structures are literally the underpinning of life in North Vietnam.

IMPORTANCE IS PARAMOUNT

While most people might conceive of dikes as more or less ordinary construction efforts to control errant rivers, the dikes of North Vietnam are far more important.
They moved historian Joseph Buttinger to write, "They rise above the flat lands of the delta in higher praise of man than the pyramids along the Nile—true ramparts of civilization, if anything ever deserved such a name."

Visitors to North Vietnam are invariably awed by the dikes along the Red River and its tributaries. In recent months, trips along the river have been forbidden to most if not all outsiders, according to those who have visited the North.

In 1954, before the partition of Vietnam, the dikes along the Red River extended more than 1,600 miles. Under the Communist regime they have been extended and enlarged, but there are no official figures. The most important dikes, of course, are those which flank the Red River itself.

Prewar population figures show that some 6 million people live in the Red River Delta. In some areas, the population density is one thousand per square mile.

Since the beginning of Vietnamese history perhaps 2,000 years ago, these people have been dependent on the river and have labored to enlarge and strengthen the very dikes which stand today.

In Vietnamese, the Red River is often called simply the Great River (Song Oai). The reason is clear: Buttinger's history notes that the Red River carries twice the average volume of the Rhone in a bed far narrower.

**GREAT FLOW VARIATION**

The flow variation between dry and wet season can be as much as 40 times the low of 844 cubic feet per second. During severe floods the entire delta is below the rivers high water mark. Parts of Hanoi are as much as 25 feet below the high water mark.

As Buttinger noted, only a "Promethean reaction against the cruel heavens" could insure survival in the Red River Delta, and this reaction was the building of a system of dikes surpassing that known anywhere else in the world.

"The Red River now flows through the delta between two gigantic dikes, suspended, as it were, above a watchful and apprehensive population."

Some of these dikes measure 80 to 100 feet at their base. The surface is used for major roadways paralleling the river and extending on over slightly lesser dikes to the north and south. Some of these are defended by antiaircraft guns.

Last Thursday in Washington, Laird said that some of the dikes may have suffered damage from air strikes directed at convoys on the roads or antiaircraft guns positioned on the dikes. But he said that the dikes have never been bombing targets.

Laird raised the possibility that Hanoi radio was engaging in a propaganda campaign "to relieve themselves from the responsibility with their own people for the failure to adequately this system since the major flooding last year."

At the time, Hanoi admitted that those floods were the most severe in more than a century. The transportation system of the whole country was disrupted. Hanoi radio carried repeated exhorting the river dwellers to greater work on the dikes and Communist Party dignitaries were photographed toiling alongside ordinary peasants to repair the damage.

The floods lasted approximately six weeks and struck in August and September. The flood season is once again approaching, and should the floods approach anything like the level of one year ago, the dikes in many areas might not sustain the pressures of two such successive years.

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[From the New York Times, July 14, 1972]

**DIKES IN HANOI AREA REPRESENT 2,000-YEAR EFFORT TO TAME RIVERS**

(By Seymour M. Hersh)

WASHINGTON, July 13.—For more than 2,000 years the peasants of northern Vietnam have been locked in unending battle against nature, trying to stem and control the annual high waters of the Red River with an intricate system of dikes.

The river, spawned in the mountains of Yunnan Province in southern China and fed by monsoon rains, races through narrow gorges in its annual summer drive to spill along the vast and fertile plains of the Red River Delta, where more than 15 million Vietnamese live and farm.
The terrain along the 300-mile route from China to the rich farmlands can most simply be described as a huge drainboard, tilted down from northwest to southeast.

To meet the crest of the Red River and its tributaries, which usually peak between July and late September, Vietnamese societies have constructed about 2,500 miles of earthen dikes with sluice-gates and dams. It is this system that the Hanoi Government charges is under United States aerial attack.

MENTIONED IN 11TH CENTURY

The first written mention of the elaborate system is in Chinese chronicles of the early 11th century. Some Vietnamese scholars also have found archeological evidence of dikes as far back as the second century.

The dikes have been expanded in length perhaps 50 percent in the last 20 years and have also grown in width and height, vastly complicating the problems of maintenance and control. The growth is constant because the Red River carries along millions of tons of silt that are deposited in the river bed.

In other areas, particularly in the rice-growing regions near Hanoi, the river flows on its own progressively rising mud bed that is often five or six feet above the level of the fields. A similar situation exists in areas along the Yellow River in China.

