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target of the B-52s was the enemy command and control apparatus associated with its Military Region V.<sup>110</sup>

(S) Even greater attention was given to strikes in the I and II Corps Tactical Zones during June. These were primarily aimed at thwarting enemy offensive plans in the Central Highlands. Operations Hawthorne (U. S.-ARVN search and destroy in Kontum Province), El Paso (First Infantry reaction operation in Tay Ninh Province), and Kansas (a combined South Vietnamese and III Marine Amphibious Force action in Quang Tin Province) also required B-52 strikes. Viet Cong base areas in Tay Ninh and Ba Long Provinces received 11 strikes. Six infiltration targets in Laos were also attacked. In all 57 missions were flown during the month.<sup>111</sup>

(S) Undoubtedly the most significant development Arc Light operations during the first part of 1966 was the expansion of the bombings to include targets in Laos and North Vietnam. With a single exception, all B-52 missions during 1965 had been conducted within the borders of South Vietnam. On 10 December the Duck Flight mission hit a suspected VC supply storage area along the South Vietnam-Laotian border. Part of the target box was in Laos.<sup>112</sup> By the end of the year COMUSMACV had expressed a desire to commit B-52s regularly to bomb enemy camps, truck parks, and penetration points on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and on other infiltration routes into the northern provinces of South Vietnam.<sup>113</sup>

(S) The use of B-52s in Laos, no matter how close to the South Vietnam border, could be interpreted as an escalation of the war on the part of the United States, thus it was sensitive politically. Missions

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during the first six months of 1966 were not announced to the press, nor were they cleared beforehand with the neutralist premier of Laos, Souvanna Phouma. It will be recalled that the first Laos mission in December 1965 had been announced as taking place within South Vietnam. During the early months of 1966 whenever a Laotian target was struck another target in South Vietnam was struck at the same time. The latter one was the only one announced. Although these came to be referred to as "press targets", they were valid targets and not contrived just for that purpose. This arrangement seems to have worked, at least no political problems developed as a result. It would be naive to suggest that the press was actually taken in, or for that matter that it was ever seriously believed that they would be. Yet, perhaps as the result of a tacit understanding, there was little comment suggesting that B-52s were bombing in Laos. 114

(2S) In the first six months of the year SAC flew 399 sorties against Laotian targets contiguous to the South Vietnamese Provinces of Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, and Kontum (in fact the targets took their names from these provinces, e.g., Quang Tri 9, Kontum 5 and 6, Quang Nam 15 and 16, etc.). The objective of these strikes was to interdict the movement of supplies and men from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. Targets were at various points along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, actually a network of footpaths and roads extending from southern North Vietnam south through Laos parallel to the border with South Vietnam, which at a number of places turned eastward and debouched into South Vietnam. Bombed by SAC were Viet Cong and North Vietnamese