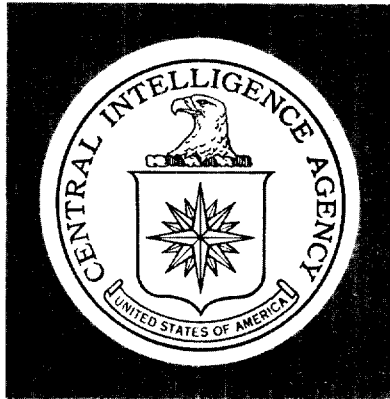


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

*Communist China Increases Support
To North Vietnam's Air Defenses*

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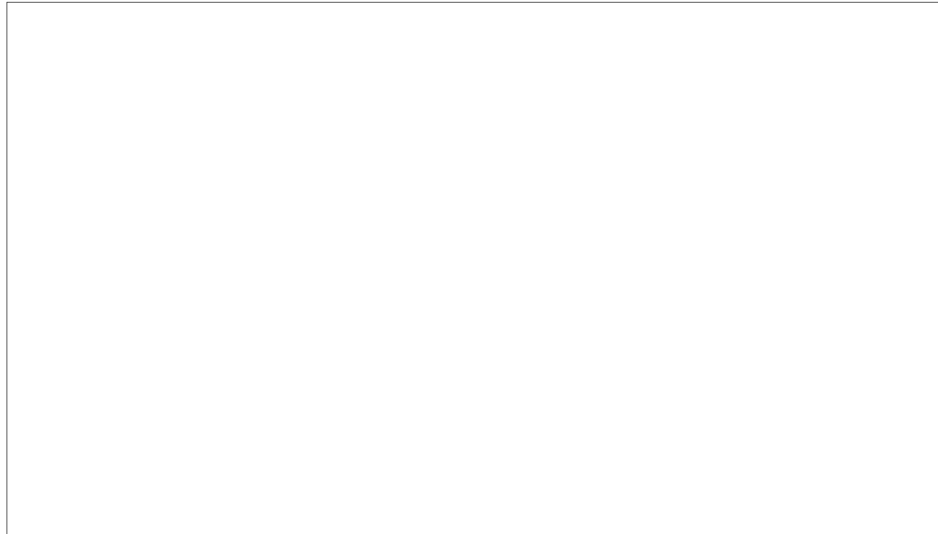
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This document contains classified information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, US Code Title 18, Sections 793, 794, and 798.



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
15 December 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Communist China Increases Support
to North Vietnam's Air Defenses

Summary

Communist China has recently stepped up its support of North Vietnam's air defense effort by permitting North Vietnamese MIG's to take refuge in China after combat missions. Earlier assistance included the delivery of fighter aircraft to Hanoi, the deployment of Chinese antiaircraft artillery units in North Vietnam [redacted]

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[redacted]. In addition, Communist China has improved its own air defense posture in the south.

The Chinese are expected to continue, and perhaps to expand, their aid to the North Vietnamese air defense effort while bolstering their own air defense system along the border. In permitting North Vietnamese MIG's to take refuge in China after combat missions, Peking probably envisions a risk of US aircraft pursuing these fighters across the border. Past experience indicates that intrusions by US aircraft would almost certainly be challenged.

China's posture still appears to remain basically defensive and cautious. The air defense augmentation in south China has not been accompanied by other moves--such as the deployment of bombers or ground forces closer to North Vietnam--which would indicate a more ominous intent.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research and coordinated with the Offices of Current Intelligence, National Estimates, and Scientific Intelligence.

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1. Communist China's support of North Vietnamese air defense has grown significantly since the first US air strikes on North Vietnam in August 1964. This support has extended into many facets of air defense and has included [] [] supply of jet fighters, movement of anti-aircraft units into North Vietnam, and the use of Chinese airfields as a safe haven for North Vietnam's reserve aircraft (see the map, opposite page). In the past several weeks, Peking has permitted North Vietnamese fighters to take refuge in Chinese air space and land at Chinese airfields following combat missions over North Vietnam.

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2. In the past several months, the Chinese have steadily bolstered their own air defenses along the North Vietnamese border by sending more jet fighters, additional anti-aircraft units, and at least one SAM unit to the area, and by improving radar and ground control capabilities.

Fighter Defenses

3. Just one day after the first US air strike against North Vietnam on 5 August 1964, Peking delivered about 35 MIG-15 Fagot and MIG-17 Fresco aircraft to North Vietnam--clearly in response to an earlier agreement with Hanoi. Concurrently several Chinese fighter units in south China moved to forward bases along the border.