Working on the dikes and repairing them is a constant preoccupation of the North Vietnamese. During a visit by this correspondent to Hanoi in mid-March, hundreds of workers—often led by military men—seemed to be constantly hauling earth to reinforce the vast system near Hanoi.

At that point, as in many parts of North Vietnam, there were actually two separate networks of dikes roughly a quarter of a mile apart. The purpose obviously was to provide a back-up system.

The pressure on the dikes at the height of the flood season is immense. Specific data on the flow of the Red River near Hanoi was impossible to obtain, but last month Le Monde, the Paris newspaper, published a dispatch predicting that the flow of the Black River, a main tributary, would reach 32,500 cubic meters a second at Son Tay, about 25 miles northwest of Hanoi (a cubic meter is about 35 cubic feet). The dispatch also noted that the peak flow of the Saigon in Paris during the floods there in 1910 was 2,500 cubic meters a second.

In addition to the river system there are a number of sea dikes to prevent the seepage of brackish water from the Gulf of Tonkin into crop-growing areas. North Vietnam also has charged that these sea dikes have been bombed by United States aircraft.

FLOOD LAST YEAR RECALLED

Many experts believe that the river dike system northwest of Hanoi is highly vulnerable to bombing attacks. Last year flood waters broke through a 30-mile section of the dikes in the delta and destroyed much of the 1971 autumn rice crop.

The flooding, which forced the North Vietnam to import food from the Soviet Union and China, was described as the worst since 1944. In that year the dikes along the Red River were breached in 25 areas and thousands of acres of rice were destroyed.

The repeated North Vietnamese charges of bombing of dikes have been buttressed in recent weeks by a number of news dispatches from Hanoi filed by Jean Thoraval, the resident correspondent there for Agence France-Presse.

Until recently most Administration spokesmen in Washington generally denied that dikes had been chosen as targets or inadvertently bombed. An Air Force general, asked in mid-June whether some dikes could have been accidentally struck, said, "Anything is possible, but I think it's highly improbable."

The official United States position was modified by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in a news conference last Thursday.

"Some of the dikes and dams may be on roadways that are being used or they may be in a position where antiaircraft weaponry is placed and, of course, our pilots are given the opportunity and they should have this capability to attack North Vietnamese gun emplacements."

Mr. Laird went on to say, however, that "the real damage to the dams and dikes of North Vietnam is the damage that was suffered in weakening those dams and dikes last year during the very, very heavy flooding of North Vietnam."

"I believe," he went on, "that the North Vietnamese are carrying on this campaign in order for them to relieve themselves from the responsibility with their
own people for their failure to adequately repair this system since the major flooding of last year.”

State Department analysts have said that major flooding is expected again this year and characterize the wave of North Vietnamese complaints as a propaganda war.

For its part, North Vietnam has repeatedly charged that the United States has been bombing the dike systems for the last three months “in a very wicked design—to destroy or weaken dikes and, thereby, to cause floods.”

[From the New York Times, July 16, 1972]

VIETNAM: HOW TO BOMB A DIKE BUT NOT TARGET IT

(By Seymour Hersh)

WASHINGTON—Ever since the American air campaign over North Vietnam was resumed early in April, Hanoi had been charging—and Washington had been denying—that the North’s highly vulnerable river-dike system was being bombed. By the end of last month the controversy had swollen into an international propaganda war, with some Hanoi-based journalists and diplomats reporting that the dikes were indeed being hit by bombs.

Last week, the United States Government took a new tack. Military and civilian officials acknowledged that targets such as mobile antiaircraft missile units, and roads were being bombed even if they were on top of dikes or other parts of the North Vietnamese irrigation system.

“We’re not targeting the dikes,” one senior Navy officer said. “But if a SAM [surface-to-air missile] is a threat to you, you’re certainly entitled to protect yourself.” Another military source said, “A military target is targeted, and if it happens to be near a dike, then it gets hit.”

The incident that brought the controversy to the fore last week began at about 6 A.M. Tuesday near the city of Namsach, a rice-growing area about 35 miles south of Hanoi in the fertile and heavily populated Red River delta. A flight of Navy aircraft, ignoring two or three SAM missiles fired in defense, began dropping bombs throughout the region.

To Jean Thoraval, a Hanoi-based correspondent of the French news agency, Agence France-Presse, who had been taken on a routine inspection trip to the area, some of the bombs appeared to be deliberately aimed at the dike on which he and other foreign journalists were standing. Other bombs, he reported in a dispatch, appeared to be dropped almost at random.

