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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

NSA review completed.

PATTERNS AND TRENDS IN SOVIET MILITARY AID
TO NORTH VIETNAM

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I. The Politics of Aid: Moscow, Hanoi's Offensive, the Summit

1. Two basic factors must underly any analysis of Soviet involvement in Vietnam. First, the USSR would like to see an eventual Communist victory in Vietnam. Conversely, some decisive Southern victory in the conflict would be felt as an important setback to Soviet interests, given the high degree of Soviet commitment and support to Hanoi's cause.

2. Yet this proposition must be qualified. The USSR certainly does not attach the same priority to the struggle that the DRV does. In 1954 the Soviets worked out a deal with the French that fell well short of North Vietnam's objectives; by 1964 Khrushchev was all but ignoring the area. His successors have proven truer and more consistent allies to Hanoi, but -- even given the interests shared on the two sides -- Moscow can hardly be expected to subordinate all its international concerns to this single problem.

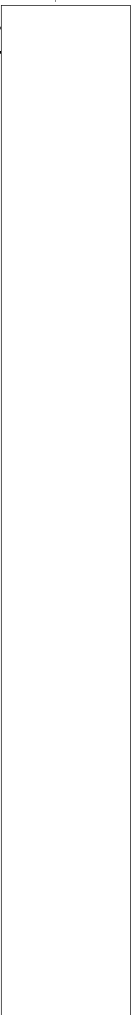
3. The second proposition is that Soviet room for maneuver is limited. It is dealing, not with a puppet, but with a distant, independent client to which, in the Communist context, it has obligations of some weight. Furthermore, this client has, in the People's Republic of China (PRC), another patron that is eager to pillory the Soviet Union for any faltering in its support to Hanoi's cause and that gives North Vietnam military and economic aid of its own. The Soviets should derive some leverage from their position as supplier of complex, advanced weapons, but even here the Chinese could confound their attempts to apply this leverage by replacing them in this function as well, albeit incompletely and with difficulty.*

* In terms of total value, Chinese military aid in 1965-71 was about 40% that of the USSR. In the last two years, however, the Chinese have supplied almost 95% as much military aid, by value, as the USSR. This is mainly because the DRV's air defense needs, met primarily by the USSR, declined for several years after the bombing halt of 1968.

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4. Last, in this concrete situation theoretical leverage does not have much practical effect. The North Vietnamese themselves are immensely jealous of their independence, and they assiduously work their relations with their two big supporters not only to maximize the aid but also to minimize the influence of the donors.

5. We lack direct evidence of the real tone of the Soviet-North Vietnamese relationship, although we do occasionally receive indications, mostly indirect, on this matter. Relying on these and on deductions from the above propositions, we surmise that these relations are somewhat as follows. The Soviets feel a special obligation to help in the air defense of North Vietnam, as a socialist state under bombing by the imperialists. As for military supplies intended for use in the South, the bulk are by now routinely supplied; and, beyond this, Moscow is anxious to help the DRV overcome the advantage in modern weapons that the other side has enjoyed. Hanoi for its part probably submits its aid requests with a minimum of explanations. Hanoi's leaders have consistently said that they need no advice from outside strategists, and they have excoriated any North Vietnamese who seem to be coming too heavily under outside influence. Moreover, they are always wary of getting caught in a bargaining relationship with their patrons, and they thus almost certainly avoid being drawn into the kinds of consultations that might grow into joint planning. The Soviets can draw many conclusions from the kinds and volume of aid requested, as well as intelligence from their people in North Vietnam, but they have no apparent mechanism for advising on strategy and tactics - that is, on matters beyond those affecting training in and use of their equipment. They also recognize that, given Hanoi's sensitivities and its Peking option, they would be treading on delicate ground if they sought to intrude into this sphere.

6. If these views are correct, then it is likely that over the last year or so, and particularly after the DRV's heavy losses of equipment in Lam Son 719, the Soviet Union has been delivering to North Vietnam large shipments of weapons and supplies, some of which are undoubtedly being used in the present offensive. The signing of a number of military aid agreements has been announced during this period, including one in August 1971, another in October, and the most recent in December (the Chinese have kept pace throughout with similar announcements of aid deals). We cannot associate Soviet decisions on particular weapons or volumes with individual agreements, but Moscow would clearly have been aware that Hanoi was building up large inventories of tanks, for example, and long-range artillery. This process almost certainly began before the Soviets were aware of President Nixon's planned visit to Peking and before their own summit was scheduled. The Soviets could easily infer that the North Vietnamese

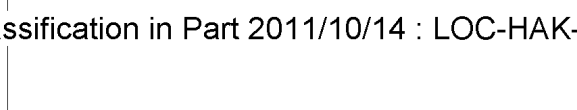
were preparing for large-scale conventional action, which would occur during a dry season. They may have been told as much, but they were probably not kept abreast of the details of Hanoi's evolving plans for a multi-front offensive.

