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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST AID TO NORTH VIETNAM

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
2 March 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

International Communist Aid to North Vietnam

Summary

The USSR continues to provide the overwhelming share of the increasing amounts of military aid being provided to North Vietnam and is willing to sustain this commitment at present or even higher levels. [

] aid deliveries will increase even further in 1968. [there is no quantitative limit to the types of the assistance that the USSR would provide with the possible exception of offensive weapons that would result in a confrontation with the US. [

] the USSR cannot refuse to provide aid if it wishes to maintain its position in the socialist camp.

[] does not believe that the recent increase in aid deliveries reflects an awareness on the part of European Communist power that the Tet offensive was imminent.

[] the USSR has not been able to use its aid programs as a means of influencing North Vietnam's conduct of the war. [] the Chinese are a more influential power.

Finally, [] the USSR will use force to maintain access to the port of Haiphong. The evidence offered to support this statement conflicts sharply with the present judgment of the intelligence community and is undergoing extremely close scrutiny.

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Soviet Military Aid to North Vietnam

1. The record of military aid deliveries to North Vietnam in 1967 and information on agreements for 1968 deliveries reflect the dominant role of the USSR as the main supplier of military equipment. Information [

] indicates that military aid deliveries from North Vietnam's allies will increase even further in 1968. [] also makes it clear that there is no quantitative limit to the aid that will be provided to support North Vietnam's military effort and to offset the effects of bombing of the North or the material losses in South Vietnam.

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Military Aid Deliveries in 1967

2. Our estimates of Communist military aid deliveries by quantity and value in 1965, 1966, and 1967 are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The value of military materiel delivered to North Vietnam in 1967 from the Soviet Union and Communist China increased to a total of about \$660 million, from \$455 million in 1966 and \$270 million in 1965.

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Of the total value of goods delivered in 1967 the Soviet Union supplied almost 80 percent--about the same percentage of the total supplied in 1965 and 1966. Communist China supplied the bulk of the remainder. Although East European countries supplied only negligible quantities of combat materiel in 1965 and 1966, the amounts increased during 1967 and will be even greater in 1968.

3. Soviet military aid has concentrated on air defense equipment including surface-to-air missiles, antiaircraft guns, radar, and fighter aircraft including MIG-21s. Chinese military aid has concentrated on the build-up of North Vietnamese ground forces and sustaining the military effort in South Vietnam. More recently, China has provided radar of increasing sophistication and apparently has supplied large quantities of MIG-17s in 1967--most of them being delivered in response to heavy losses in the latter part of the year.

4. Although we cannot make a confident judgment on levels of military deliveries at any particular time, there appear to have been erratic changes in the categories of military goods provided by some donors during 1967. Communist China delivered only eight MIG-15/17s during the two-year period 1965-66 but is believed to have delivered about 61 of these aircraft in 1967 with the bulk of them arriving in the latter part of the year. About 12 were delivered in late October and about 28 in December. The North Vietnamese armored vehicle inventory probably was increased substantially in the latter part of the year. Photography of October revealed at least 38 armored vehicles or self-propelled guns at Ping-hsiang China believed to be en route to North Vietnam from the Soviet Union. [] these might well be a Czech-produced armored vehicle known as the TOPAS. This vehicle was specifically requested by the DRV delegation that negotiated 1968 deliveries in Prague during the fall of 1967. []

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The 1967 Military Aid Agreements

5. During 5 August to 18 October 1967, representatives of the DRV concluded with 12 Communist countries* trade, aid, and technical-scientific agreements that were generally declared to be for strengthening the economic and national defense potential of the DRV. Details on the agreements are not available but public statements indicated that at least Communist China, North Korea, Bulgaria, Poland, USSR, Hungary and Rumania agreed to provide military assistance without charge to the DRV.

6. The 1967 agreements were also significant because for the first time the majority of the donor countries acknowledged that military as well as economic assistance was being provided to North Vietnam.

