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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL AND AIR DEFENSE OPERATIONS IN NORTH VIETNAM

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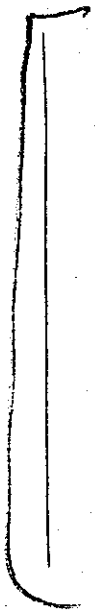
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
21 October 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet Military Personnel and Air Defense
Operations in North Vietnam*

Summary

We have no evidence that the number of Soviet military personnel in North Vietnam has changed appreciably since our last assessment issued 3 September. Vietnamese are participating in surface-to-air missile operations to a greater degree, and Soviet military personnel are now apparently acting mostly in an advisory capacity rather than as direct participants. We estimate their total number to be about 1,500 with 1,000 of them concerned with surface-to-air missile operations and 500 concerned with flight training and administrative, liaison, and logistical functions.

1. New SAM sites continue to be built in North Vietnam in groups of alternate firing positions for the SA-2 units. The growing number of sites and their distribution imply that 2-3 SA-2 regiments (8-12 firing battalions) may be operational now. Present evidence indicates that these are manned mostly by North Vietnamese receiving on-the-job training from Soviet personnel.

2. The number of surface-to-air missile sites in North Vietnam has now grown to more than 30. However, we have obtained little evidence of a commensurate increase in SAM equipment, nor does any available evidence suggest that the number of Soviet personnel in the DRV has increased.

DIA
review

Prepared in consultation with DIA. DIA, however, assesses the present number of operational SA-2 firing battalions as being 6-8 rather than 8-12.

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The pattern of SAM site construction, however, suggests that several sites are prepared for each firing unit in order to employ a shoot-and-scoot mode of operations. Present site locations are grouped in clusters of three or four sites within a few miles of each other.

4. Analysis of this site construction pattern and of general SAM activity suggests that there now are 8 to 12 firing battalions in operation. (A site is normally manned by a battalion.) The SAM operations seen so far in the DRV readily divide into 6, or 7 possible operational areas, on a map. We assume that each operational area has at least one firing unit except in the area around Hanoi where there may be as many as four.

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There are three SAM regiments in North Vietnam, located respectively near Hanoi, Thanh Hoa, and Haiphong. Each regiment probably has a standard complement of four firing battalions.

5. In August we estimated that there were at least 1,000 Soviet SAM operating personnel in North Vietnam although we did not detect when or how they entered. Since that time no large new contingent of Soviet military has been noted active in Vietnam. It is possible the Soviet SAM personnel in the DRV have been divided into advisory groups and assigned to various SAM installations. This was done in Cuba, where the SAM training of Cubans required approximately one year. While the state of our evidence does not permit us to exclude larger Soviet SAM forces being present or introduced, especially if more equipment is brought in, it now appears more likely that the number of Soviet SAM personnel will remain at a level close to 1,000. The number may even be reduced as more Vietnamese are trained to man the SA-2 sites.