7. When, with this buildup in process, summit diplomacy began to develop from July onward, first in Peking and then in Moscow, the Soviets must have had to consider the relationship between their diplomacy and the Vietnam war. By November, with the breakdown of secret US-North Vietnamese negotiations, their task had become how to relate what they knew of Hanoi's military plans to the May summit.

8. At least by the first of the year, Moscow almost certainly knew that an offensive was in the offing and could foresee several outcomes. First, a North Vietnamese offensive might score victories of a scope to have major repercussions on South Vietnam's stability. This would be welcome for its own sake and (the Soviets would reason) would put them at an advantage vis-a-vis President Nixon in Moscow. At the summit, in any discussion of a Vietnam settlement, it would require the United States to be the supplicant. This would be a desirable result unless the United States reacted so negatively as to postpone or cancel the summit. The Soviets would see some benefits even in this reaction, in that they would anticipate a weakening of the President's domestic political position.

9. It is possible to argue that these advantages are so great that the USSR hoped that a North Vietnamese offensive would provoke the United States to put off the summit and even contrived to arrange matters to this end. Putting aside for the moment the question of its ability to control events in this fashion, it is doubtful that Moscow sees this as the preferred outcome. Its interest in a successful summit is substantial. It has a stake of some importance in certain bilateral matters, especially arms control and trade. It has an interest in improved US-Soviet relations as the centerpiece of a detente campaign, which is meant to forward its interests in Western Europe. Most important, it is a matter of deep concern not to encourage the rapprochement between its major antagonists (China and the United States) to proceed to a stage of active anti-Soviet cooperation, a contingency to which the Soviets have shown themselves acutely sensitive.

10. Second, the North Vietnamese might suffer a major defeat. This would clearly be a bad outcome from the Soviet standpoint. Its only virtue would be to deflate the importance of the Vietnam issue as a problem in Soviet-US relations, thus leaving more time for the bilateral matters that are Moscow's primary incentive for a summit. But if this defeat had been



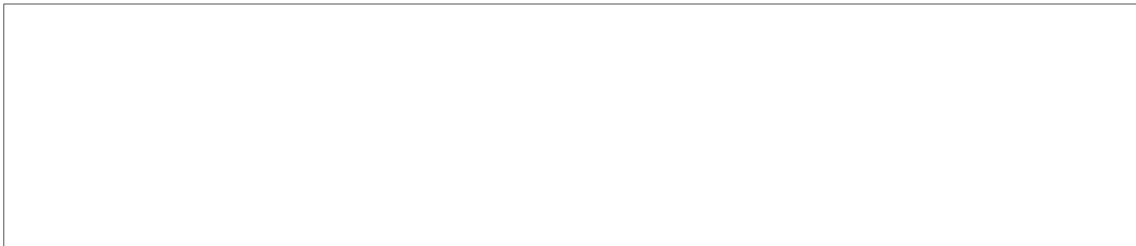
accompanied by heavy US bombing deep into North Vietnam, the Soviets would have a hard time justifying any summit at all.* Thus this outcome could be a double defeat for the USSR.

11. **Third**, major action could have eased off with no decisive result. This would be, in terms of summit considerations alone, a manageable result, since Vietnam would then not play a critical role in the Soviet-US encounter.

12. **Fourth**, the outcome might be undecided and still hotly contested at the time of the summit itself. This would run the major risk of the first case - a US postponement or cancellation - and would put Moscow under pressure to do the same. If the summit nonetheless took place, this situation would almost guarantee that Vietnam would dominate the political atmosphere. Vietnam, to the Soviets, is the wrong issue for this meeting.

13. This review shows how hard it would have been for the Soviets to make confident calculations of the best way to relate the evolving conflict in Vietnam to their summit diplomacy. In fact, however, there was little they could do about Hanoi's plans. The Soviets have long been committed to the military support of North Vietnam, and they began to be committed to the aid that supports the present offensive before they arranged the Moscow summit. For the Politburo, it would have been a momentous decision to change course in the latter part of 1971. Supporters of a summit would have had the greatest difficulty in mustering a majority behind the proposition that North Vietnam should be pressed to call off its offensive plans. In fact, it is doubtful that they would have prevailed, especially since it would have been argued that Hanoi would not have turned aside from its plans in any event. No matter how the individual Soviet leaders appraised the situation, it would be uncharacteristic of the present leadership, which is closer to a collective than to the Khrushchevian model, to consider such radical alternatives.