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The negotiations with the European Communist countries were used, particularly by the USSR and Czechoslovakia, as an opportunity to encourage North Vietnam to give more public emphasis to its political rather than its military objectives. This approach on the part of the European Communist countries was reported to reflect their interest in a negotiated settlement of the war. The North Vietnamese rejected these approaches, partly on the belief that they can withstand present manpower losses "for a hundred years" and partly on the belief that North Vietnam is ruining the US and its economy.

8. Hanoi was able to obtain commitments for greater amounts of assistance but not to the levels it sought. The need for increased levels of military assistance is apparently regarded by the Communist countries as a logical result of the increased

*These 12 countries are the USSR, Communist China, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, East Germany, Albania, Czechoslovakia, North Korea, Mongolia and Cuba.

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damage caused by the bombing of the North and the war in the South. Generally, Hanoi's solicitations followed the pattern of previous years and [] revealed no intentions with respect to military strategy or North Vietnam's views of the phasing of the war. []

[] the North Vietnamese delegation stressed the need for accelerated deliveries in 1968 but gave no elaborations on the reasons. []

[] complaints on delays in deliveries, attributable in part to Chinese obstruction, have been chronic although abating somewhat in 1967.

9. [] attributed the more widespread acknowledgment that military assistance is being provided to North Vietnam as simply a ploy to preclude Chinese charges that European Communist countries are not helping their Communist ally.

Terms of the Agreements

10. The 1967 negotiations followed the pattern of previous years. Military aid is negotiated as a separate agreement whereas economic assistance is negotiated as annual protocols to long-standing agreements. All military assistance and much of the economic assistance is grant aid. Although some of the economic assistance is carried on the books as credits, [] reported that there was no expectation that these credits would be repaid. [] also indicated that all of the donor countries are aware that they will have to pick up much of the costs of North Vietnam's postwar reconstruction.

The Limits of Soviet Aid Programs

11. The public announcements about the 1967 aid agreements and information on the volume of goods being imported by North Vietnam all support an upward trend in military assistance from all donors, particularly the USSR. [] made several observations that confirm Soviet willingness to give North Vietnam almost unlimited military assistance.

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12. Despite the fact that Hanoi's requests to Czechoslovakia in the 1967 negotiations were not fully met, the general impression among Czech official circles is that North Vietnam is provided essentially all the assistance it seeks. The outlook is that military aid will stay at least at its present high levels and if further assistance is required it will be provided. The USSR, []

[] feels that it cannot jeopardize its position in the socialist camp by refusing to meet demands for aid. He reported, moreover, that the volume and sophistication of the aid provided would have been even greater if it were not for the Chinese. [] a Soviet offer to provide more advanced equipment and technicians was refused by the North Vietnamese because the Chinese would object to a further influx of Soviet technicians. The Soviets apparently are not willing to provide this equipment without the accompanying technicians.

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13. The only practical inhibition to Soviet willingness to provide aid at ever increasing levels is the desire to avoid a confrontation with the US. Thus [] the USSR would not, for example, provide short-range surface-to-surface missiles for use against targets in South Vietnam. [] however, [] they would provide such equipment if there were an invasion of North Vietnam.

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14. The extent of the Soviet commitment to the North Vietnamese is illustrated by the source's report of the Soviet attitude toward a report that the US was considering the mining or a blockade of the port of Haiphong. [] the Czechoslovak minister of national defense was told by high Soviet military officials that if these measures were taken by the US that Soviet merchant ships would be provided armed escorts and would shoot their way through. The evidence offered [] to support this statement conflicts sharply with the present judgment of the intelligence community and is undergoing extremely close scrutiny.

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Aid and Influence

15. Despite the significant role of the USSR in providing assistance to North Vietnam there is little evidence that the USSR exerts any influence or leverage on North Vietnam's conduct of the war. The North Vietnamese themselves have emphasized repeatedly that the strategic conduct of the war has been purely Vietnamese in origin and nature.

