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20 October 1965

SC No. 11391/65

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CHINESE COMMUNIST MILITARY
PRESENCE IN NORTH VIETNAM

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: DEC 2000

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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SC No. 11391/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
20 October 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Chinese Communist Military Presence in
North Vietnam*

SUMMARY

1. The Chinese Communists in June 1965 began deploying a limited number of military support units into North Vietnam (DRV). This marked the first time that Chinese troop units had been stationed outside China since 1958, when Peking withdrew the last of its troops from North Korea. Unlike the Chinese troops in Korea however, the units detected in North Vietnam thus far have been restricted to a few logistic support units and probably some local security forces, including antiaircraft artillery.

2. These Chinese forces for the most part have been moved from adjacent areas of south China into the northeast region of the DRV [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] On the basis of tentative information, however, we estimate that there may be 15,000 to 20,000 Chinese military personnel now in North Vietnam.

3. Recent aerial photography has revealed some activity in the northeast DRV that is probably related to the presence of Chinese support units. The northern sector of the Hanoi-Pinghsiang rail line is being improved and several new truck parks have been set up in the border area, probably to facilitate the increased flow of supplies into North Vietnam.

EO 12958 3.4(h)(1)-25Yrs

* This memorandum has the concurrence of the Director, DIA.

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4. Although there is no firm evidence that any additional Chinese military units have deployed into North Vietnam since August, there are signs that several units, probably railway engineer and/or conventional engineer units, may be preparing to do so in the near future. These units, which began to appear near the Vietnam border in mid-September, are either newly formed or taken from areas of China other than the immediate border area. At least one railway engineer unit has moved to a position where it can deploy rapidly into the northwest DRV, where the Hanoi-Kunming rail line has been subjected to frequent bombing since mid-July.

5. There is no evidence that the deployment of logistic support units to the DRV has been accompanied by a buildup of Chinese combat forces in the Sino-DRV border area. Such a buildup would probably precede any major deployment of Chinese combat units into North Vietnam. There are however, tentative signs [redacted] that con-
tingency plans, [redacted]

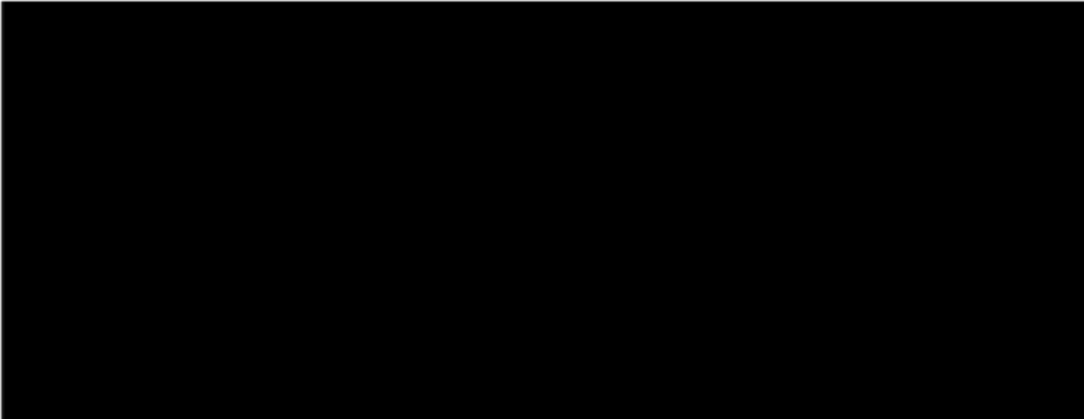
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[redacted] have been made for the introduction of a force of considerable size into the border area. Thus available intelligence suggests that the Chinese are taking some of the necessary steps to move more units rapidly into Vietnam should the war escalate. On the basis of their practice to date, we expect to receive some early warning [redacted]

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[redacted] if the Chinese military involvement in North Vietnam is significantly expanded.

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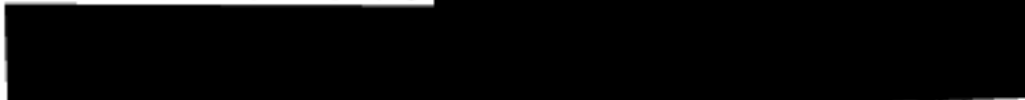