14. In sum, the Soviets, through their long commitment to North Vietnam and the momentum of their military aid program, probably began to underwrite the expansion of North Vietnam's offensive capabilities before the summit was in view and without being fully consulted on Hanoi's



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specific intentions.* They see dangers to their interests in the way in which Vietnam and the summit have become related, but the alternatives available to them as this relationship developed were even more unpalatable. As of now, they want both a North Vietnamese victory and a summit, but they find that the key choices are beyond their control.

* The visit of Marshal Batitskiy (16-27 March) came far too late to fit into any scenario of major decision-making. The composition of his delegation suggests that his purpose was to advise on the air defense of North Vietnam, probably in connection with renewed US bombing expected as a consequence of the North Vietnamese offensive. Batitskiy's and other recent Soviet visits are discussed in Appendix A.

II. The Amounts and Timing of Soviet Military Aid:
Relationship to the Present Offensive

Background

15. Until 1965 the Soviet Union provided only small amounts of military aid to Hanoi - substantially less than \$10 million annually in the decade before 1965. From 1965 through 1971, however, the USSR shipped nearly \$1.7 billion of military aid to North Vietnam, or about 70% of total Communist military aid (see Table 1). Soviet deliveries rose sharply during the first three years of this period to a peak of \$505 million in 1967, mainly because, as already indicated, Moscow was providing Hanoi with a large quantity of air defense equipment. Following the 1968 bombing halt, the value of Soviet military aid declined markedly to about \$70 million in 1970. Deliveries rose again in 1971 as Moscow once more stepped up shipments of expensive air defense equipment and provided replacements for losses of other equipment suffered by North Vietnam during Lam Son 719.

Table 1

Estimated Communist Military Aid Deliveries
to North Vietnam

	Million US \$							
	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	Total
<i>Total</i>	270	455	650	390	225	155	180	2,330 <i>a/</i>
USSR	210	360	505	290	120	70	100	1,655
PRC	60	95	145	100	105	85	75	665
Eastern Europe and other	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	5	10 <i>a/</i>

a. Including an estimated cumulative value of deliveries from Eastern Europe which amounted to \$5 million during 1965-70. More detailed tables on Communist aid by value, country of origin, and types are presented in Appendix B.

16. The PRC provided about \$665 million of military aid during 1965-71, accounting for most of the remaining 30% of total military aid deliveries. Ammunition and light infantry weapons dominated the Chinese contribution to North Vietnam's arsenal, but the PRC has also provided such equipment as MIG-17s, antiaircraft artillery (AAA), field artillery pieces, amphibious and other types of tanks, and naval craft.

17. Over the years it has always been difficult to establish, until after the event, the link between Hanoi's planning for an offensive and specific military aid deliveries in support of such an offensive. For one thing, preparations for an offensive normally precede by many months the action itself. Second, the existence of stockpiles maintained by the North Vietnamese enables Hanoi in many instances to use goods imported at a considerably earlier date, at least in the initial phases of an offensive. (The question of stockpiling is discussed in more detail, below.) Third, a portion of our information about North Vietnamese arms imports is only developed after the fact - that is, it is derived not from direct evidence of shipments but from a later calculation of what the enemy has actually used or lost on the battlefield. Our estimates of Hanoi's imports of such items as ammunition and small arms are derived in this fashion.

18. In many key areas, of course, we do have, on a wholly current basis, high-quality information about recent trends in military aid.

frequently provide hard evidence of the presence of various types of equipment, such as SA-2's, AAA weapons, tanks, heavy field artillery, and armored equipment. Direct and up-to-date evidence is also generally available on Soviet deliveries of military support items such as trucks and petroleum products. This information, however, does not enable us to monitor the total flow and exact mix of military shipments on a continuing and real time basis.