The Pentagon looked into the matter and reported that the aircraft had three basic targets in the area—a SAM missile site, some dispersed oil barrels and an above-the-ground fuel pipeline. The Pentagon did not rule out the possibility that the dike had, in fact, been hit. But, a senior Defense spokesman said, “You can be sure nobody told him [Mr. Thoraval] that there was a pipeline or a SAM site there.”

It is hard to know how many similar incidents take place every day in North Vietnam. One complicating factor, in the military view, is the sheer number of dikes, dams, and other irrigation facilities in the North. The dike system, which is more than 2,000 years old, sprawls across 2,500 miles. Much of it is built to contain the fast-flowing Red River, which, at the height of the summer monsoon between July and September, attains a flow of more than 30,000 cubic feet of water per second. And much of northern-central part of North Vietnam lies below the bed of the Red River. Hence the huge earthen dikes throughout the North.

Last year a portion of the dike system along the Red River broke during the monsoon, and flooding wiped out much of the autumn rice crop. An even worse flood 25 years ago brought death through starvation to an estimated 2 million Vietnamese.

Some experts here believe that serious flooding would force North Vietnam to reduce its war effort. In 1967 the Johnson Administration weighed the possibility of bombing the dam and dike system. The option was rejected by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara. In a memorandum that was part of the published portion of the “Pentagon Papers,” Mr. McNamara wrote, “There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and most of the world would not permit the United States to go.”
Concern over the bombing of the dikes came up several times during the Democratic National Convention; it could develop into an issue in the Presidential campaign.

[From the New York Times, July 21, 1972]

BLAKE CHARGES DELIBERATE U.S. BOMBING OF DIKES—HEAD OF COUNCIL OF CHURCHES WRITES LETTER TO NIXON; URGES PRESIDENT TO CEASE THE ATTACKS IMMEDIATELY

GENEVA, July 20—The Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, has written President Nixon that he believes that United States planes are deliberately bombing dikes in North Vietnam.

In a letter dated last Monday, the Secretary General of the council of 250 Protestant and Orthodox churches addressed an "urgent appeal" to the President to "use your authority as Commander in Chief of the military forces of the U.S.A. immediately to cease this bombing."

He further requested Mr. Nixon to "stop the bombing in the region of the dikes in order that the people of North Vietnam can make the urgent, necessary repairs to avoid a catastrophe of unthinkable proportions."

COMMENTS ON LETTER

Commenting on the letter in an interview, Dr. Blake, former head of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States, said he had "no other evidence" of the alleged bombings than the report by a French newsman and Swedish television films that he cited in his appeal to the President.

But he added that because of the low credibility that could be accorded the denials of "low-level spokesmen" in the Defense Department in Washington, council officials were alarmed by the growing number of rumors about the bombings that they were hearing in Western Europe.

"The nature of the widespread rumors reminds me of other occasions when reports first denied by the Defense Department were later admitted as true," Dr. Blake said.

Dr. Blake made the letter public today because, he wrote the President, "I feel conscience-bound to publish at the time you receive it since publicity is the only channel left to me."

The churchman noted that last April he requested a meeting with President Nixon on behalf of a group of American church figures to "discuss the moral issues involved in the Vietnam war."

"As of today," he continued, "there is no indication of your willingness to discuss these matters with ecumenical leaders of your own country."

Dr. Blake wrote that he was raising an "issue of supreme urgency and moral import" because of the council's alarm over allegations that the United States military was seeking to destroy the dikes "both by bombing and artificially induced rainfall."

The allegations are difficult to believe, the church leader commented, "since the magnitude of the human suffering which major ruptures in these dikes would provoke is almost unbelievable."

DISCOUNTS NEGLECT

Nevertheless, Dr. Blake said that "in-depth inquiries with Western Europeans who have personally witnessed the situation since late June" had led to the conclusion that "the American explanation that the present weakness of the dikes is due to neglect by the population is untrue" and that "American protests that no intentional bombing has occurred and that only 'accidental' bombs have fallen on or near the dikes must also be untrue."

In rejecting United States denials of deliberate bombing of dikes, Dr. Blake cited the report of Jean Thoraval, a French newsman stationed in Hanoi for Agence France-Presse, that he and other foreign journalists had witnessed direct bombing of dikes by United States planes on July 11.

This report was disputed by Daniel Henkin, United States Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, in a statement supplied to The New York Times.
But Dr. Blake also said that Swedish television films made in late June "show serious bomb damage done to dikes" some five days before the filming.

