

~~TOP SECRET~~



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SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

IMPLICATIONS OF A CERTAIN US COURSE OF ACTION

NOTE: This is the estimate. No further versions will be published.



Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf
2 June 1965

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Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, AEC and NSA.

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 4 June 1965. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; the Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.

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TS#185860

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

4 June 1965

SUBJECT: SNIE 10-7-65: IMPLICATIONS OF A CERTAIN US COURSE
OF ACTION

THE PROBLEM

To estimate Communist reactions if the US does not attack the surface-to-air missile sites, light bombers, and fighters recently furnished to the DRV by the USSR.*

DISCUSSION

1. Since April, the Soviet Union has been furnishing to North Vietnam a variety of weapons. Among these the most important are about 30 MIG-15/17s, some with limited all-weather capabilities, three SAM sites under construction near Hanoi, and eight light jet

* Reactions if the US does attack are considered in SNIE 10-6-65, "Probable Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions," ~~TOP SECRET~~,
[redacted] dated 2 June 1965.

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bombers (IL-28) which have been ferried across China to Phuc Yen airfield since 21 May.

2. We think this program of military assistance was initiated to deter the US from extending its air attacks to the Hanoi-Haiphong complex. In the Communist view, the deterrence would rest not so much on the combat capabilities of the weapons as on the manifestation of a deepening Soviet commitment. In effect, Hanoi and Moscow are hoping that this new program, added to other pressures on US policy (e.g., domestic and world opinion), will dissuade the US from extending air attacks northward. The Soviet program of military assistance also represents a part of Moscow's effort to increase its influence, relative to that of Communist China, on the Hanoi regime.

Chances of Further Buildup

3. If the US refrained from extending air attacks northward, though the Soviets would probably continue to augment North Vietnam's air defense capabilities (e.g., by providing additional SAMs, AAA, radar, and fighters), they might not increase the supply of offensive weapons much beyond present levels. The USSR and the DRV might conclude that they had already succeeded in establishing an effective deterrent and judge that significantly greater numbers of weapons such as IL-28s would only raise the chances of eventual US attacks on key targets north of the 20th Parallel.

4. On the other hand, the supply of jet light bombers represents a change in the character of Soviet aid which may point to a larger buildup. These aircraft give the DRV a capability to strike against targets in South Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos. The USSR also realizes that IL-28s became a highly charged issue during the Cuban missile crisis, and that the US insisted upon their removal while permitting Cuba to retain defensive systems. If the US tacitly accepted them, Moscow and Hanoi might conclude that an important test had been passed and that they could extend the buildup of offensive weapons without incurring unacceptable risks. In this event, they would probably expect their SA-2 defenses, as these became operational, to reduce US reconnaissance and mask a further buildup.

Possible Use of the IL-28s

5. We think it unlikely that the DRV now intends to use IL-28s in offensive operations. Hanoi would almost certainly calculate that this action would invite a US retaliation which would probably not be limited to the airfields supporting the operation of the bombers. Moreover, we think that the general line of DRV strategy still is to concentrate on the guerrilla war in the South which they expect to win, and not themselves to take the initiative in widening the war.

6. But these aircraft would widen the DRV's offensive options, and circumstances might arise in which Hanoi chose to use them. In particular, we cannot exclude the possibility that, even now, Hanoi means to try an individual raid against some psychologically important target such as Da Nang or a US aircraft carrier.

Political Implications

7. Whatever the Communists' precise intentions at present, US acceptance of the present buildup would be encouraging to them. They would probably infer that the US, at least for the time being, had accepted certain limitations and ground rules in the bombing of the DRV.

8. The Chinese would be concerned by the probable increase in Soviet influence in Hanoi, but at the same time they might be reassured by the anticipated hardening of DRV determination to carry on without negotiations. They would also be somewhat relieved of their apprehensions that the US would escalate the war to bomb targets in China.

9. The Soviets would probably view their involvement as now somewhat less dangerous, although still not without risks, and they might be encouraged to take a more rigid position with the US. At the same time, the Soviets almost certainly still hope for a negotiated settlement and might see the US inaction as increasing the prospects of negotiations on terms favorable to the Communist side. But Hanoi

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would probably conclude that the war in the South could be pressed with no greater risk to key areas of the DRV. Any DRV disposition to negotiate arising out of fears of attacks on the Hanoi-Haiphong area would be lessened.

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