A More Detailed Look at Soviet Aid in the Past Year

19. Soviet military aid to North Vietnam during the past 12 months or so appears to have been geared to Hanoi's changing needs, as has been the case throughout the war. There is no indication that Moscow at any time has withheld aid from North Vietnam in an attempt to influence Hanoi's military policies. On the contrary, the large deliveries of air defense equipment, tanks, small arms, ammunition, trucks, and petroleum products in 1971 and early 1972 demonstrate Moscow's continuing support for North Vietnam in the conduct of the war. The types and quantities of goods, as well as the timing of deliveries, clearly indicate that some of the Soviet aid was intended to replace losses from Lam Son 719. These amounts, however, were also adequate to permit Hanoi to prepare for the current offensive. The major categories of Soviet military aid delivered in 1970 and 1971 are shown in the following tabulation:

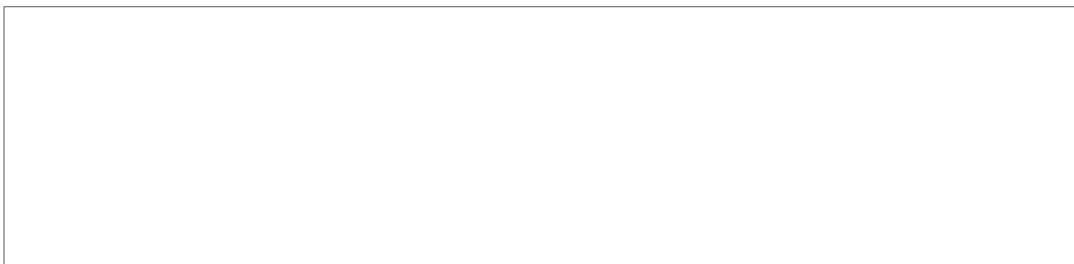
	<u>Million US \$</u>	
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>
<i>Total a/</i>	70	100
Air defense equipment	5	46
Missiles	3	2
Ammunition	49	34
Ground forces equipment	4	13
Other	10	5

a. Because of rounding, components may not add to the totals shown.

20. Reliable estimates for the first quarter of 1972 are not available, but there is no evidence of any upsurge over previous levels. This does not, however, imply any withholding of support by the USSR: all historical precedent indicates that many types of supplies needed for the first phases of the current offensive would have arrived months in advance. Similarly, historical precedent suggests that replacements for ammunition and equipment expended in the offensive almost certainly will cause a bulge in military aid deliveries in the months immediately after the offensive. Recent aid agreements signed between the two countries undoubtedly provide assurances of continuing future aid. In an unusual display of support, Soviet President Podgorny traveled to Hanoi in October 1971 with a high-ranking delegation to sign the annual military and economic aid agreements for 1972. In late December 1971, during a period of US protective reaction strikes against North Vietnam, additional guarantees of Soviet support were provided by the announcement of a supplementary agreement on military and economic aid for 1972.

21. Details of deliveries of selected military equipment and war supporting goods are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Surface-to-Air Missiles



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In 1971 as a whole, the USSR almost certainly delivered at least ten SA-2 battalions to North Vietnam, the first such deliveries since 1968. These imports substantially improved North Vietnam's air defense capability, increasing its SAM strength from 35-40 missile battalions to 45-50 battalions. This expansion enabled North Vietnam to maintain its air defenses around Hanoi and other strategic areas in the north while deploying more than 20 missile battalions to southern North Vietnam and Laos. The latter deployment, in turn, greatly strengthened the enemy's ability to protect his logistic network in Laos, and it gave him means with which he could seek to counter US air attacks during the current offensive.

Tanks

23. At least 100 Soviet tanks and probably more were delivered to North Vietnam during 1971, in part to replace losses incurred during Lam Son 719 and in part to build up inventories. More than 80% of these were T-54 medium tanks - the largest in North Vietnam's inventory and the type being employed extensively by the NVA in the current offensive. All available evidence suggests that Soviet tank deliveries to Hanoi in 1971 were at record levels. On two separate occasions last summer, photography revealed a total of about 50 tanks at P'ing-hsiang, the main rail transshipment point for Soviet military equipment entering North Vietnam via China.

Field Artillery

24. Hard evidence shows that the Soviet Union delivered at least eight new 130-mm field artillery pieces to North Vietnam in 1971 and six more in the first quarter of 1972, bringing North Vietnam's inventory of these long-range guns to more than 50. The USSR has also delivered a minimum of 15 field pieces of other calibers in the same period. The actual number of pieces delivered was almost certainly greater, but our evidence does not indicate how much greater.*

Trucks

25. North Vietnam imported an average of more than 3,000 Soviet trucks per year from 1967 through 1970, and imports continued at least at that rate in 1971. An unprecedented buildup of trucks was observed in photography of North Vietnam's truck parks in 1971, including the country's largest at Dong Dang on the border between China and North

* We also estimate that the PRC provided North Vietnam with over 200 field artillery pieces during 1971.

