

~~SECRET SAVIN~~

2/O/VCK/R5-68
AVC/AVIA-A, DOCT-A/E.I.
252144Z Jan 68
DIST: O/VN

INDICATIONS OF SPECIAL DRV AIR
OPERATIONS POSSIBLY IN DMZ

Unusual MIG-21 activity in the southern NVN since 8 January, along with certain other SIGINT anomalies noted in DRV air/air defense communications, give rise to the possibility of the DRV again planning special operations, possibly in the DMZ area, such as recently reflected in the shootdown of the RB-66 and the bombing of the RLA position in Laos.

Most significant among the present SIGINT anomalies has been a series of unusual MIG-21 flights south of 20-00N, the first of which occurred on 8 January. Similar flights were subsequently noted on 19 and 24 January. Two additional flights of MIG aircraft in southern areas of the DRV occurred on 30 December and 9 January; however, the nature of these flights and the type activity involved are clearly different from those of 8, 19, and 24 January. In the case of the latter three flights, each consisting of two MIG-21's, the major intent has appeared to be that of navigational and geographic familiarization. Despite the fact that the flight of the 24th resulted in an encounter with F4B aircraft, this activity like that of the two previous dates reflected an intent on the part of the MIG pilots to avoid confrontation with hostile aircraft. The pilots, while showing concern with the locations of hostiles, at no time attempted to initiate offensive action. Even in the encounter of the 24th, presently available SIGINT strongly indicates that the two MIGs were attempting to land at Vinh when they were surprised by F4 aircraft and were subsequently told to return to Phuc Yen.

Of probable additional significance with respect to these flights of MIG-21's is the fact that, on all three occasions, the same two pilots have been involved. These pilots have not been reflected in normal MIG reaction to U. S. strike forces during 1968

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and, prior to their first southern flight on 8 January, were noted only once in practice GCI on 6 January in western North Vietnam. While positive identity continuity of these pilots prior to 1 January 1968 cannot be established, analysis of communications characteristics suggests that they may be two of the most proficient pilots in the DRV Air Force. Also involved in these flights of MIG-21's has been the appearance of two new and unlocated ground control facilities, as well as a third controller which had previously been observed in transport and AN-2 practice bombing activity. This facility was also reflected in the recovery and landing of AN-2's following the 12 January attack in Laos. This controller was originally identified as located in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, and has more recently been reported as tentatively located in the Vinh and/or Hung Yen areas. Re-analysis of the activities involving this station, however, has failed to clarify this point. Each occurrence has involved ambiguous indications and each has tended to contradict the last. Although not confirmed in SIGINT, the possibility exists that this control facility is not at a fixed location, but, rather, represents unusual communications usage for special air operations activities.

In all three cases of MIG-21 familiarization flights, pilots and ground controllers have reflected some pre-occupation with the operation of radio compass equipment. All flights have recovered at Phuc Yen, although as stated above, the flight of 24 January exhibited an intent to land at Vinh.

Also of interest as regards the anomalies in the present DRV air posture is the fact that, since 20 January, a North Vietnamese air operations facility probably located at Hanoi has been reflected passing messages pertinent to B-52 strike operations in the DMZ to a subordinate probably located at Vinh. A total of eight messages have been reflected through 24 January.

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Correlation with collateral data tends to substantiate the relationship to B-52 operations. On the average, the times of transmission of these messages are three hours prior to the times indicated in the message texts (Ref USJ-790, 2/02/VCA/R12-68, 241527Z JAN).

COMMENTS: The significance of the Hanoi air operations facility passing information on B-52 operations in the DMZ to a probable Vinh subordinate cannot be determined. However, in view of the unusual MIG-21 operations and the use of ground control facilities associated with offensive operations by the DRV air forces, the possibility of an attempt by MIG-21's staging at Vinh for air operations against the B-52's and/or operations against reconnaissance aircraft in the Gulf of Tonkin must be considered.

For details of current unusual ground force reflections, see 2/0/VCM/R32-68.

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