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SPECIAL ANNEX V

DRV Planes Receive Sanctuary, 1967

As INR had suggested would probably happen, North Vietnamese fighters were given refuge in China after US bombing of DRV airfields. Over half went in the two months after the first fields were struck, and more were flown out after Phuoc Yen was bombed in October 1967. The planes flew training missions over China but never flew combat missions over North Vietnam from these bases. Concern about this possibility arose in November, however, when North Vietnamese MIG's stationed at North Vietnamese fields were allowed on four different days to land at Chinese bases (or take refuge in Chinese airspace) after combat with American aircraft. These planes normally returned to their home bases after the danger of encounter with American planes had passed. INR believed these actions demonstrated Peking's willingness to risk combat with US aircraft should the latter pursue the North Vietnamese MIG's into China. INR also believed such after-combat refuge might presage a Chinese decision to allow North Vietnamese fighters to engage the enemy over North Vietnam from Chinese bases. This did not happen, and, after November 18, inexplicably no more DRV aircraft took refuge after combat. The reason for the halt is not clear, for, although US sorties were down in November-December due to bad weather, critical targets, including airfields, continued to be struck.

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