

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Smitty,

Ref: **Meteorologists face death threats after recent storms** by Mary Boyte

Just a couple of comments regarding the referenced article from the November 2024 Aerograph.

I remember in about 1965 when I was the Deputy Director of JTWC Guam and there were four typhoons in a row over a period of about a month that went ashore in China -- near Hong Kong. Someone at FWF Sangley Point, RP sent us an article from one of the Manila newspapers that was a press release from PRC accusing us at JTWC of steering those four typhoons into China and causing much damage and loss of life. Heck, we were lucky to do a reasonable job of forecasting them -- much less steering them. Nice that the Chinese thought that highly of us, but, alas, we were in sales, not production!

I was a flight meteorologist in VW-4 (the Navy Hurricane Hunter Squadron) from 1960 till 1962. It was during that time that an experiment (Project Stormfury) was made on a hurricane in the area off the east coast of the USA when that hurricane was unlikely to affect any land area for 72-hours and the silver-iodide "alektos" were dropped in the wall cloud. A F8 photo reconnaissance aircraft was to pass through (or above) the wall cloud at 35,000 feet or above and drop 1/3 of the load of "alektos" and then do a figure 8 and drop another 1/3 of his load and then finally a few minutes later go back and drop the final 1/3 of his load. Well, the pilot got into such turbulence, even at that altitude, that he dropped the whole load at once. Well the radar photos of that hurricane were interesting -- the radar echo of that portion of the wall cloud sort of "disappeared" where the F8 had dropped the whole load. BUT, within a few minutes, the "missing" segment of the wall cloud re-formed as if nothing had happened. Of course no one was there to first-hand witness the heavy rain, but I suspect it was similar to Niagara Falls.

We all commented afterwards that surely the heaviest rain that has ever occurred on earth happened in the few minutes that the segment of the wall cloud was induced to drop all its' rain in a short time.

The bottom line is that the hurricane was only phased for a few minutes and quickly resumed its deadly intensity as if nothing had happened.

So much for "controlling or steering" tropical cyclones!

Best wishes,

John R. Lincoln  
Captain, USN (Ret.)

P.S. I served my 32 years and four months in the meteorology/oceanography part of the Navy between 1955 and 1987. I took my first university-level course in meteorology in 1953 -- before computers, weather satellites, high-speed error-free telecommunications (we were still using CW in some cases), etc.