

IIM 75-002

**Imports of Military Equipment and
Material by North Vietnam in 1974**

10 January 1975

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*Imports of Military Equipment and
Materiel by North Vietnam in 1974*



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10 January 1975

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January 10, 1975

INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Imports of Military Equipment and Materiel by
North Vietnam in 1974

KEY POINTS

- Preliminary analysis of the intelligence community indicates that North Vietnam imported at least \$260 million of military equipment and materiel from the USSR, China and Eastern Europe in 1974.
- This estimate will undoubtedly increase as additional evidence becomes available. We will be unable to make a reasonably complete estimate of 1974 military imports by North Vietnam until April or May 1975.
- We cannot at this time say whether, in the final estimate, Hanoi's military imports in 1974 will turn out to be higher or lower than the 1973 level of about \$300 million.
- Our estimates of Communist military deliveries to North Vietnam include only the cost of military equipment and materiel provided to Hanoi, and these estimates are not comparable to the standard figures on US military aid to South Vietnam. Less than half of US military aid to the GVN in recent years has consisted of materiel comparable to that included in the estimated deliveries to North Vietnam.

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DISCUSSION

1. We have little direct evidence on the overall level of military imports by North Vietnam during 1974. Information on specific military shipments has been difficult to obtain [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (Over the past decade most Soviet, Chinese, and East European military shipments to North Vietnam have come overland through China, rather than by sea.) Moreover, a large segment of military imports, such as ammunition for small arms and field artillery, can be gauged only indirectly by estimating military expenditures in South Vietnam and the level of supply flows to the South, which are at best rough approximations and generally well after the fact. It will be at least April or May before we can estimate the overall level of military deliveries to North Vietnam for all of 1974 with more confidence.

2. Nevertheless, our preliminary analysis indicates that North Vietnam has already received at least \$260 million in military equipment and materiel from its allies during 1974.* (See Tables 2 and 3 for a breakdown of this total.) Unlike past years, however, when air defense equipment made up a substantial part of North Vietnam's military imports, most of the deliveries noted so far for 1974 apparently have been concentrated in ground forces equipment and ammunition. Moreover, for the first time since 1970, China appears to be the main contributor of aid, primarily ammunition and ground forces equipment, valued at \$170 million. This is a natural development with no air war in North Vietnam and a consequently reduced requirement for sophisticated and expensive air defense equipment which has come primarily from the Soviets. Military aid from the Soviet Union during 1974 has been valued at only \$85 million so far. A much smaller quantity of military equipment, valued at about \$5 million, is believed to have been provided by Hanoi's East European allies. The following table provides comparative estimates for the years from 1967 on, although the 1974 figures are preliminary and incomplete.

* Values in this preliminary estimate are in 1973 dollars, as equivalent 1974 production costs are not yet available.

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TABLE 1
COMMUNIST MILITARY DELIVERIES TO NORTH VIETNAM
(Million US\$)

	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>
Total	<u>830</u>	<u>530</u>	<u>315</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>285</u>	<u>630</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>260</u>
USSR	675	415	175	90	165	395	180	85
China	155	115	140	100	115	230	115	170
East European	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	5	5	5	5

3. It should be stressed that this estimate of the value of Communist military deliveries includes only the cost of military equipment received and not the full cost of military assistance provided Hanoi by its allies. The costs of training, spare parts, and transportation -- for which there is virtually no information -- are not estimated. US military aid totals to Saigon, on the other hand, include these items, as well as others such as combat rations, medical supplies, and the cost of contractor support for a variety of services. In recent years, these costs have amounted to more than 50 percent of US military aid to South Vietnam.

4. There are other reasons why comparisons between US military aid to South Vietnam and Communist military aid to North Vietnam are singularly inappropriate. During the war South Vietnam's armed forces have been roughly twice the size of North Vietnam's forces in the South, primarily because the missions of South Vietnam's forces -- protecting population and holding territory -- have required a much larger force structure. To compensate for the Communists' ability to concentrate their forces and firepower on objectives of their own choosing, Saigon has required a large combat air force and an ability to redeploy forces rapidly by ground and air transport. Thus, the type of equipment supplied to South Vietnam by the US has been much more sophisticated and therefore considerably more expensive than that received by Hanoi.

Air Defense Equipment

5. The most discernible trend in military imports during 1974 has been the sharp decrease in deliveries of air defense equipment. In past years, air defense equipment comprised at

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least one-third of the total value of military imports, and even more if antiaircraft (AAA) ammunition is included. The Soviet Union provided most of this, including large amounts of surface-to-air missile equipment, AAA weapons, and radar.

6. With one exception, no new air defense equipment was detected entering North Vietnam during 1974. Peking did provide 29 MIG 19s and 2 L-29 Maya jet trainers to Hanoi, valued at \$31 million -- only 12 percent of the \$260 million total estimated to have been delivered to North Vietnam. Traditionally, MIG 19s have been used as interceptors in an air defense role. North Vietnam also received 22 MIG 17s from China, although these may have been aircraft previously provided by China.

