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raids 1 (normass/deepe)

SAIGON, AUGUST 23--Insiders call them HAP's repeat HAP's--high-altitude plows--which furrow gruesome moonscapes in South Vietnam's jungles. American ground commanders and troops call them by the codename of "arc lights." Captured Viet Cong documents have referred to them as the "filthy B-52's", which attack Communist base areas from soundless, invisible heights.

More frequently and in greater concentrations than ever before in the Vietnam war, General Creighton W. Abrams has been calling on the eight-engine Stratofortresses to forestall, stop or roll back the long-predicted Communist ground offensive.

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raids 2 (normass/deepe)

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"General Abrams uses the B-52's in a much different way than General ~~West~~ (William C.) Westmoreland (his predecessor)," one informed source explained. "Westmoreland used the B-52's more for political purposes. Maybe one of his field commanders had not had a B-52 in his corps area for weeks--so Westmoreland would give him a raid and then forget about that area.

"But Abrams calls in wave after wave of B-52's for days on an area where his intelligence people report a buildup of Communist main forces. He uses the B-52's as a substitute for sending out an Army division to search through the area on the ground. Not long ago a Viet Cong defector told Abrams' intelligence officers that an important Communist conference was to be held in a certain area on a certain day. About the time the meeting had been scheduled to begin, Abrams had B-52 bombs dropping ten kilometers (six miles) on all sides of ^{TRAT} the conference table."

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raids 3 (normass/deepe)

During the three-year period following the first B-52 raid in South Vietnam on June 18, 1965, the huge bombers have flown 25,000 sorties (one aircraft on one flight) to Vietnam. During that time, they have dropped 625,000 tons of lethal bombs. This total tonnage is the equivalent of thirty atomic bombs of the Hiroshima vintage; but it is only one two-hundredth the explosive power of the ~~total~~ lethal 100-megaton bomb recently detonated by the Soviet Union. General Westmoreland once price-tagged a B-52 raid at \$30,000 repeat 30,000 dollars a sortie--~~not~~ meaning the B-52 commitment thus far has totalled 750 repeat 750 million dollars.

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raids 4 (normass/deepe)

These days, between ten and twelve B-52 missions hit South Vietnam or southern North Vietnam in a 24-hour period. Generally, three aircraft--but occasionally more--comprise a mission. Much of this B-52 power is directed at Communist troop concentrations--and hence many missions fall into patterns of concentrations in Communist jungled base areas and strongpoints. These include the demilitarized zone and Ashau Valley; the Kentum and Pleiku jungled region along the Cambodian border; Tay Ninh, ^{GROUPINGS} along the Binh Long and Hau Nghia provinces bordering Cambodia in the Saigon area. And more than ever, an occasional raid is being dropped into the Communist swampland zones in the once-quiet Mekong Delta.

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raids 5 (normas/deepe)

In the Saigon area, three or four missions are heard nightly, causing windows and doors to rattle as though a ~~mini~~ miniature ~~equ~~ earthquake had ~~occurred~~. ^{ERUPTED,} The rumbling noise of the bombardment is heard ^{BY} first ~~to~~ the Saigonese--followed by the slower-moving vibrations of the shockwaves pulsating through Saigon's under-girdings, which causes the flimsy buildings to quiver. ~~Scarcely~~ The maximum ~~three~~ thirty-ton bombload--called a "stick"--of each of the three planes in a mission can be heard impacting separately. in three waves. Generally, ~~15 minutes to~~ fifteen to twenty minutes later, another three-plane flight also begins dumping its bombs. The missions into one geographic area are often close together in time ~~bezu~~ because all the airwaves under the ^A B-52 flight must be cleared of all other aircraft. A transport plane carrying former ~~Secretary~~ Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to Vietnam was once delayed in the Pacific so that a ~~Guam~~ Guam-based B-52 mission could proceed to Vietnam on schedule. Sometimes the flashes of the strings of bursting B-52 bombs can be seen from the hotel rooftops by Saigon's "war-watchers." The closest raid to Saigon to date in the war has been ten miles from the center of the city; most of the raids these days are a dozen or so miles from the capital; some raids as far as 30 miles from the city can be heard in Saigon during the proper weather conditions. MOONSOON RAINY Season.

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raids 6 (normass/deepe)

During most of these missions, the B-52 Strategic Air Command bombers are used against tactical—not strategic ~~tar~~ —targets, a quirk in the Vietnam war that ~~is~~ the B-52 pilots ~~find~~ often discuss among themselves.

"We hit very, very few strategic targets," one SAC commander explained.

