



ADRC/DA/WC

CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENTIAL	MESSAGE REFERENCE NO. A 60
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TO: Department of State
 INFO: DIA Washington DC
 Amembassy Moscow
 FROM: USINT Havana
 E.O. 11652: GDS
 TAGS: MILI, PDEV, UR, CU
 SUBJECT: Soviet Aircraft for Cuba
 REF:

Rbr copy DG

DATE: SEP 20, 1978

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USINT officer, September 16, asked the Soviet Air Force Attaché here why the MIG-23 aircraft had been delivered to Ethiopia, but not to Cuba. The Soviet replied that the MIG-23 had not been delivered to Cuba because the U.S. would consider it an "offensive weapon" -- falling outside the US-USSR informal understanding on non-permissible weapons in Cuba.

COMMENT: Presumably, Soviet rationale is that the MIG-23 has a heavier bomb payload than the IL-28 light bombers that were removed from Cuba at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

LANE

[Signature]

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PREPARED BY POL: JdGlassman:dh	DRAFTING DATE 9/19/78	PHONE NO. 209	COMMENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: PO: LFL
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Feb MIG 23

Soviets Upgrading Cuban Forces

The Soviet Union appears to be upgrading Cuba's air force by sending it Mig 23 Flogger fighters for the first time, Pentagon officials said yesterday. The preliminary indications reported by U.S. intelligence suggest that 18 to 20 aircraft have arrived in Cuba some in crates and the other assembled.

The planes spotted so far are not equipped to handle nuclear weapons, officials said, but may be able to perform as conventional bombers as well as dogfighters for aerial combat.

Within the Pentagon hierarchy there was concern, but not alarm, about the shipment, according to officials. The Mig 23 is considered an advance over the Mig 21 sent to countries all over the world but no match for such a modern U.S. fighter as the F15. The Soviet Union sent Egypt some Mig 23s before relations between the countries cooled.

The Soviets have been supplying Cuba with a wide array of modern armament, some of which has been used by Cuban troops in Africa. U.S. intelligence officials apparently tracked the freighters laden with crates containing the Mig 23s, and confirmed their suspicions when they saw the planes flying over Cuba. It was not certain whether they had Cuban or Soviet pilots.

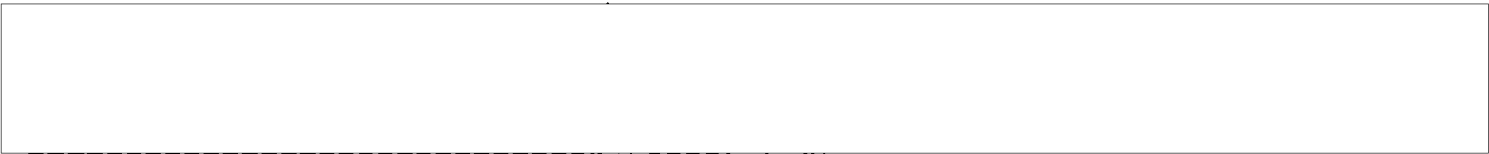
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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI CU UR
SUBJ: MIG-23'S IN CUBA

1. WE HAVE HEARD OCTOBER 30 MIAMI RADIO BROADCASTS QUOTING PENTAGON INTELLIGENCE SOURCES ON PRESENCE OF 20 MIG-23'S IN CUBA. PLEASE ADVISE.

2. FYI ITALIAN EMBASSY (CORTESE-STRICTLY PROTECT) INFORMED US, OCTOBER 31, THAT CUBAN CIVILIAN SOURCE (UNIDENTIFIED) TOLD HIM ON TO TWO WEEKS BEFORE OCTOBER 30 BROADCASTS THAT 20 MIG-23'S ARRIVED IN CUBA SOME THREE MONTHS AGO. END FYI.
LANE

END OF MESSAGE

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3773
INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 322
RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 42
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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COMMENTS:		

Discuss with Gleason

EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MILI EAIR CU UR
SUBJ: MIG-25'S FOR CUBA, BUT NO MORE MIG-23'S

1. CUBAN MINISTER OF TRANSPORT LUSSON (STRICTLY PROTECT) TOLD USINT OFFICER, AT ALGERIAN NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION, NOVEMBER 1, THAT NO FURTHER MIG-23 AIRCRAFT WOULD BE DELIVERED TO CUBA. (FYI ITALIAN EMBASSY CLARIFIED, NOVEMBER 1, THAT THEIR CUBAN CONTACT HAS INDICATED THAT THERE ARE "ALMOST 20", NOT 20, MIG-23'S IN CUBA. END FYI) (COMMENT: ABSENCE OF FURTHER DELIVERY OF MIG-23'S IS SIGNIFICANT NOT ONLY QUANTITATIVELY, BUT ALSO QUALITATIVE-IF, AS DOD AS STATED, MIG-23'S NOW HERE DO NOT APPEAR TO BE NUCLEAR-CAPABLE.)

2. LUSSON ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT MIG-25 (FOXBAT) AIRCRAFT WOULD SOON BE ARRIVING FOR CUBANS. HE DECLINED, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, TO SPECIFY HOW MANY MIG-25'S WOULD BE COMING, STATING ONLY THAT THERE WOULD BE "A SUFFICIENT NUMBER" ("UNA CANTIDAD SUFICIENTE". LUSSON DID NOT SPECIFY WHETHER THE MIG-25'S WOULD BE INTERCEPT OR RECONNAISSANCE VERSIONS.

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3. WITH REGARD TO RECENTLY ARRIVED AN-26 TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT, LUSSON SAID THESE AIRCRAFT WOULD BE USED TO DOMESTIC CARGO OPERATIONS-THOUGH THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS TO CONVERT THEM TO CARRY 35-40 PASSENGERS. (FYI AT LEAST THREE OF THE AN-26'S APPEAR TO BE LOCATED AT SOUTHWEST END OF CIDUAD LIBERTAD AIRPORT. END FYI)

4. FYI FRENCH EMBASSY COUNSELOR AZAIS WAS PRESENT WHEN LUSSON MADE ABOVE COMMENTS. END FYI. COMMENT: LUSSON'S OPEN DISCUSSION OF CUBAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT IS EXTRAORDINARY. WE PRESUME THAT CUBANS MAY WISH TO LIMIT US ANXIETY OVER CHARACTER OF NEW AIRCRAFT DEPLOYMENTS-AND THAT LUSSON'S REMARKS MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO CONVEY A MESSAGE. SHIFT OF ACQUISITIONS TOWARD FOXBATS, IF ACCURATE, WHILE INTRODUCING ANOTHER NEW HIGH-PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT IN US PROXIMITY-WOULD AT LEAST LESSEN POSSIBILITY THAT CUBANS ARE SEEKING TO DEVELOP MORE SIGNIFICANT GROUND ATTACK OR LONG-DISTANCE STRIKE CAPACITY AGAINST US.
LANE

END OF MESSAGE

SECRET