[From American Report, Aug. 4, 1972]

MR. PRESIDENT:

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

You may recall that on April 26, I requested a meeting with you on behalf of a small group of leading American ecumenical figures to discuss the moral issues involved in the Viet Nam war. Though I stated then that we would be willing to adjust our schedules to meet with you at your convenience during the week beginning May 7, I received a negative reply from your assistant, Mr. Parker, only on May 10.

Subsequent correspondence from Mr. Parker (May 24) and Dr. McLaughlin, your deputy assistant for church affairs (June 29), assured me that you still had such a meeting under "active consideration." As of today there is no indication of your willingness to discuss these matter with ecumenical leaders of your own country.

This obliges me to address you through a letter which I feel conscience-bound to publish at the time you receive it since publicity is the only channel left to me. The private conversation we have sought for three months has not taken place. I do not now intend to repeat what I stated publicly together with seven American church leaders at St. John's Church, Washington, D.C., on May 11. Here I raise with you only one issue of supreme urgency and moral import.

For some weeks my colleagues in the World Council of Churches and I have been alarmed by the ever more frequent allegations that the U.S. military is pursuing a policy of intentional destruction of dikes in North Viet Nam both by bombing and artificially induced rainfall. The aim, it has been alleged, is to weaken the North Vietnamese dike system so as to provoke a "natural" disaster.

I admit that it is difficult to give credibility to such allegations, since the magnitude of the human suffering which major ruptures in these dikes would provoke is almost unthinkable. Of the 18,000,000 inhabitants of that country, more than 10,000,000 live in areas protected by the fluvial and maritime dikes.

It has been estimated that more than 1,000,000 lives would be immediately lost if the violent floods which threaten the region each rainy season were not contained. Many millions more would be left homeless, without food, and exposed to the diseases which ravage flood areas with the result of still more thousands of civilian deaths.

In recent days we have made in-depth inquiries with Western Europeans who have personally witnessed the situation since late June, and are forced to conclude that:

The American explanation that the present weakness of the dikes is due to neglect by the population is untrue. Millions of cubic yards of earth have been added to the dikes to reinforce them in past months, work which has taken place under the most difficult war conditions. Some of these dikes have existed for thousands of years, and the Vietnamese are aware that their very existence as a nation depends on the maintenance of this protection.

The American protests that no intentional bombing has occurred, and that only "accidental" bombs have fallen on or near the dikes must also be untrue. Mr. Jean Thoraval, correspondent of Agence France-Presse reported (Le Monde, July 12, 1972) that he and other foreign journalists witnessed on July 11 repeated direct bombings by U.S. aircraft of the dikes they were then inspecting. Swedish television films made in late June show serious bomb damage done to dikes some five days prior to their visit.

I am therefore forced to conclude that intentional bombing of dikes must be taking place, and make an urgent appeal to you to use your authority as Commander in Chief of the Military Forces of the U.S.A. immediately to cease this bombing. I further request that you stop the bombing in the region of the dikes in order that the people of North Viet Nam can make the urgent, necessary repairs to avoid a catastrophe of unthinkable proportions.

Respectfully yours,

EUGENE C. BLAKE,
General Secretary, World Council of Churches.
The bombing of North Vietnam as conducted first by President Johnson and more recently, during my visit, by President Nixon. The central fact is that life in North Vietnam is so much at the level of pocket fans that the country is virtually invulnerable to weapons designed for use against power plants.

To be sure the bombing has done terrible damage to the basic infrastructure of this country which has a bearing on the Communist war effort in South Vietnam. Hundreds of rail and road bridges linking major towns with each other and the southern front have been cut. Factories in any way useful to the war effort—for instance the textile works at Namdinh have been leveled. The port of Haiphong which I visited has been bombed to the point where it resembles a lunar landscape.

But life and the war effort go on, and at a pretty effective clip. I have seen dozens of cases where destroyed bridges have been replaced by ferries or pontoon bridges. "We are probably better at building pontoon bridges than anybody else in the world," a local editor boasted to me.

I have also repeatedly seen steady streams of trucks, buses, cars, and bicycles moving along the roads linking Hanoi with Haiphong and the military front. I have seen several freight trains pulled by steam locomotives moving along tracks leading east from the capital city to Haiphong and south to the front.

Gasoline remains so abundant that it is not rationed. Food and other basic requirements seem plentiful. In one department store I visited there was an oversupply of shoes and the price had been cut from roughly $5 a pair to $3. At the markets there seems to be lots of fruit, dried fish, vegetables, noodles and rice. Ducks are in season and I saw several hundred being sold at what I was told was a relatively low price—about 30 cents per pound.

