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No Objection to Declassification in Part 2010/02/25 : LOC-HAK-110-10-1-6

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By NARA Date 6-26-07

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

9 JUN 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Alleged Intrusion of PRC Air Space

This is in reply to your request for a written investigative report concerning the alleged intrusion on 4 June 1972 of four U.S. military aircraft into the airspace of the Peoples Republic of China in the vicinity of Ping Hsiang, Kwang Si Province.

Three strike flights of four F-4 aircraft each, along with a number of escort aircraft, struck the Northeast Railroad and a nearby highway segment during the period of the alleged violation. However, a review of aircraft flight paths, aircrew procedures, flight monitoring systems and available intelligence indicates that there was no violation of the PRC border.

The strike flights which penetrated North Vietnam during the period of the alleged violation began their ingress by overflying two prominent island checkpoints off the coast of North Vietnam. The weather was such as to permit visual recognition of these initial checkpoints, and in addition, both were excellent aircraft radar checkpoints.

From the second island checkpoint, the strike flights assumed a track of 309° true course until they reached North Vietnam's Highway 13B, at which point they proceeded to the target on a course of 316° for 26NM. Upon arriving at the Northeast Railroad, the strike flights proceeded southwest and struck their assigned targets.

Throughout the period of ingress to the target area, aircrew members cross-checked aircraft heading, inertial navigation systems and visual reference points. The possibility of track error by this number of aircraft, all with fully operable navigation aids, is virtually nonexistent.

EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY B

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Sec Def Comt Nr. X-2995

Authority EO 12958
By RT NARA Date 6-26-07**SECRET**

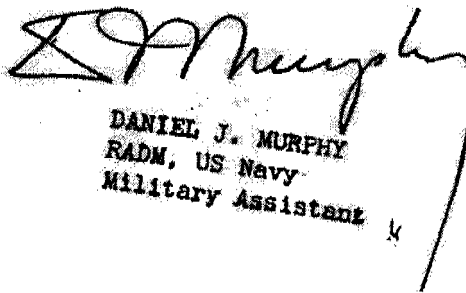
Moreover, all aircrew members had been briefed prior to flight on the absolute necessity of avoiding a border violation.

The flights which conducted the strike in North Vietnam during the period of the alleged violation were accompanied by escort aircraft whose function was to protect the strike force from enemy fighters. The escort aircraft were under positive radar control throughout the ingress and egress of North Vietnam, and the radar controllers confirm that these aircraft at no time approached the PRC border.

Certain US airborne and shipborne radar facilities also monitor all US air traffic over North Vietnam for the purpose, inter alia, of issuing warnings when border violations are imminent. Warnings of this type are broadcast over emergency frequencies monitored by all pilots, and they include a suggested egress heading which will guide the aircraft in question away from the border. No warnings were issued to any of the aircraft overflying North Vietnam during the period of the alleged violation.

In addition to the facts discussed above, intelligence sources indicate that Chinese radar tracking often has been in error. Radar is particularly likely to provide erroneous information when there is considerable mountainous terrain between the tracking station and the radar target, as was the case when the alleged violation occurred.

In summary, all available evidence indicates that the claimed border violation did not occur, and that Chinese radar tracking error was the most likely cause of this incident.


DANIEL J. MURPHY
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Military Assistant

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