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Intelligence Memorandum

*Communist Military Aid Deliveries To North Vietnam
During 1969*

~~Secret~~

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April 1970

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
April 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Communist Military Aid Deliveries
To North Vietnam During 1969

Introduction

1. During 1969, North Vietnam reduced the value of imports of military equipment from Communist countries, continuing a downward trend that started with the partial bombing halt of early 1968. This memorandum presents estimates of the values and types of military equipment and expendable munitions supplied by major donor countries.

2. There is virtually no direct information on North Vietnam's military imports, most of which are believed to come overland, by rail.

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The values cited in the text are in foreign trade prices as reported in Soviet arms trade with Free World countries. The estimates for the several types of equipment have varying confidence levels; those for the larger items such as aircraft and naval craft are firmer estimates than those for small equipment and ammunition. The total values must be considered gross estimates of North Vietnam's military imports, but they provide the best available indication of the comparative levels of annual military imports during the past five years.

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Note: This memorandum was produced jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

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SECRETMilitary Deliveries During 1969

3. Deliveries of military equipment during 1969 were reduced considerably because of the total bombing halt late in 1968 and the lower combat levels that prevailed in South Vietnam during 1969. Military aid deliveries included equipment for improving air defense systems as well as munitions to replace those expended in combat in South Vietnam and Laos. Military deliveries in 1969 are estimated to total about \$225 million,* slightly more than one-half the value imported in 1968. The 1969 military aid brings the cumulative value of Communist deliveries of military equipment to North Vietnam during 1954-69 to more than \$2 billion, as shown in Table 1.

4. The substantial drop in military aid deliveries during 1969 resulted largely from reduced imports of ammunition and missiles that made up slightly more than one-third of the total value in 1969, compared with three-quarters in 1967, as shown in the following tabulation.

	<u>Million US \$</u>				
	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>
Ammunition and missiles	110	240	490	260	80
Other military equipment	160	215	160	130	145
<i>Total</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>455</i>	<i>650</i>	<i>390</i>	<i>225</i>

The value of military deliveries during the bombing years, particularly after initial inventories of military weapons systems had been built up, was

* Values are given in Soviet foreign trade prices, the list prices charged for military hardware and ammunition by the USSR under its aid agreements with non-Communist countries. These goods would cost about 10% to 20% more if calculated at equivalent US costs.

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heavily weighted toward replacement of ammunition and surface-to-air missiles. Since the bombing halt, the firing of SA-2 missiles and antiaircraft ammunition in North Vietnam has dropped significantly. Although North Vietnamese antiaircraft defenses in Laos have been built up to counter the stepped-up air war in that country, expenditures of antiaircraft ammunition have been far below the levels expended in North Vietnam during the bombing.

5. The value of increased deliveries of jet aircraft and of small arms in 1969 only partly offset the reduced value of imports of ammunition and missiles. Deliveries of MIG-21s by the USSR and MIG-19s by China in 1969 increased the inventory of jet fighter aircraft to about 250* and improved both the all-weather and the low-level intercept capabilities of North Vietnam's air force. The estimated value of imports of small arms and other infantry weapons was nearly 40% greater than the previous high annual level in 1966. Increased deliveries of small arms, particularly the AK-47 assault rifle, are estimated to have been needed to replace losses to Allied forces in South Vietnam and Laos and to meet continuing resupply needs in North Vietnam. (Table 2 shows estimated quantities and values of military aid deliveries during 1969, by type of equipment.)

6. The USSR continued to be the major supplier of military aid, but Communist China is estimated to have provided an increased share of all military aid deliveries in 1969 -- almost one-half compared with about one-fourth in the two preceding years -- mainly because of the emphasis on deliveries of infantry weapons, many of which were supplied by China (see Table 3). The value of deliveries of military equipment from North Korea and East European countries was estimated to be small. The latter provided primarily small arms, grenade launchers, and recoilless rifles as well as vehicles, some of which undoubtedly were for military use.

* On 1 January 1970, half of the North Vietnamese MIG jet inventory was deployed at bases in North Vietnam and half was located at Yunnani Airfield in southern China.

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SECRETAir Defense Equipment

7. An estimated 55 MIG-21 aircraft were delivered by the USSR in 1969 and 10 MIG-19s were delivered to airfields in North Vietnam by Communist China. An additional 22 MIG-19s flown during 1969 to Yunnani Airfield in southern China are believed to have been transferred to North Vietnamese control and are included as deliveries. These MIG-19s are the most advanced fighter produced by China and can out-perform the MIG-15s and 17s that previously served as North Vietnam's second-line fighters. Moreover, the MIG-19 reportedly can out-maneuver the faster MIG-21 at low altitudes, making it particularly suited for defense against low-flying reconnaissance aircraft. It is believed that many, or possibly all, of the MIG-21s from the USSR were Fishbed F models, an advanced version with enhanced all-weather and night interception capabilities.*

8. Imports of antiaircraft weapons and heavy machine guns are estimated to be valued at \$10 million in 1969, an increase over 1968 but still considerably below the levels in 1965-67, when North Vietnam's antiaircraft defense system was being developed. Most of these imports were replacements for antiaircraft guns destroyed or captured in Laos. About 1,000 antiaircraft weapons -- mostly from North Vietnam -- have been deployed to Laos during the 1968-69 and 1969-70 dry seasons, according to estimates based on pilot reports of threat areas. [redacted]

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than 220 37-mm antiaircraft weapons and heavy machine guns were captured by friendly forces in Northern Laos during August-October 1969. Imports of radar and other electronic equipment related to antiaircraft defenses in 1969 were valued at about \$6 million. Deliveries consisted primarily of early warning equipment to supplement existing units and to replace older sets. No fire control radars are known to have been deployed into Laos in 1969.

