

USSR AID TO VIETNAM: May 1979

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Since the outbreak of war on the Sino-Vietnamese border on 17th February there has been a dramatic increase in Soviet military aid to Vietnam. Most military aid is delivered in Soviet merchant ships, which are arms carriers. The only details we have of the cargoes are limited to the deck cargoes, such as trucks and aircraft. Details of the number of arms carriers that have made deliveries to Vietnam since 1973 are:

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Arms Carriers</u>
1973	4
1974	3
1975	35
1976	11
1977	16
1978	28

Since the beginning of 1979 Soviet arms carriers have delivered more than 53,000 tonnes of military materiel to Vietnamese ports. Up to 7th May this has involved 40 arms carriers, and more vessels are en route to Vietnam⁽¹⁾. The materiel consists of a wide range of military vehicles; possibly helicopters and other aircraft; heavy ferries; a POLNOCNY-class LSM (delivered on 10th May and not included in the tonnage) and two SHERSHEN-class patrol boats (delivered on 13th April); and a large amount of unspecified military materiel. This is almost double the total Soviet deliveries to Vietnam in 1978.

77 ships a week. This number is about double the weekly average for the latter part of 1978 and is 65 percent of all ships that are trading with Vietnam. The average number of Soviet merchant vessels in Vietnamese ports each day is 28. The cargoes of these ships are not usually specified; therefore, a great deal more military equipment could have been delivered to Vietnam than we can account for.

The arms carriers are only a small proportion of the Soviet vessels that are engaged in trade with Vietnam. So far this year the number of Soviet merchant vessels trading with Vietnam has averaged

Note

1. On 26th May nine Soviet arms carriers were reported to be en route to Vietnam. Some of the more important cargo includes 703 trucks on a roll-on/roll-off ship bound for Da Nang; 12 x MiG-21 (Fishbed) aircraft and 16 aircraft-associated crates; a medium landing craft; and cylindrical steel storage containers.