4. Subsequent deliveries of MIG's to North Vietnam are believed to have come from the Soviet Union, but China's support of the North Vietnamese Air Force continued to develop. In December 1965, North Vietnam began flying some of its aircraft out of the country to Pei-tun/Yun-nan-i airfield for safekeeping and probably for maintenance and repair as well. The number of North Vietnamese aircraft at this field remained fairly constant until June 1967.

5. On 21 June, some two months after the first US strikes on North Vietnamese airfields, Hanoi began to send most of its fighters into Pei-tun/Yun-nan-i. In October, Peking began allowing the Vietnamese to

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use Meng-tzu, Nan-ning, and Ning-ming airfields in ferrying their aircraft to and from China. Today south China airfields provide a safe haven for approximately 130 North Vietnamese aircraft, about 90 of them MIG's. In addition, the Chinese probably supplied about two dozen of their own MIG-17's to North Vietnam in 1967. Most of these aircraft subsequently returned to China.

6. In November, for the first time, North Vietnamese MIG's were permitted to take refuge in China after combat missions over North Vietnam. On three occasions they landed at Ning-ming airfield just across the border and after a brief layover returned to North Vietnamese airfields. Other times they remained airborne after entering China and returned home when the danger of further encounter with US aircraft was minimal.

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7. During the past two months, the Chinese also have increased the number of MIG's in south China. Approximately 38 MIG's have moved to south China since 10 September, and there are some indications that more may be sent soon. Currently there are about 300 MIG-17 Fresco, 170 MIG-19 Farmer, and 10 MIG-21 Fishbed aircraft in south China--representing about 20 percent of China's total fighter force.

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Radar Facilities

11. The Chinese have established at least two, and possibly three, radar units in North Vietnam

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They have also steadily improved their radar capabilities in south China by adding several new long-range radars of native Chinese design along the border and on Hainan Island.

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Antiaircraft Artillery

13. In August 1965, China moved two AAA divisions into North Vietnam, probably to provide defense for construction projects being undertaken by Chinese engineering troops. Since then, the number of Chinese AAA divisions in North Vietnam has risen to four, and several rotations have occurred.

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14. One AAA unit is at Yen Bai airfield in northwestern North Vietnam, an airfield which Chinese engineer troops have been constructing since late 1965. The other three AAA divisions are in the Lang Son, Thai Nguyen, and Hanoi areas for the defense of rail lines and related construction projects.

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15. AAA forces on the Chinese side of the border also have been augmented recently. The number of AAA divisions along the northeast segment of the frontier has risen from three to as many as six during the past two months. Some of these units eventually may replace or augment the Chinese AAA forces currently in North Vietnam.

16. China is believed to have provided some of the AAA guns in the hands of the North Vietnamese, although the main source of these weapons continues to be the Soviet Union.

Surface-to-Air Missiles

17. North Vietnam's SAM units have been equipped and supported strictly by the Soviets. On the Chinese side of the border, only one SAM unit has been confirmed--about seven miles north of the border near Chin-chou, where it apparently shot down a reconnaissance drone on 17 September. In October, however, photography revealed that the site had been evacuated. The equipment probably has been moved to another location along the border in accordance with the "hit and move" tactic which the Chinese have used with some of their SAM units elsewhere to ambush reconnaissance flights.

Outlook

18. Peking probably will continue to support North Vietnam's air defenses, and it is possible that this support will grow. Additional Chinese AAA

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forces may be sent to North Vietnam if Chinese construction activities in North Vietnam expand, and North Vietnamese MIG's may use Chinese air space and airfields with increasing frequency.

19. In permitting North Vietnamese MIG's to take refuge in China after combat missions, the Chinese probably envision a risk that US aircraft will pursue the North Vietnamese fighters across the border. The recent acceleration of the fighter buildup in south China may have been designed to meet this contingency. Past experience indicates that intrusions by US aircraft would almost certainly be challenged. Chinese fighters generally patrol the border during US air strikes over North Vietnam and have consistently tried to engage any US aircraft that penetrate the border.

20. Nevertheless, China's posture appears to remain basically defensive and cautious. The air defense augmentation in south China has not been accompanied by other moves--such as the deployment of bombers or ground forces closer to North Vietnam--which would indicate a more ominous intent. Propaganda attention to Vietnam remains moderate in volume and follows long-standing positions.

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