* *Although only 30 MIG-21 Fishbed F models have been confirmed in the North Vietnamese inventory, it is believed that the actual number may now be twice this.*

SECRETGround Forces Equipment

9. Imports of equipment for North Vietnamese and other Communist ground forces during 1969 were valued at more than \$55 million, an increase of two-thirds over the 1968 level. Deliveries of field artillery and armored vehicles made up less than 10% of the value of ground forces equipment and are estimated to have been about the same as in 1968. Imports of small arms and other infantry weapons, including mortars and rockets, are estimated to have increased in 1969 because of increasing losses of weapons in combat areas and the continuing requirements to re-equip forces in North Vietnam. More than 71,000 individual and crew-served weapons were reportedly lost during 1969 to Allied ground operations in South Vietnam and to friendly forces in Northern Laos, about 15% more than during 1968. Estimated normal attrition would have required another 35,000 weapons, and additional but uncounted losses were suffered from air operations in Laos and South Vietnam. Something in excess of 100,000 individual weapons are estimated to have been required in North Vietnam to equip new troops being infiltrated into South Vietnam and to continue to re-equip existing in-country units with the 7.62-mm family of modern weapons. The modernization of Communist ground forces weapons has been corroborated by weapons captured in South Vietnam.*

Ammunition and Missiles

10. Ammunition imported during 1969 was valued at nearly \$75 million, compared with about \$225 million in 1968. Estimated expenditures and known losses of ammunition to ground operations in South Vietnam and Laos probably accounted for as much as two-thirds of the estimated imports. In contrast, only about 10% of estimated ammunition imports was expended in out-of-country operations in 1968. Actual firing of weapons in North Vietnam was limited primarily to training and to reactions by air defense units against US manned and unmanned

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reconnaissance aircraft. In-country expenditures, together with unknown amounts lost to air operations in South Vietnam and Laos, would have made up the remaining one-third of imports.

11. North Vietnamese firings of surface-to-air missiles during 1969 were at a greatly reduced rate. According to [redacted] pilot reports, an estimated 200 missiles were fired in 1969, compared with about 1,150 in 1968. Surface-to-air missile units have not been introduced into Laos, but increased deployment into the North Vietnamese Panhandle had been started by December 1969. SAM firings have been directed primarily at unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, but since December missiles have been fired also at B-52s operating against targets in the Laos Panhandle close to the North Vietnamese border.

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Other Military Assistance

12. Negotiations with the USSR for three transport aircraft -- two AN-24s and one IL-18 -- were reported during 1969 [redacted]

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[redacted] Hanoi may intend to renew civil air service as the remainder of these aircraft are received. Transport aircraft have been used exclusively since 1965 for diplomatic travel and military tactical and logistics missions. Other miscellaneous imports included a small number of naval craft and a portion of the estimated 5,900 trucks imported in 1969 from the USSR, Communist China, and the East European countries.

Conclusions

13. North Vietnam reduced military aid imports in 1969 for the second consecutive year; the estimated value of military deliveries was about one-half that of 1968 and one-third of the all-time high reached in 1967. Imports of jet aircraft were continued at a high level relative to previous years. Increased amounts of small arms were imported for use by Communist forces in South Vietnam and Laos and for continuing the modernizing of

* *The IL-18 was delivered in March 1970.*

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weapons of in-country North Vietnamese ground forces. Reduced firing of missiles and anti-aircraft artillery, however, permitted a significant cutback in imports of these munitions. Imports of artillery, armor, and naval craft are estimated to have been no more than enough to maintain present inventory levels.

14. The USSR and Communist China, the major suppliers of military aid, provided more nearly equal portions of the total value than in past years. Soviet aid deliveries made up a little more than half of the total value. Whereas the USSR delivered a greater number of MIG jet aircraft, Communist China probably supplied most of the ground forces weapons and at least as much ammunition as the USSR. East European Communist countries and North Korea made only small contributions to the total direct military aid, as in past years.

15. North Vietnam's military imports for 1970 undoubtedly were provided for in agreements signed with the Communist donor countries during September-November 1969. There has been no indication thus far in 1970 of the continued imports of MIG aircraft such as were observed in 1969, but it is possible that equipment to build up and modernize other weapons systems will be imported. If imports are limited to the maintenance of current inventories and the replacement of annual expenditures of munitions both in and out of North Vietnam, however, the value of military imports could again be reduced in 1970.

Table 1

Estimated Communist Military Deliveries to North Vietnam ^{a/}

	Million US \$						
	<u>1954-64</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>Total</u>
USSR	70	210	360	505	290	120	1,555
Communist China	70	60	95	145	100	105	575
Eastern Europe	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	5 ^{b/}
North Korea	0	0	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.
<i>Total</i>	140	270	455	650	390	225	2,135 ^{b/}

a. The data refer exclusively to combat materiel; they exclude aid designed for war-support purposes. Values are given in Soviet foreign trade prices, the list prices charged for military hardware and ammunition by the USSR under its aid agreements with non-Communist countries.

b. The cumulative value of deliveries from Eastern Europe during 1954-69 is estimated at \$5 million.

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