But if the bombing does not cripple the country, it inspires the kind of wrath that knits people together. I have seen with my own eyes the damage done by American bombs to homes, schools, stores and many innocent people.

I have seen bits of burned clothing hanging grotesquely from the remains of what were trees standing near bombed out homes. I have seen pieces of what were human beings, including a charred lower jaw. I have seen an old man standing, in the ruins of his devastated home mourning the loss of his wife, his only son, and his grandson and vowing, as he shook his fist to the heaven that his heart would always be "hardened with hatred" against the Americans.

Then there is the matter of the dikes which are central to flood control at the end of the rainy season next month and to the prevention of drought in the dry season thereafter. There is no doubt that the dikes have been hit by American bombs. I have seen with my own eyes two undoubted examples of such hits. Indeed, given the number of American sorties (about 200 per day recently) and the extent of the dikes (about 2000 miles) it would be remarkable if there were not some bits on the dikes.

The end result of all this is a particularly grim kind of determination. The North Vietnamese have become convinced that fighting for them is a matter of life or death; that they have no alternative. They believe that if they keep fighting they will prevail—no matter what the cost.

As one of them put it: "Nixon has only two cards left to play—wiping out Hanoi and destroying the dikes. After that he is through".
From the Washington Post, July 23, 1972

Waldheim Urges U.S. to Avoid Dikes

Moscow—U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim said yesterday he was concerned about reports that U.S. aircraft have been bombing dikes in North Vietnam. He said thousands would die if such bombings were carried out.

"I firmly hope and appeal that this will be avoided," Waldheim told a news conference at the end of a six-day official mission to the Soviet Union. Waldheim said he did not know whether reports that bombs had hit the dikes were true, and noted that the United States had denied bombing them deliberately.

From the New York Times, July 28, 1972

Waldheim Voices Worry on Dikes—Ending Soviet Visit, Takes Note of Bombing Charges

(By Theodore Shabad)

Moscow, July 22—Secretary General Waldheim of the United Nations ended a week's visit to the Soviet Union today after having expressed concern over allegations that the United States was bombing dikes in North Vietnam.

In answer to a question at the news conference, held in the press center of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the Secretary General said he was concerned about reports that dikes in the densely populated Tonkin delta had been struck in United States bombings.

"If the dikes are bombed, then the plain will be flooded and this will lead to disaster and death," Mr. Waldheim said. "I hope this will be avoided."

United States officials have denied that dikes and dams in North Vietnam have been deliberately bombed, as asserted by Hanoi, although accidental strikes could not be ruled out, the North Vietnamese charges have received wide publicity in the Soviet press.

From the Washington Post, July 22, 1972

Hanoi Harvest Efforts Blamed for Troubles in South

(By Lydia Giles)

London—One of the important reasons North Vietnam has failed to resist the present South Vietnamese offensive is the northern harvest—for the past few weeks, all available North Vietnamese labor has been pressed, night and day, into bringing in the spring rice crop and getting the fields ready for the larger second crop, harvested at the end of the year.

Until these jobs are completed, Hanoi may well be reluctant to spare the reinforcements likely to be needed for any new push in the south.

The North Vietnamese press has complained that the harvest is proceeding too slowly. Conditions have been greatly complicated by the bombing and the arrival of large numbers of refugees in the countryside, even though the refugees are proving to be a valuable source of extra agricultural manpower.

By now the rice must be nearly in. It can be supplemented by stockpiled food from China and the Soviet Union and by rice seized by Communist troops in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

If the crop is reasonably good, it should see both North Vietnam and its army through to the autumn—but not, as the government has emphasized, without stringent economy and rigorous control of grain stocks.

Rarely have the results of a harvest been more important, even in North Vietnam where food supplies are a perpetual problem.

The North Vietnamese are being left in little doubt that harder times may lie ahead. Hanoi has stressed that "Every inch of land where food crops can be cultivated must be fully devoted to food production."
There were similar government pleas between 1965 and 1968. But now the American blockade of North Vietnamese ports and heavier, more accurate air attacks on communications mean that Hanoi can no longer, count on regular shipments of grain from its Communist allies. In spite of immense efforts, over the last few years to step up agricultural production, to cultivate new land, to diversify crops and to make more use of high-yield rice strains, North Vietnam has still been forced to import some 60,000 to 65,000 tons of food a month.