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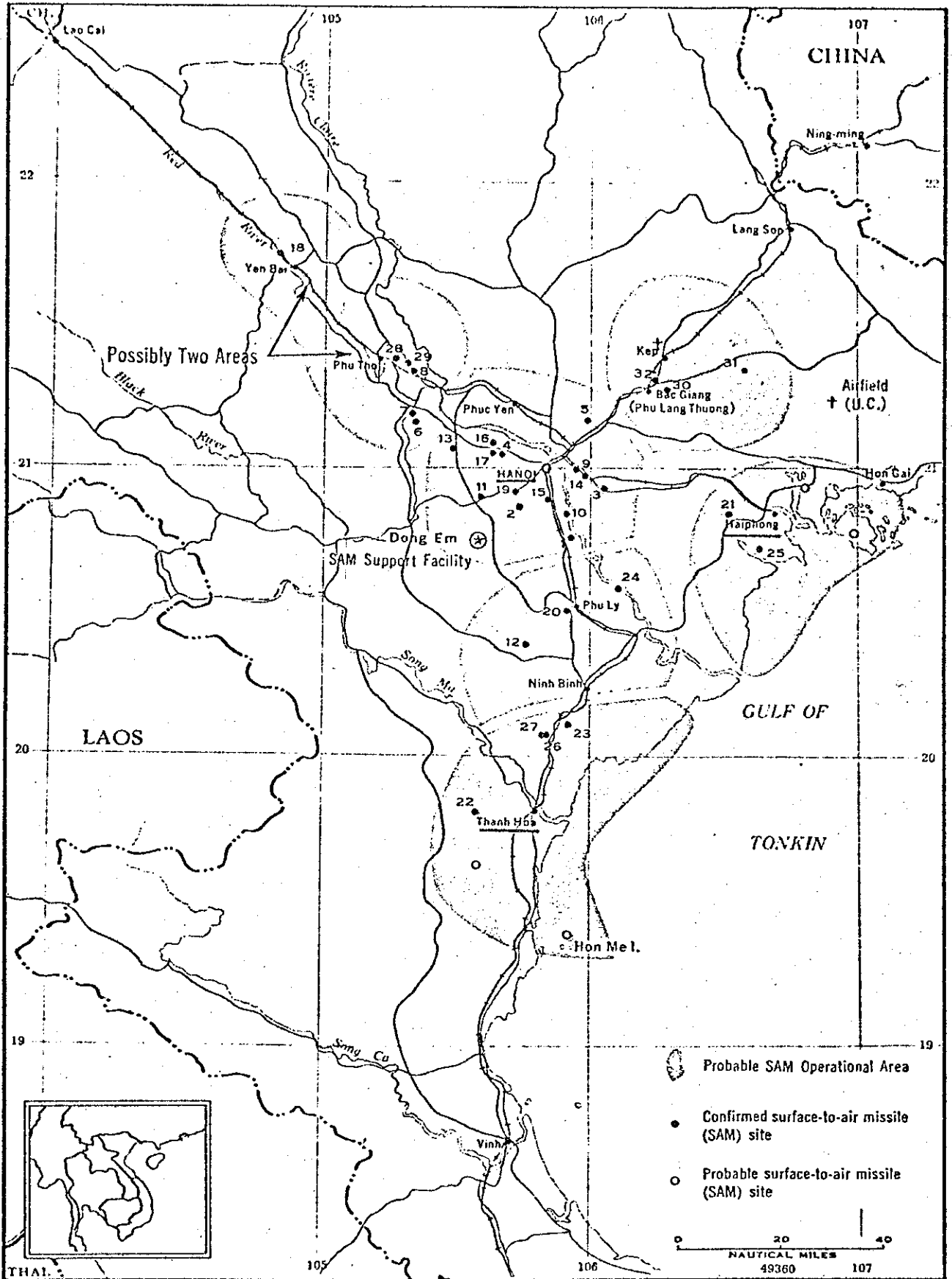
8. The surface-to-air missiles committed against US aircraft since late August, although greater in number, have been much less effective than those launched earlier. For instance, seven missiles fired between 24 July and 24 August resulted in the downing of four US aircraft; the same number launched between 25 August and 14 September did not produce any damage. On 20 September at least ten SAMs were committed against US aircraft during two air strikes along the rail link with China; all missed. Missiles are still being launched at US aircraft at an accelerated rate, but results continue to be poor.

9. The apparent ineffectiveness of the surface-to-air missiles can be explained by such factors as the high maneuverability of US tactical aircraft, improved tactics, and use of electronic countermeasures on the part of US pilots, and degradation of SAM equipment because of humid weather conditions or extensive mobile use. However, lack of direct Soviet participation in the firings and poor firing techniques by North Vietnamese crews could be a major factor.

10. The number of Soviet military personnel in North Vietnam not engaged in SAM activity--i.e., those concerned with flight training, communications, and administrative and logistic support activities--has apparently remained static. Although these military personnel possibly number less than 500, there is simply not enough evidence to do more than guess how many there are at this point. No Soviet troop transport ships have called at North Vietnam ports, and the air transport activity between the DRV and the Soviet Union has not been extensive enough to allow a large troop movement.

11. In parallel with the apparent assumption of SAM responsibilities by the North Vietnamese, DRV pilots may soon take an active role in the air defense of North Vietnam. They have recently begun operating from a second airfield located at Kep. They have greatly extended their training area, possibly flying over the Gulf of Tonkin, and have scheduled flights as distant as 130 miles southeast of Hanoi. All types of flight training, in particular night combat training, have become more extensive and advanced lately, which indicates that the training cycle for the DRV fighter pilots is nearly complete. The Soviet flight instructors may remain to train more North Vietnamese pilots or return to the USSR. (Map and Chart).

PROBABLE SAM OPERATIONAL AREAS IN NORTH VIETNAM



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**SAM LAUNCHINGS VS US AIRCRAFT AND
DRONES SHOT DOWN**

	APR	MAY	JUNE	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
LAUNCHES	0	0	0	5	6	29	28	68
AIRCRAFT DOWNED	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	5
DRONES DOWNED	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	4
SAM SITES IDENTIFIED	1	2	1	3	11	4	10	32

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