Chinese Military Units in Northeastern North Vietnam

9. The first Chinese unit detected in North Vietnam appeared in the northeast coastal area of Tien Yen in mid-June.

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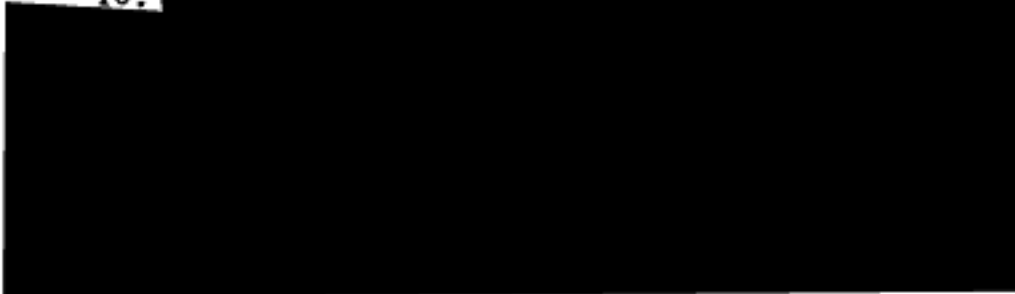
This same organization controls a number of small Chinese military vessels which, in addition to supporting Chinese security forces, may be providing some type of military logistic support for the North Vietnamese.

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11. [REDACTED]

12. Chinese railway engineer units are highly specialized units with a proven capability for rapid construction and repair of rail lines. By 17 August, photography revealed some new construction work on the northern part of the Hanoi-Pinghsiang railroad, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The new construction appears to involve efforts to improve the capacity and efficiency of this important narrow gauge line, by eliminating sharp curves and steep gradients. These improvements are apparently being accomplished in such a manner as to minimize the disruption of rail traffic between China and the DRV.

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13. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] photography [REDACTED] showed a high level of truck activity among several apparently newly established vehicle storage areas stretching from Pinghsiang, China, to Langson in North Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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14.



15. The Chinese may have decided to deploy AAA along the Hanoi-Pingsiang rail line when it became clear in mid-July that the US was going to bomb rail lines north of Hanoi.

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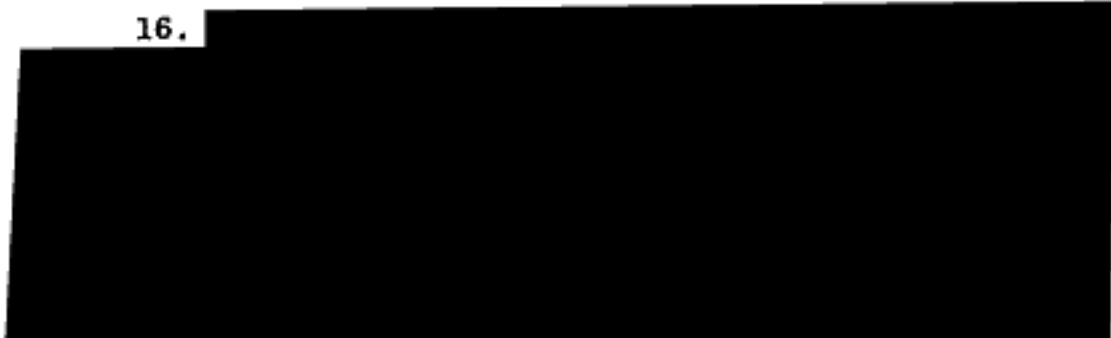


US pilots reported after the strike that they had encountered unusually heavy flak; two US aircraft were downed by ground fire.

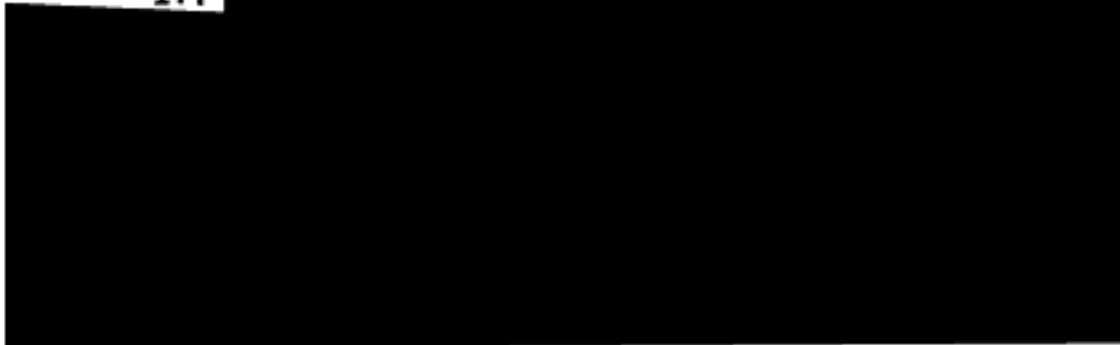
Chinese Units in Northwestern DRV

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18. To sum up, at least five, and possibly one or two more, Chinese military units have now been detected moving into North Vietnam. These units appear to include a possible AAA division, a suspect border/coastal security defense division, elements of a railway engineer division, a motor transport regiment, and another possible security unit of at least regimental size. At normal organizational strengths, this would amount to about 19,000 troops in all. There are probably also some headquarters and service personnel.