These figures shot up at the end of last year. The autumn harvest in 1970 was good, and 1971 started promisingly with a spring rice crop claimed to be 600,000 tons above previous years. But in the late summer, the worst floods for a century caused widespread damage to livestock, communications and property and what the government described as "serious losses" to the main rice crop of the year. Thousands of acres of transplanted seedlings were lost.

According to American estimates, North Vietnam's food imports went up from 15 per cent to 25 per cent of its total requirements.

Hanoi must hope that the present harvest will be good enough to help North Vietnam recoup some of last autumn's losses.

It has already made extensive efforts to persuade the peasants to break with tradition, plant more land with spring rice and reduce the country's dependence on the second crop which in its turn depends on North Vietnam's freakish weather conditions. Floods in late summer, drought in the autumn are not uncommon.

It is in this context that Hanoi's accusations of American attacks on the country's complex system of dikes should be seen. The volume of water in the Red River, which irrigates the delta ricefields where most of the population is concentrated, can increase by 30 times during the height of the flood season, from June to October.

Hanoi itself is about 20 feet below river level. In the North Vietnamese lowlands, large dikes control the rivers and channel water into irrigation canals, smaller ones protect and retain water in the ricefields and a further system provides sea defenses.

Hanoi maintains—and the U.S. denies—that bombing has already inflicted extensive and deliberate damage on the dikes.

In part, of course, such claims are aimed at world opinion: The North Vietnamese have not failed to point out that the Germans World War II governor general of Holland was tried at Nuremburg for crimes which included the destruction of Holland's sea defenses.

Now that the rains have begun, the threat of bombing is also a way of encouraging the North Vietnamese people to work harder on an irrigation system which needs constant labor and vigilance in any circumstances.

Hanoi cannot rule out the possibility of a calculated attack. Its fears must be reinforced by the U.S. experiment with induced rainfall as a weapon in Vietnam.

Unintentional damage to the irrigation system is also far from unlikely: There are some 2,500 miles of major dikes, while traffic on the waterways is an important U.S. target. However accurate the bombing is, it is inconceivable that North Vietnam's flood defenses can escape completely unscathed.

At the beginning of this year, a three-month campaign to strengthen the dikes was launched. Newspapers reported that thousands of laborers—15,000 in the Hanoi area alone—were hard at work. Many were students and their teachers. Classes were organized at workplaces.

Since the bombing began in earnest, editorials have stressed the need for night- and-day patrols to inspect the dikes and for careful weather watching.

What particularly disturbs the North Vietnamese is that this year, either floods—will be extremely hard to control. Power stations have been high on the U.S. list of targets.

On June 7, an editorial in Nhan Dan, the Communist Party newspaper, summed up Hanoi's message to its agricultural workers: Carry out normal plans, but foresee all circumstances and prepare for the worst.

For its part, the government seems determined to tighten its control over grain supplies and particularly to prevent the crop being harvested from slipping into new hoarders' hands or onto the free market.

Too much of last year's successful spring crop vanished in cooperative celebrations or into illicit rice alcohol. And in spite of raising the prices on rice in 1970, the government has found it hard to persuade the peasants to sell more than the obligatory minimum of grain to the state.
Prime Minister Pham Van Dong has issued strict instructions on grain procurement and ordered party organizations at district level to send cadres out to supervise cooperatives where “Grain management still leaves much to be desired.”

The trouble is that unless the government is able to lay hands on a larger share of the country’s agricultural produce, North Vietnamese in the cities and away from the main rice-growing areas face far harsher living conditions than the peasants in the cooperatives.

But with North Vietnam’s communications disrupted by bombing and its population scattered, the country’s leaders are not likely to find the problems of acquiring food and distributing it any more manageable than in the past.

[From the Washington Post, July 25, 1972]

**U.N. CHIEF SAYS U.S. HITS DIKES**

UNITED NATIONS, July 24—U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim said today that he had “private and unofficial” information from Hanoi that the U.S. was bombing the dikes of North Vietnam—and appealed to Washington to stop it.

Without directly challenging the Nixon administration position that the U.S. is avoiding deliberate targeting intended to damage the dikes, Waldheim cited reports of damage, intentional or not.

He appealed to the U.S. to “avoid this kind of action, which could lead to enormous disaster and enormous human suffering. Thousands and thousands of people would die. This has to be avoided.”