7. This cutback in air defense deliveries is attributable to Hanoi's reduced in-country air defense posture since the US ended its bombing of North Vietnam some two years ago. The mainstay of Hanoi's defenses, the SA-2 missile system now consists of no more than 25 occupied sites (battalions), compared to the 48 battalions operational at the time of the cease-fire.* The antiaircraft artillery system has not been augmented by the Soviets since the delivery in early 1973 of a small number of sophisticated ZSU-23-4 mobile systems. The Soviets, on the other hand, probably sent at least 100 of the small shoulder-launched SA-7 ground-to-air missiles, including some improved models, to maintain inventories in South Vietnam. The Communists made heavy use of this weapon during 1974.

Ammunition

8. The major indicator of the order of magnitude of North Vietnam's ammunition imports is the volume of logistic activity in the southern Panhandle. Although there is no direct evidence on the amount of ammunition imported by Hanoi, the Communists would be breaking sharply with past practice if they failed to maintain stocks in their strategic rear areas. It is therefore assumed that munitions shipped south through the Panhandle are replaced in kind by imports.

* [] the existence of some 20 other battalions. Whether these additional entities are held in reserve or are no longer serviceable is unclear, but the important fact remains that the number of deployed battalions is substantially lower.

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9. So far during 1974, some 40,000 short tons of ammunition, valued at slightly more than \$150 million, have been detected moving through the southern Panhandle en route to Laos and South Vietnam. This already exceeds the amount observed in 1973 by about one-third and is close to the \$175 million provided in 1972. The shipments included large quantities of ammunition for virtually every weapon used by the NVA and were more than sufficient to replace ammunition expended, thus adding to already sizable stockpiles.

Field Artillery and Armor

10. North Vietnam probably continued to receive some field artillery during the past year. [redacted]

11. [redacted] conclusive evidence of imports of armor. On several occasions, however, small numbers of tanks and armored personnel carriers (APCs) were observed in storage areas near Hanoi and moving on the rail lines in the southern Panhandle. Although some of this equipment probably represents new imports, much of it was most likely in North Vietnam before 1974. [redacted]

[redacted] the Communist armor inventory in the South has remained stable, strongly suggesting that armor imports were not substantial during 1974. Overall, we estimate that North Vietnam received about 80 tanks and APCs to replace losses.

Small Arms and Other Infantry Weapons

12. Like most categories of military aid to North Vietnam, there is almost no direct evidence on the amount of small arms

* Indirect evidence of possible field artillery imports was provided during the summer of 1974, when a number of tracked, prime movers, which are often used to haul artillery, were observed entering North Vietnam.

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and other infantry weapons imported by Hanoi. [redacted]

[redacted] Other large shipments of weapons were noted in the North Vietnamese Panhandle, and it seems highly unlikely that all these deliveries came from materiel stockpiled in North Vietnam in earlier years.

Other Military Imports

13. North Vietnam received nine MI-8 Hip helicopters from the USSR during 1974, increasing their MI-8 inventory to 15. This helicopter, with a lift capacity of four tons, has a variety of military applications, including the transport of military personnel and cargo. To date, these expensive helicopters have been used only sparingly outside of North Vietnam, carrying priority cargo from North Vietnam into Laos. They could just as easily be used to carry cargo into South Vietnam.

14. During the first nine months of 1974, we estimate that North Vietnam also received at least 3,000 trucks from the USSR, China and East European countries, compared to some 4,000 the previous year. Of the trucks imported in 1974, about half probably were assigned to the military forces.

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TABLE 2
CHINESE MILITARY AID DELIVERIES DURING 1974^{a/}

	<u>Quantity (Units)</u>	<u>Million 1973 US\$^{b/}</u>
<u>Total Value</u>	---	<u>170</u>
Air defense equipment		
Jet aircraft		
MIG-19	29	30
L-29	2	1
Ground forces equipment		
Field artillery		
130-mm	30	3
122-mm	10	1
Armor		
T-59	15	3
Armored personnel carriers	50	3
Small arms and other infantry weapons ^{c/}	---	17
Ammunition (short tons)	25,000	105
Other		
Trucks	600	5

^{a/} Data presented is an estimate based on preliminary information, and will be revised later. Individual categories are rounded to the nearest \$1 million, the total to the nearest \$5 million.

^{b/} No costing data is available reflecting 1974 US production costs of major weapons and equipment.

^{c/} Because of the variety of weapons contained in this category, no quantity is listed.

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TABLE 3
SOVIET MILITARY AID DELIVERIES DURING 1974^{a/}

	<u>Quantity (Units)</u>	<u>Million 1973 US\$^{b/}</u>
<u>Total Value</u>	---	<u>85</u>
Air defense equipment		
SA-7 replacement missiles	100	1
Ground forces equipment		
Field artillery		
130-mm	30	3
122-mm	15	1
Armor		
T-54	15	3
Armored personnel carriers	---	---
Small arms and other infantry weapons ^{c/}	---	6
Ammunition (short tons)	12,000	50
Other		
Artillery prime movers	75	3
Trucks	400	3
Helicopters		
Mi-8	9	13

^{a/} Data presented is an estimate based on preliminary information and will be revised later. Individual categories are rounded to the nearest \$1 million, the total to the nearest \$5 million.

^{b/} No costing data is available reflecting 1974 US production costs of major weapons and equipment.

^{c/} Because of the variety of weapons contained in this category, no quantity is listed.

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