New Chinese Construction Units Near DRV Border

19. Although no Chinese military units have been detected moving into North Vietnam since August, there are indications that several new Chinese construction units may be assembling near the DRV border for possible deployment into the country. These units were first noted in the Kwangsi area of the Canton MR in mid-September.

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22. If the units [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] prove to be railway engineer divisions, their deployment into North Vietnam could raise the estimated number of Chinese troops in that country as high as 35,000 to 40,000. In the wake of continued US bombing attacks on North Vietnamese lines of communications, it seems likely that additional Chinese engineer units will be sent to assist the Hanoi regime in keeping its road and rail net operative.

Possible Chinese Contingency Plans

23. [REDACTED]

24. [REDACTED]

25. [REDACTED]

26.

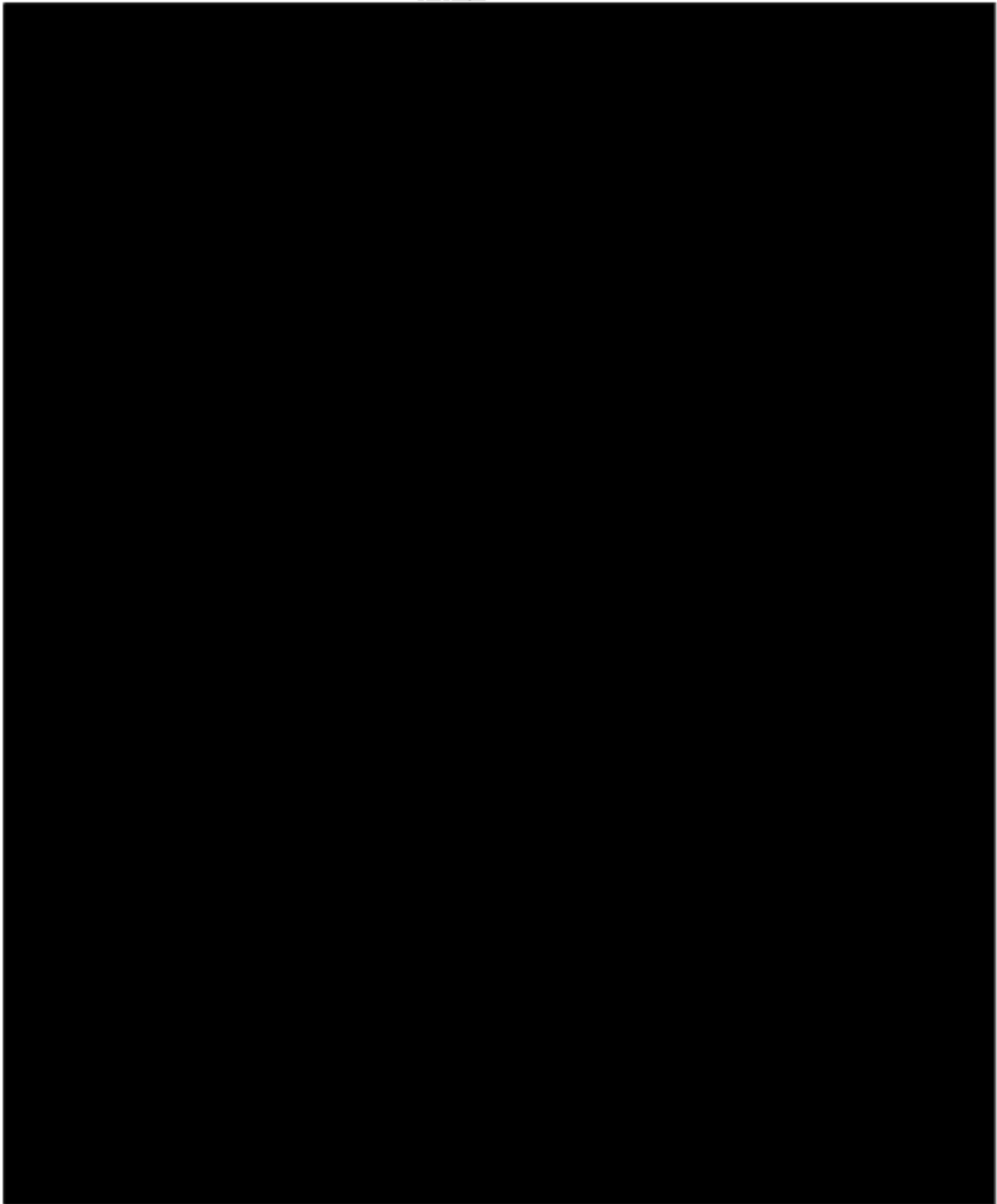


It is at least clear that the Chinese have taken steps to secure the lines of communications from China to the DRV. Thus, should the war in Vietnam escalate into a major confrontation involving the Chinese, they would not have to start from scratch.