"And even those are of a limited ~~strateti~~ strategic nature."

During the battle of Khe Sanh earlier this year, the eight-engine jets were tactically used in direct support of American troops on a sustained basis, another unusual utilization of the aircraft.

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raids 7 (normass/deepe)

The dust and debris from a B-52 raid ~~raisem~~ mushrooms more than a half-mile in the air—sometimes floating there for half ^{up} and hour; the ~~craters~~ ^{craters} created by the individual craters created by the 500 or 750 ^{POUND} bomb bombs are so huge that 37-ton American caterpillars, clearing the jungles once ^{Debris = HODEN} bombed by the SAC planes, vanish into the elephantine holes without warning.

For the B-52 crews, ~~the war is a remote,~~ automated flying up to six-miles above Vietn Vietnam, ~~the war~~ their automated, computerized bombing ^{RAIDS} ~~runs~~ seem remote from the ground war below.

"Most of our missions are just like training exercises," explained Lt. Col. Edward F. Gehrke, Warner Robins, ~~George~~ Georgia (108 Nancelon Circle), the home base of his ~~45~~ 465th Bombardment Wing, now operating out of southern ~~Thailand~~ Thailand. "But, there's one difference. Over here, SAC won't tolerate any mistakes. Also, once you realize you're carrying bombs into a high-threat area, it's not really an ordinary mission either."

^{Also} Along the demilitarized zone with North Vietnam, a SAC bomber ~~has~~ ^{HAND TRACKED} is occasionally ~~like~~ "locked-in" on Communist radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns, but none thus far have been hit. The SAC bombers carry counter-~~to~~ ^{devices} electronic ~~measures~~ to outfox Soviet-made surface-to-air missiles ~~possi~~ ~~positioned~~ in ~~south~~ the southern part of North Vietnam. The huge bombers ordinarily fly well above ~~all the widespread~~ automatic weapons and small arms fire. ~~Thus far, no SAC bombers have been lost to in combat due to combat; however four have been lost in mid-air, two mid-air collisions,~~

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raids 8 (normass/deepo)

Thus far, none of the SAC bombers have been lost due to Vietnam combat. However, four have been lost in two mid-air collisions: one crashlanded at the Danang Airbase for mechanical reasons and was later demolished by the first round of a Viet Cong rocket attack ^{shell during}.

Some of the most surprised persons startled persons hearing a B-52 raid outside of Saigon were a visiting crew of B six-man B-52 crew.

Lt. Col. Gehrke, a B-52 pilot and SAC officer for 16 ya years, was asleep in a small hotel outside near Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport, when a B-52 raid ~~down~~ night raid descended on Long An and Hau Nghia provinces, 16 miles southwest of the city.

"All of a sudden, I heard the doors rattling," the tall, confident colonel laughed. "I had no idea what was going on! I thought someone was knocking at the door and I went to open it but no one was there."

During the one day Vietnam visit, ~~off~~ the six-man crew was transported in an Army helicopter to watch a B-52 raid outside of Saigon. ^{the capital}

"Another thing that really surprised us--when the helicopter engine stopped," the ~~mission~~ SAC pilot ^{explained}. "We heard the chopper pilot radioing 'mayday mayday', meaning we were going to crash. We had just watched the first SAC strike and the chopper pilot was worried we wouldn't be able to get out of the area where the second strike was about to come in. But, then the engine came back on and we watched the second strike without incident."

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raids 9 (normass/deepee)

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Some high-ranking Communist defectors have said that the Viet Cong
High Command used to notify them several hours before a ~~B-52~~ ^{Guam-based B-52's} raid
hit their bivouack area. ^{S.} The American military command here has

vigor emphatically denied this, although some news correspondents have
reported ~~that~~ ^{that} Russian trawlers in the Pacific ~~could~~ ^{HAVE TRACKED} possibly communicate
the transiting of the huge bombers across the ~~ocean~~ ^{ocean} enroute to Vietnam.

Some defectors described surviving a ~~vicious~~ ^{FWD} B-52 raid as horrible experience,
with the shock waves sounding like a typhoon, ~~collapsing underground tunnels and with~~ ^{collapsing underground tunnels and with}
jungle trees wounding the
~~guerrillas~~ Communist fighters.

(Hank: President Thieu is making a tv address tonight. If he says
anything of political importance, or if there's more military action
overnight, we'll file a short story tomorrow. ~~regarding~~ At this point
the Saigon mood seepager is still usable. If there is a Tet-styled ground
offensive before August 28, you'd have to change the tenses. But, I think
it will hold up. Regards Bev)
--end reuter