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Vietnam. The heavy floods may have contributed to the buildup (by preventing newly imported vehicles from moving out of the truck park), but the presence of nearly 6,000 trucks in storage clearly indicated a high volume of truck imports. The overall truck inventory of North Vietnam is presently estimated at more than 20,000 – an all time high and well in excess of normal civilian needs and military requirements, even taking into account anticipated heavy losses from Allied air strikes. Furthermore,

25X1 [REDACTED] Hanoi has ordered more than 5,000 Soviet trucks for 1972 delivery. More than 1,100 of these trucks had already arrived in North Vietnam by early March, out of planned deliveries of about 2,300 trucks during the first half year.

Petroleum

26. North Vietnam's petroleum imports, more than 90% of which come from the USSR, rose nearly 10% to a record level of 390,000 tons in 1971. Deliveries in the first quarter of 1972 totaled about 145,000 tons, an all-time high. The record pace of deliveries of this critical commodity provides further evidence of Moscow's unstinting support for North Vietnam. Large quantities of petroleum are essential both to North Vietnam's logistic effort and to the large-scale use of armor that has occurred in the current offensive.

Weapons Currently Deployed by the NVA in South Vietnam

27. Heavy supporting weapons deployed by the Communists during the current offensive in South Vietnam include 122-mm and 130-mm field guns, 152-mm howitzers, 160-mm mortars, surface-to-air missiles (SA-2s), and tanks. All of these types of equipment have been in the North Vietnamese inventory for several years, and four of the above weapons have been used by the NVA inside South Vietnam in the past.* These four are the 122-mm and 130-mm field guns, the 152-mm howitzer, and tanks. Only the SA-2s and 160-mm mortars have not previously been deployed inside South Vietnam. Since all of these weapons have been in the North Vietnamese inventory for some time, it is impossible to say categorically that their deployment results from an increase in recent aid deliveries rather

* The 152-mm howitzers and 130-mm field guns are believed to be manufactured only in the USSR. The 160-mm mortar and the 122-mm field gun are manufactured in both the USSR and the PRC. While the PRC has a limited capability to manufacture the SA-2, we believe that those being used by the North Vietnamese are Soviet-made. Most of the tanks in North Vietnam's inventory are also Soviet-made, though Hanoi has some tanks of Chinese manufacture. There are preliminary indications that at least some of the tanks recently captured in Quang Tri are Chinese.

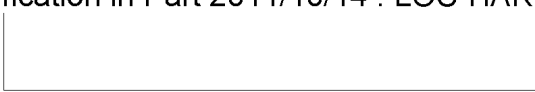
than from a drawdown in stocks. In the case of tanks, however, the sheer losses of the enemy - reportedly more than 100 in the present offensive - suggest that Hanoi already is using some of those recently delivered.

The Stockpiling Issue

28. As the above discussion suggests, analysis of the relationship between current levels of military aid and enemy intentions (or capabilities) is complicated by the fact that the North Vietnamese as a matter of policy maintain large stockpiles of war materiel and do not prepare for an offensive in a hand-to-mouth manner. Throughout the war, Communist forces appear to have adhered to a stockpiling concept that calls for large reserves of all basic equipment and supplies. Stores of food, weapons, and ammunition are established at three distinct echelons of command. Field Stockpiles - also called Combat Stockpiles - are supposed to be in all operational areas to meet the specific requirements of units that are to be committed to combat for a certain minimum period of time. Other reserves, denoted Campaign Stockpiles, are stored in areas that are more secure but still relatively close to potential combat areas. Finally, Strategic Stockpiles to meet various contingencies are established in base areas having a high degree of security.

29. The enemy has set up Strategic Stockpiles principally in North Vietnam and Laos, although there are undoubtedly some in South Vietnam and Cambodia in base areas deemed adequately secure. Campaign Stockpiles have been established widely throughout the Laotian and Cambodian base areas and in the more secure areas within South Vietnam. Combat Stockpiles also exist both in South Vietnam and in other areas close to the locations of military operations planned by the NVA.

