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Cuban Policy Statements on Vietnam

1. Cuba and North Korea have been the two most vocal Communist countries in their condemnation of US actions in Vietnam, and in expressing willingness to render active military support-- including "volunteers"--to North Vietnam. Cuban leaders made their position clear on this issue as early as the spring of 1965. In March, Fidel Castro said: "We are in favor of giving Vietnam all the help that may be necessary. We are in favor of that help being in weapons and men." Subsequent statements by Castro and other Cuban leaders have made it clear that Cuba is anxious to become more actively involved in the war in Vietnam.

2. On 13 March 1966, Castro said: "We are in favor of that aid (to North Vietnam) being in weapons and men; we are in favor of running the risks that may be necessary for Vietnam." Throughout Castro's and other Cuban leaders' speeches has run thinly-veiled criticism of the Soviet Union and Communist China for not doing more to assist North Vietnam.

3. On 26 July 1966, Castro was more specific in his offer saying: "If Vietnam asks for aid and tells us what kind of technicians they want us to send, whether tank, anti-air, artillery, or infantry, we will...provide them, according to...the Vietnamese need. All we have to do is ask which units want to go, and send complete units with their equipment to fight there."

4. On 18 October Foreign Minister Raul Roa said at the United Nations: "If we desire to hasten this victory it is indispensable to widen and strengthen the world movement of solidarity with Vietnam. In late October, Raul Castro said in Pyongyang, North Korea: "We (Cuba and North Korea) recognize that we must provide all necessary military, economic,

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political, and moral assistance to Vietnam." These views were restated during Raul Castro's and President Dorticos' 30 October - 1 November visit to Hanoi.

5. In the 2 October issue of the Cuban armed forces magazine, an officer of a Cuban cruise missile boat is quoted as saying: "I hope they (Vietnam) ask for Navy units to see if we have the opportunity to make a reality of our promise."

[Redacted]

The Cuban Presence in North Vietnam

1. There are indications that a small number of Cuban military technicians probably are in the country.

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[Redacted] Cubans had been killed in both South and North Vietnam.

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2. The few Cuban technicians who may be in North Vietnam are probably associated with the Vietnamese surface-to-air missile and other anti-aircraft defense systems. In addition, in September 1966, the Cuban diplomatic mission in Hanoi reportedly had 23 people on its staff, nine of whom were military attachés.

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The View from Hanoi

1. The North Vietnamese have made it clear since the beginning of the US air strikes against their country that they want and expect material aid from their Communist allies for the defense of their country. It also appears from events over the past year and a half that, whenever possible, the North Vietnamese prefer to operate Communist-supplied military equipment themselves rather than rely on foreign personnel.

2. The overwhelming proportion of military aid to North Vietnam, of course, comes from the Soviet Union and Communist China. Recently, however, increasing amounts of North Korean small arms have been captured in South Vietnam, suggesting that Hanoi is seeking additional sources of military supplies. In short, North Vietnam almost certainly would welcome any significant military hardware which Cuba could supply, and would probably like to have some coastal defense missiles. Since 24 October, the US navy interdiction operations against North Vietnamese coastal shipping between the 17th and 18th parallels have proved very effective. North Vietnamese coastal defenses to date have been limited to heavy artillery pieces. Hanoi would realize, however, that an offer from Cuba to supply coastal defense missiles would be a one-time affair. If Hanoi wants this type of weapon, it is more likely to turn to Moscow than to Havana.

3. At any rate, the North Vietnamese would be much more cautious in accepting Cuban military units to man the coastal defense sites. The leaders in Hanoi continue to use the "when needed" phrase when raising the shibboleth of foreign volunteers coming to their country.

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