The secretary general’s statement, made at a press conference here on the day of his return to work after a three-week trip to Geneva, Vienna, Poland and the Soviet Union, touched a nerve of extreme sensitivity in Washington.

Secretary of State Rogers reacted with a statement that “we cannot consider helpful any public statements giving further currency to these reports.”

U.N. Ambassador George Bush, who was in Washington today, flew back on instructions from Rogers to meet Waldheim this evening. Rogers said Bush would point out “again” that “the information Waldheim has received regarding alleged deliberate bombing to damage dikes in North Vietnam is false, as the President said in his June 29 press conference.”

The allegations, said Rogers, are “part of a carefully planned campaign by North Vietnam and its supporters to give worldwide circulation to this falsehood.”

State Department spokesman Charles W. Bray told reporters that Ambassador Bush had seen Waldheim before his departure for Moscow and told him that it was not U.S. policy to damage the dike system deliberately.

“What we’re being subjected to,” said Bray, “is a classic and neatly executed propaganda campaign which, interesting enough, is greatly muted within North Vietnam itself.”

Bray said that in North Vietnam the major thrust of information given to the public concerns the need to repair damage done to the dikes during last year’s heavy flooding.

Waldheim, in his press conference, was careful to disclaim any information that bomb damage to the dikes was “intentional.” Intentional or not, he said, his information from “private channels” to Hanoi—and this is Hanoi information—is that dikes were bombed, and also explosions nearby caused cracks in the dams and produced the same results as if the dikes were bombed directly.

Waldheim’s statement, even if it is not regarded by Washington as a challenge to Nixon administration credibility, is still viewed as an attack on those actions the United States admits that it is taking—sorties against military targets on or near the North Vietnamese complex of dikes.

As such, it is regarded by diplomats here, including Americans, as sure to damage the already tense relationship between Washington and the United Nations. Referring to the congressional threat to cut U.S. contributions to the U.N. budget to 25 per cent, one Western diplomat suggested that “now the U.N. will be lucky if Washington gives 12.5 per cent.”

Waldheim said he had been told of the attacks on the dikes at the end of June, before his trip. The information, he said, came from “private contacts through unofficial channels to Hanoi.”

At that time, he said, he privately informed Washington of the charges, and was told, presumably in his meeting with Bush, “that this is not correct, and
that the U.S. did give instructions to avoid bombing of dikes." This was the same
position taken by President Nixon at his June 29 press conference.
"But in Geneva early this month, Waldheim said, he received additional in­
formation from his Hanoi contacts, and from Dr. Eugene Carson Blake head
of the World Council of Churches, "confirming" the bombing of dikes.
"If the allegations are correct, and a number of informations have come forth
in this respect, I deeply deplore such bombings and I appeal to stop it," Wald­
heim said.

[From the Washington Post, July 80, 1972]

VIETNAM: PRESIDENTIAL INCONSISTENCIES

Mr. Nixon's complaint that "well-intentioned and naive" people like Kurt
Waldheim have been "taken in" by enemy propaganda about bombing North
Vietnamese dikes ignores two crucial facts. First, there would be no propaganda
if there were no bombing. Second, the President himself is the real author of the
"propaganda," for the reason that three months ago, as part of a deliberate
campaign to intimate Hanoi and bring it to negotiate on his terms, he began to
hint carefully that under certain conditions the dikes could be bombed. Last
Thursday he said that on April 30 at the Connally ranch he had declared he
would not bomb the dikes. In fact, his remarks of April 30 were by no means so
egalitarian. He said then:
"... we will continue to make strikes on military targets throughout North
Vietnam. Now the problem is that is raised with regards to dams or dikes is that,
while it is a strategic target and indirectly a military target, it would result in an
enormous number of civilian casualties. That is something that we need to avoid.
It is also something we believe is not needed.
"... we are prepared to use our military and naval strength against military
targets throughout North Vietnam, and we believe that the North Vietnamese are
taking a very great risk if they continue their offensive in the South.
"I will just leave it there, and they can make their own choice."

When Mr. Nixon thought it might serve his own purpose, he dangled ambigu­
ities about bombing dikes. Only now, when three additional months of fierce
bombing evidently have not produced a negotiating breakthrough and when eye­
witnesses have reported some dike damage (however unintentional) and when a
world outcry has broken out, does the administration offer a belated report on 12
instances of "minor" bomb damage to the dikes—while the President perceives
"enemy-inspired propaganda."

