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Memorandum

CIA APPRECIATION OF SA-2 ACTIVITY
IN NORTH VIETNAM DURING LATE JULY

1 August 1965

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By: ~~SECRET~~

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
MEMORANDUM

CIA Appreciation of SA-2 Activity in North Vietnam During Late July

This is an interim report and is based on a thorough re-examination of all data available as of 1 August concerning the shootdown of a US F4C on 24 July and a drone aircraft on 26 July in the Hanoi area. All available data pertaining to the 27 July US air strike has also been examined. When additional data is received which further clarifies the conclusions in this report a subsequent memorandum will be published.

It now appears almost certain that the main thrust of the 27 July strike occurred about 42 nautical miles west southwest of Hanoi in the Ban Xom Lom barracks area and not in the intended target area where SAM sites 6 and 7 are located. Since the information on this strike which was intended against the SAM sites was released to the press and since it was inadvertently conducted in another area (for reasons not yet clear), Hanoi might interpret this as a US ploy to test world reaction prior to launching a full scale attack against the Hanoi SAM complex.

It is now clear that at least one or more SAM sites are operational and are being controlled by Soviet personnel. However, the presence of Soviet personnel cannot yet be associated with any specific site. Although the precise site or sites involved

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in the shootdowns of 24 and 26 July cannot be determined from the available evidence, sites 4 and 6 are the most suspect. There is also the possibility that an as yet undetected site may have been responsible. Photography of 28 July clearly shows site 6 to be filled with dummy equipment but it might have been an operational site on 24 July and the equipment removed after the 24 July shootdown in anticipation of a US airstrike.

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1. Status of SA-2 Installations:

High altitude photography of North Vietnam (U-2 and DRONE) has thus far revealed seven SA-2 sites, five clustered about Hanoi in a ring of 15-mile radius and two others 30 miles to the west. It is quite possible that other SA-2 sites have been prepared but have not yet been discovered. The resolution of this high altitude photography is not good enough to distinguish between operational SA-2 sites and those sites occupied by dummy equipment. As of this writing, low altitude photography is available only on Site 6 to the west, which was occupied on 28 July with dummy SA-2 equipment. No reports have been received from agents or observers indicating that actual SA-2 equipment is installed at any of the seven sites. However, we began intercepting the SA-2 tracking radar, (FAN SONG) signal in the general Hanoi area on 23 July.

It is important to note that we now have no real way of knowing which sites are occupied and operational at any given time. Evidently one must be concerned about this matter in view of the dummy equipment recently observed at Site 6.

2. F4C Shootdown on 24 July 1965:

There is no valid indication which SA-2 site fired at the flight of four F4C aircraft flying at about 23,000 feet on 24 July. We do not know the precise position of the aircraft at the time of intercept.

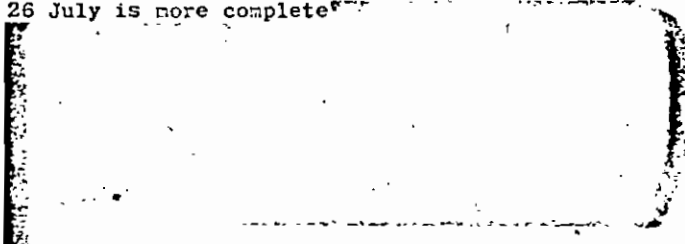
the aircraft were about 5 miles south of Site 6 within a 3-mile circle of radius. This would place the aircraft at the maximum range (17 to 18 nm) of the SA-2

system from Site 4. The returning pilots reported that the missiles were travelling almost vertically as they approached the formation, and this suggests that the launching site was more nearly beneath the flight line; the fact that the missiles passed on the starboard side of the flight line is immaterial. Had these missiles come from Site 4 at extreme range, they would have been travelling almost horizontally. Site 7 was apparently still under construction at the time of last photography; therefore, based on the limited data available, the missiles either came from Site 6 or a new undetected site in the vicinity. The absence of genuine SA-2 equipment at Site 6 on 28 July indicates either that the unit was moved from this site after the shootdown on 24 July but prior to the low level coverage, or that it never was occupied and a third unidentified site in the area was responsible.

Our conclusion at this time is that we cannot determine which site downed the F4C with any degree of assurance nor have we any basis for tying it to the DRONE loss two days later.

3. DRONE Shootdown of 26 July:

The intelligence data on the shootdown of 26 July is more complete.



*U-2 flight of 26 July (NPIC readout) and low altitude flight of 29 July (Field readout).



4. Retaliatory Strike of 27 July Against Sites 6 and 7:

It is our understanding that 46 aircraft were targeted against Sites 6 and 7 on 27 July 1965. The pilots reported that they had destroyed one site, heavily damaged the second and set the barracks areas on fire. However, it now appears that the aircraft made their passes over an area around Ban Xom Lom, 42 miles southwest of Sites 6 and 7.

It is not clear why the strike fell on this area. Neither is it clear what sites the pilots believed they had destroyed. There are a number of barracks in the Ban Xom Lom area which have been struck before by ROLLING THUNDER missions. They are protected by AAA installations, which could have been mistaken at low altitude for SA-2 sites and could have accounted for the downed aircraft. It is also possible that

