

1 August 1973

MEMORANDUM

SCOPE SHIELD Photography of North Vietnam

1. This memorandum responds to a request for a substantive evaluation of the SCOPE SHIELD photo-reconnaissance (U-2) program targeted against the coastal region of North Vietnam, and makes some recommendations for future missions.

2. Following the poor showing of the initial series of two SCOPE SHIELD (SU) missions in late March, SU mission #S033E of 21 July provided fair-to-good interpretable imagery of most key military-logistic points in the DRV Panhandle -- the first good photographic coverage since the March-April Satellite mission [redacted]. The latest SCOPE SHIELD mission provided good corroboration of Communist activities derived from the continuing heavy volume of COMINT emanating from the North Vietnamese Panhandle. Light vehicle traffic noted on routes north of Vinh indicated that rail and waterborne transport are again the primary modes used for supply shipments coming into the Panhandle. South of Vinh moderate traffic levels were reflected in the photography. Logistic activity at the coastal transfer points at Quang Khe and Dong Hoi was moderate, and sizable stockpiles of supplies were noted at Quang Khe. Some 250 vehicles, including a number of armored vehicles, were seen at the large inland truck park and storage complex at Bat Lake. A driver training area west of Quang Khe has been expanded and now consists of eight separate compounds containing trucks and at least 18 armored vehicles. The mission readout also furnished useful information with which to gauge the rate and extent of new construction and repair activity underway since the first of the year. In light of the technical success of the 21 July SCOPE SHIELD mission, and the absence of imagery over

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the DRV, we urge that another SCOPE SHIELD mission be flown as soon as possible in order to gain as much new and comparative information as possible.

3. A repeat mission along the southern Panhandle coast would yield comparative judgments on traffic levels and patterns, and rates of supply turnover at major depots and transshipment points. Important Panhandle targets are the major transfer points at Dong Hoi, Quang Khe, and Vinh, and the coastal routes leading into the DMZ. The mission would also serve as a baseline for future overhead reconnaissance to detect supply buildups in the lower Panhandle in anticipation of another possible logistic offensive in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia during the upcoming dry season.

4. Programming part of this mission to include coverage of the northern coast and the deep water ports at Haiphong, Hon Gay, and Cam Pha would provide a useful current status report on this region, which has not been covered by good

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namese maritime activities, interpretable photo coverage would add significant detail on the current state of northern port facility operations, dockside storage levels, and possible detection of military-related cargos. The tempo of reconstruction in bomb-damaged areas and new construction projects would be useful in estimating DRV civil priorities. Moreover, successful coverage of Haiphong would provide coverage of the important cement plant there, and imagery of Hon Gay and Cam Pha farther north might confirm reports that at least one of these ports is slated for major improvements. Coverage of the new petroleum pipeline terminating at Hon Gay would also be useful in assessing the post-bombing period utility of this trunkline.

5. In sum, the SCOPE SHIELD mission of 21 July provided good photography of the DRV logistic system in the Panhandle, corroborating intelligence derived from COMINT. Another such mission over the same area would yield comparative judgments on logistic developments, possibly provide early warning of supply buildups, and -- if programmed farther north -- yield useful information on DRV maritime, economic, and reconstruction activities.

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