As for his complaint of a "double standard" leveled against critics of his
policy who don't also criticize enemy attacks on South Vietnamese civilian
installations, it is almost embarrassing to have to explain that the violence
committed by parties in what is essentially a civil war—however deplorable—
is of a very different political and moral order than violence committed by a
foreign country intervening in that conflict to uncertain purpose and equally
uncertain effect. It seems almost superfluous to add that the standard of Amer­
ican conduct in war really ought not to be fixed, or justified, in terms of the
conduct of the North Vietnamese.

Mr. Nixon's reminder that the country has only one President at a time—
tended to put down congressmen who doubt he can soon end the American
part in the war—is no less off the mark. It was, after all, Richard Nixon, who
declared on March 10, 1971: "Those who think Vietnam is going to be a good
political issue next year are making a grave miscalculation. Now I am applying
our policy there not for political reasons, but for reasons of national security.
Nevertheless, those who are counting on Vietnam as a political issue in this
country next year are going to have the rug jerked from under them."

The President was saying then, as we read him, that he would end the war
by election day. If that was a pledge to the American electorate (and a warning
to his domestic political opposition), then it was also a notice to Hanoi that he
had to have a settlement to run successfully for re-election.

Mr. Nixon protests now that war critics in Congress are undercutting his
negotiating position with antiwar speeches and votes. But to the extent that
he meant what he said earlier, he was undercutting his own negotiating posi­
tion—by imposing on his own diplomacy a deadline for American disengagement
more rigorous than any that might have been imposed by the various measures
that have been debated in Congress. He is in the insupportable position of
claiming that it's acceptable for American diplomacy to be circumscribed by his own definition of his political requirements but not by the political requirements of his opposition and not by the widespread and growing popular sentiment for an early end to our involvement in Vietnam on almost any terms.

[From the New York Times, July 29, 1972]

WALDHEIM AND BUSH MEET AFTER CRITICISM BY NIXON

(By Robert Alden)

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., July 28—Relations between the United States and Secretary General Waldheim grew more strained today as Mr. Waldheim, responding to criticism by President Nixon, called in George Bush, the United States representative.

Their meeting, resulting from the Secretary General's statement that he had learned "through private unofficial channels" that the dikes in North Vietnam "are being bombed," lasted just short of an hour. Mr. Bush emerged and said, "I think the best thing I can do on the subject is to shut up."

Mr. Bush, normally ebullient and forthright, appeared subdued and troubled following the meeting. He characterized the discussion as "frank and full."

Yesterday, President Nixon declared at his news conference that Mr. Waldheim "like his predecessor, seized upon this enemy-inspired propaganda, which has taken in many well-intentioned and naive people."

The Secretary General declined comment both on Mr. Nixon's statement and on his meeting with Mr. Bush.

But spokesman William C. Powell, did refer correspondents to a series of Mr. Waldheim's statements Mr. Waldheim has made on the Vietnam war, including one memorandum to the Security Council in which he said, "I feel strongly that the United Nations can no longer remain a mute spectator of the horror of the war and of the peril which it increasingly poses to international peace."

Mr. Bush said he hoped that the current strain would not affect United States relations with the United Nations "over the long run." He said it was his belief that, judging by Mr. Nixon's statements, the President was a firm believer in United Nations.

Mr. Waldheim predecessor, U Thant, was subjected to criticism by the United States over his efforts to end the bombing of North Vietnam. Criticism of Mr. Thant, however, came mainly from State Department officials. President Johnson did not involve himself in the criticism personally.

Since he assumed his office at the beginning of this year, Mr. Waldheim has spoken out forcefully on Vietnam.

"The nations may not choose to accept our efforts to use our good offices to bring about peace," Mr. Waldheim said during the course of an interview, "but I don't want the United Nations blamed for doing nothing."

At a news conference in Paris in April, he said that he was always ready to lend his good offices to bring about peace in Vietnam.

In a statement to the press in New York in May, he said that the time had come for the "full machinery" of the United Nations to be used to achieve a cessation of hostilities in Vietnam.

"It is my earnest hope that even at this very late stage the parties to the conflict will agree to use the machinery of the United Nations in their own interest as well as in the interest of world peace," he said.


BEHIND THE FUROR OVER BOMBS ON RED RIVER DIKES

The approach of a potentially devastating flood season in North Vietnam means that the furor over U.S. bombing of Communist dikes is likely to reach new heights in days ahead.

Hanoi is pulling out all stops in determined propaganda campaign to convince the world that American warplanes are deliberately destroying North Vietnam's dikes and threatening hundreds of thousands of persons with drowning or starvation.