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ANNEX

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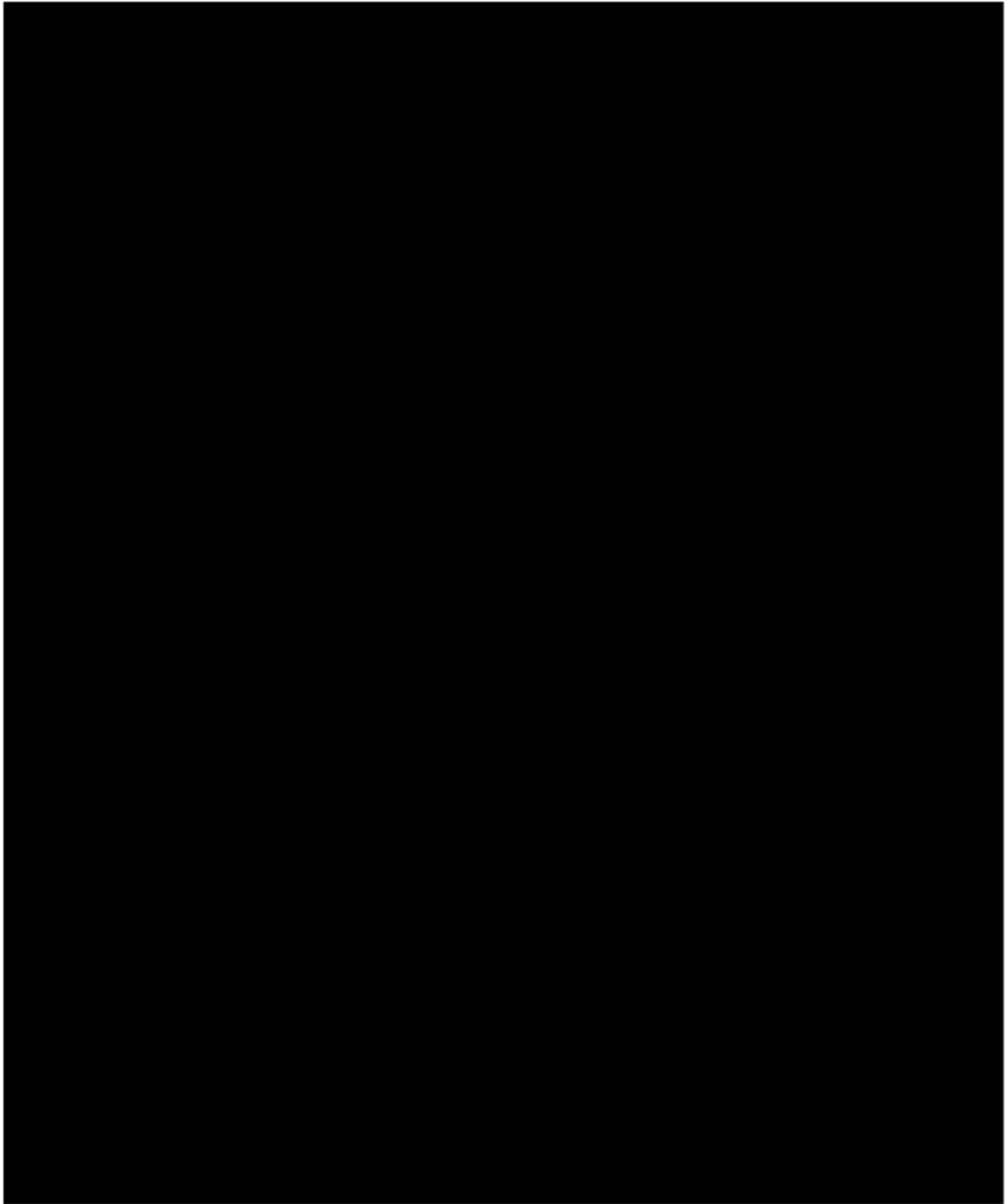


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