16. This situation is confirmed by []
[] The Soviets, for example, have had little success in influencing North Vietnam to negotiate a settlement of the war. Indeed, Soviet offers to increase the type and quantity of assistance have been refused. [] the large shadow of Communist China looms foremost in North Vietnam's attitude toward foreign Communist powers. Because of Chinese objections the North Vietnamese have refused both Czechoslovak and Soviet offers of military experts and have allowed only Soviet missile experts to maintain an extended presence in North Vietnam. This latter point to the best of our knowledge is true.

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17. On balance [] if any power has an influence over North Vietnam's conduct of the war it is Communist China. []
[] the North Vietnamese may well have consulted with the Chinese before the Tet offensive. At any rate [] reading of Soviet and Czech reactions to the Tet offensive is that the high military officials in these countries had no prior knowledge of the event and took a rather sober view of the whole affair.

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Table 1
Soviet Military Aid Deliveries to North Vietnam
1965-1967

	1965		1966		1967	
	Quantity (Units)	(Million US \$) At Foreign Trade Prices	Quantity (Units)	(Million US \$) At Foreign Trade Prices	Quantity (Units)	(Million US \$) At Foreign Trade Prices
Total Value		<u>210</u>		<u>360</u>		<u>505</u>
SAM Missile systems		<u>72</u>		<u>77</u>		<u>136</u>
Firing Battalions	15	66	10	44	5	28
Replacement Missiles	200	6	1,100	33	3,810	114
Aircraft	<u>57</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>12</u>
IL-28 light jet bomber	8	3				
MIG-21 jet fighter	11	9	26	21	15	12
MIG-15/17 jet fighter	32	4	42	6		
MI-6 Helicopter			6	12		
MI-4 Helicopter	3	1	7	1		
U-MIG-15 jet trainer	3	Negl.				
AN-24 Medium Transport			3	3		
IL-18 Heavy Transport			1	2		
Armor	<u>113</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>Negl.</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>4</u>
T-54 medium tank	30	3			40	
T-34 medium tank	25	1				
PT-76 amphibious tank	25	1	5	Negl.	10	
BTR-40 armored personnel carrier	25	Negl.	10	Negl.	40	
BTR-50 armored personnel carrier					3	Negl.
ZSU-57 self-propelled gun	8	Negl.				
SU-76 assault gun					30	Negl.
Artillery	<u>1,430</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>2,030</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>2,230</u>	<u>53</u>
100-mm AAA	100	5	100	5		
85-mm AAA	315	12	55	2	465	39
57-mm AAA	485	17	735	25	590	21
37-mm AAA	250	2	1,850	17	850	8
14.5-mm AAA	230	1	50	Negl.	100	Negl.
Field artillery (76-152-mm)	50	1	40	1	225	5
Radar	<u>23</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>2</u>
Vehicles	<u>650</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>850</u>	<u>1</u>
Small arms and other infantry weapons		<u>1</u>		<u>3</u>		<u>1</u>
Ammunition (metric tons)	<u>17,000</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>40,000</u>	<u>164</u>	<u>70,000</u>	<u>255</u>

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Table 2

Chinese Communist Military Aid Deliveries to North Vietnam
1965-1967

	1965		1966		1967	
	Quantity (Units)	At Foreign Trade Prices (Million US \$)	Quantity (Units)	At Foreign Trade Prices (Million US \$)	Quantity (Units)	At Foreign Trade Prices (Million US \$)
Total Value		<u>60</u>		<u>25</u>		<u>150</u>
Aircraft	8	1	0	0	61	8
MIG-15/17 jet fighter	8	1			61	8
Naval craft	2	2	2	2	6	4
Shanghai-class fast patrol boat	2	2	2	2		
P-6 class motor torpedo boat					6	4
Armor	25	1	0	0	0	0
T-34 medium tank	25	1				
Artillery	320	6	140	4	645	8
57-mm AAA	100	4	100	4	100	4
37-mm AAA	200	2				
14.5-mm AAA					120	1
Field artillery (76-mm)	20	Negl.	40	Negl.	425	3
Radar	33	3	112	2	67	7
Vehicles	600	3	400	2	700	4
Small arms and other infantry weapons		10		35		22
Ammunition (metric tons)	8,000	33	10,000	41	24,000	28

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