30. Firm intelligence on the true size of the enemy's stockpiles in Indochina is difficult to come by. Based on the enemy's logistic planning doctrine, Strategic Stockpiles should approximate 12 months' resupply requirements; Campaign Stockpiles, six months' requirements; and Combat Stockpiles, three months' requirements - a total of 21 months of resupply requirements. These figures undoubtedly represent an ideal; the odds are that current North Vietnamese stocks are below these levels. Nevertheless, there is good evidence that Communist stock levels are substantial. For example, intercepted enemy communications in January 1972 revealed that more than 4,500 tons of supplies were stored in eight storage areas in the Laotian Panhandle. These storage areas are only a fraction of the number currently being maintained in the Panhandle alone. COMINT also indicates a similar picture in southern North Vietnam. One late-1971 intercept revealed that more than 5,000 tons of supplies were stored in several areas in Quang Binh Province. More recently, intercepts have indicated that several



thousand tons of ordnance were stored in or near Vinh. Thus, from the standpoint of stocks, the North Vietnamese probably would have been in a position to launch a sustained offensive this spring regardless of whether or not there had been a significant increase in Soviet aid over the past year.



APPENDIX A

Soviet Military Visitors
and the North Vietnamese Offensive

Travel by an unusually large number of high-ranking Soviet military officers to North Vietnam during the three weeks before the initiation of the current North Vietnamese drive in South Vietnam raises the question of whether, despite Soviet protestations to the contrary, the USSR may have been involved in planning the attack. Available background information on the Soviet officers, and other factors pertinent to the visits, suggests that Moscow did not have this specific purpose in mind. Nevertheless, the episode further illustrates how Moscow's present Vietnam policy complicates the pursuit of its policy goals elsewhere.

A total of 15 Soviet officers have been identified with the delegations to Hanoi led by USSR Minister of Communications Psurtsev (9-17 March) and by the Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Air Defenses (PVO), Marshal Batitskiy (16-27 March). With Psurtsev were a Deputy Commander-in-Chief of PVO formerly responsible for fighter aviation (Air Marshal Savitskiy), the First Deputy Commander in-Chief of the Baku PVO district (Lt. General Konstantinov), and the Deputy Commander of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia for combat training (Maj. General Tukeyev). With Batitskiy were 11 other Soviet officers, notably his deputies in charge of surface-to-air missile troops (Lt. General Bondarenko) and of radio technical troops (Lt. General Beregovoy). Among the rest were an assortment of senior military intelligence, communications, and propaganda specialists. Almost certainly the Batitskiy delegation constituted the largest group of Soviet military VIPs ever to visit Hanoi.

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Indeed since 1965 such visits have been relatively infrequent. In January 1966 Politburo member Shelepin had in his entourage the present Commander of the Far East Military District, General Tolubko [redacted] in October 1966 Batitskiy himself made a secret visit to inspect North Vietnamese air defenses. President Podgornyy's delegation in October 1971 included a First Deputy Minister of Defense, General Sokolov.

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By the time Batitskiy arrived, the Soviets clearly knew what was in the works. It seems doubtful that these Soviet officers were advising the North Vietnamese on how to conduct offensive operations in the South. Possibly, the combat training specialist from the Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia could have been of some help in this regard, but the PVO

specialists were probably better qualified to advise on defense of North Vietnamese territory than on offensive operations. In this context, the Soviet officer best qualified in matters directly relating to the protection of advancing ground troops from air attack, Lt. General Levchenko, Chief of Ground Forces PVO, seems conspicuous by his absence.

Moreover, the fact that Moscow sent other delegations to Hanoi at about the same time suggests that Moscow had broader purposes in view, ~~not exclusively related to military matters. At least three other relatively~~ important Soviet delegations are known to have been in Hanoi at various times from 22 February to 30 March, headed by the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Maritime Transport, and a Deputy Chief Editor of *Pravda*. Two of these five visits began during the Sino-American talks, while the other three were dispatched after Chou En-lai's 5 March visit to Hanoi. ~~Conceivably, Moscow simply wished its official spokesman to play on~~ Hanoi's apprehensions - which of course the Soviets share to some degree - regarding the possible effect of Sino-American detente on the course of the war.

In any case, the Soviets have clearly tried to minimize adverse US reaction to the appearance of Soviet involvement in the offensive. The Soviets gave the Psurtsev delegation no publicity and gave none to the Batitskiy delegation until Hanoi broke the story on 27 March, the last day of the visit. On 4 April a Soviet official abroad privately stressed the USSR's non-complicity in the ill-timed venture and his hope that it would not jeopardize the impending US-Soviet summit meeting. On 5 April a Soviet TASS correspondent in West Germany refused to participate in a television news panel discussion on Vietnam on the grounds that the criticism of US policy he would feel obliged to express could complicate the approaching Presidential visit to the USSR.