



# **Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam 1965 - 1966 - War in Southeast Asia and Indochina, Flaming Dart, Rolling Thunder, Pause and Escalation, SAM Threat, Bombing Halt**

*U.S. Government, U.S. Military, Department of Defense, U.S. Air Force (USAF)*

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Professionally converted for accurate flowing-text e-book format reproduction, this U.S. Air Force (USAF) publication, previously classified, tells the story of the opening two years of the Rolling Thunder air campaign in North Vietnam. The United States Air Force reached its nadir during this time. Never had the Air Force operated with so many restraints and to so little effect. These pages are painful but necessary reading for all who care about the nation's military power. Jacob Van Staaveren wrote this book in the 1970s near the end of his distinguished government service, which began during the occupation of Japan; the University of Washington Press published his book on that experience in 1995. He was an Air Force historian in Korea during the Korean War, and he began to write about the Vietnam War while it was still being fought. His volume on the air war in Laos was declassified and published in 1993. Now this volume on the air war in North Vietnam has also been declassified and is being published for the first time. Although he retired to McMinnville, Oregon, a number of years ago, we asked him to review the manuscript and make any changes that seemed warranted. For the most part, this is the book he wrote soon after the war.

Chapter 1 - Flaming Dart \* The United States Considers a Reprisal Attack \* Flaming Dart I \* Flaming Dart II \* Chapter 2 - Planning \* Paramilitary Activities and Bombing Plans \* Rising Pressure from the Services to Bomb the North \* Selecting Major North Vietnamese Targets \* The Gulf of Tonkin Incident \* Washington Forbids Follow-on Strikes \* The Bien Hoa Incident \* Beginning of a Limited, Two-Phase Program \* Washington's Resistance to a Bombing Program Ends \* Chapter 3 - Rolling Thunder Begins \* The Air Challenge in North Vietnam \* Command and Control of Air Resources \* Preparations for a Rolling Thunder Program \* The First Two Rolling Thunder Strikes \* Initial Analysis of Aircraft Losses \* An Air Strategy Emerges \* Beginning of Weekly Rolling Thunder Strikes \* Supporting Operations for Rolling Thunder \* Contingency Planning for a Larger Conflict \* Chapter 4 - Gradual Expansion \* Further Decisions on Prosecuting the War \* Initial Bridge-Busting Attacks \* Countering the North's Air Defenses \* The Honolulu Conference of April 1965 \* Rolling Thunder's Moderate Pace Continues \* Expansion of the Leaflet Program \* Cautious Optimism on Bombing Results \* Chapter 5 - Pause and Escalation \* The First Bombing Halt \* Rolling Thunder Resumes \* Hanoi Expands its Air and Ground Defenses \* The Air Force Organizes for Extended Combat \* Washington Rejects a More Air-Oriented Strategy \* Beginning of Two-Week Bombing Cycles \* Chapter 6 - The SAM Threat \* Initial anti-SAM Operations \* The First Iron Hand Missions \* Improving Detection of SAM Sites \* Continued Air Strikes on non-SAM Targets \* Establishment of a Target Intelligence Center \* Deepening Service Concern about Strike Restrictions \* The First SAM "Kill" and the anti-SAM Campaign in Late 1965 \* The Air Force Increases its anti-SAM Capability \* Chapter 7 - Toward the Thirty-seven Day Bombing Halt \* Additional Interdiction Changes and Planning for Negotiation \* Continuation of the Leaflet Program \* Beginning of a Thirty-seven Day Bombing Halt \* Chapter 8 - Diplomacy Fails \* Hanoi Rejects American Peace Overtures \* Debate on Resuming the Bombing \* Rolling Thunder 48 \* More Deployment Planning \* Rolling Thunder 49 \* Chapter 9 - Rolling Thunder 50 \* Westmoreland's "Extended Battlefield" Area \* Selecting Rolling Thunder 50 Targets \* Rolling Thunder 50 Begins \* The Air Munitions Shortage \* Circumventing Bad Weather With MSQ-77 Radar \* Countering the North's Air Defense System \* Improving MiG Watch and Border Patrol \* Chapter 10 - The Strikes \* The

POL Debate \* Approval of a Few POL Strikes \* Gradual Expansion of POL Strikes \* Strikes on Major POL Sites Begin \* The Honolulu Conference, July 1966 \* The POL Strangulation Campaign \* Chapter 11 - Summary and Reappraisal

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