

Due date: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 08:14 PM (968 words)

There were many topics that I was thinking of explaining with stories from the Patriots book. The theme I have chosen to write about is of the amount of bombing and firepower that was used by the Americans during the war. Although there were many procedures to fight the enemy, aerial bombardment was the most common method to deter the Vietnamese.

The first account I will use to support my subject is from Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy. She worked making new trails in the Quang Binh Province, which is the gateway to the jungles of Truong Son. So many bombs were dropped on the jungle, that she called it the "bombing capital." They were so accustomed to bombs that they knew that they sounded like, as they penetrated the earth. She describes that, "...a cluster bomb lands with a thud. That's because it's a "mother bomb" and doesn't itself cause the destruction. It just opens up and out fly the "baby bombs." Those small bombs are lethal." (Appy 105) Kim Chuy illustrates what she saw from bombing attacks and the things that she and others had to do in order to survive. She recalls one story where they, "...had to withstand seven bombing attacks, while working day and night to fill the craters." She also explains how much death and violence that was witnessed by all those who were there, by recounting a scene in which a bomb dropped into a shelter hole full of girls. "I saw with my own eyes a bomb drop into a shelter hole. Everyone stopped working and rushed there, screaming and crying. We were on our hands and knees clawing at the dirt. Our arms were smeared with blood. There were five people in that shelter. We just divided the parts arbitrarily into four small mounds, gave each one a name, and buried them." (Appy 105) It is clear that Kim Chuy witnessed very gruesome things, as well as the ridiculous amount of weaponry and firepower used against them.

The second account is from James Thomson. From 1964-1966 he was an aide to LBJ's first national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy. Thomson took part in making decisions and planning "armed reconnaissance" missions. He says, "I still thought it was about taking pictures and fire if fired upon." (Appy 116) Thomson thought these missions meant armed, as in if people were firing on you, you could fire back and reconnaissance was misinterpreted as taking pictures. He later realized what he was doing as he explains by saying, "Armed reconnaissance planes basically flew up and down both halves of Vietnam and over Laos, taking pictures and shooting at anything they wanted to." (Appy 116) Thomson also planned much of the "policy options for post election action in Vietnam," after Johnson's landslide victory in 1964. He describes that most, if not all possibilities were ruled out, except for a, "...slow-motion but systematic escalation and the aerial bombardment of enemy positions north and south." (Appy 117) Thomson was approached by Bundy and was asked to report on what his thoughts were on the chosen option to bring about a slow escalation through aerial bombardment to bring the enemy to defeat. He replied that he knew little of weaponry of war, but knew that, "No matter what we do-even if we bomb them back to the Stone Age, push them back into the brush, and destroy everything they've built- they know that someday we'll leave." (Appy 117) He was not supporting this chosen plan and did not want to be more responsible for killing people in Vietnam. It is unfortunate that more people in the American government didn't see things like this, for if they had, things might have turned out a lot differently.

The last account I've chosen to use is from Fred Branfman, who lived in Laos from 1967-1971 as a volunteer for a non-profit organization devoted to education and economic development in Third World countries. Branfman recalls a conversation with a peasant, where he learned that they had been being bombed for 5 years and were forced to hide in caves. "Every single one of these refugees told the same basic story.

The bombing started in May 1964, slowly accelerated, and got really bad in 1968. I later found out that when Johnson declared the bombing halt over North Vietnam just prior to the November '68 election they simply diverted all the planes into northern Laos."(Appy 217) Branfman explains that he was full of emotion after learning about the bombing. "I couldn't believe the American executive branch had been bombing this country without telling anyone. Nobody knew about it. Even Congress didn't know."(Appy 218) He was angry our government was so secrete about the bombing and very sad and enraged at the amount of violence he witnessed, but he was most frustrated at the fact that the bombing was continuing. "You had the United States, the most powerful people in the world, bombing the weakest people in the world"(Appy 218) This bombing should have never spilled over into Laos, but when it did people should have been informed about it.

The amount of bombs and weaponry that was used in Southeast Asia was outrageous and should have never happened in the first place. Even though this bombing happened, it should have never occurred anywhere else, other than the specified area. Northern Laos should have never been disturbed and Vietnam should have been dealt with other than the mass bombardment of the country. There were different methods that could've and should've been used, but hopefully we've learned what are limits are and the difference between mass bombardment and using weaponry to intimidate the enemy.

Close this window

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)