

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Alleged Violations of PRC Air Space and Alleged Bombing of
PRC Fishing Boats

You requested a report by July 12, 1972, on the alleged violation of PRC Air Space on July 5, 1972, and the alleged bombing of two PRC fishing boats on June 20, 1972.

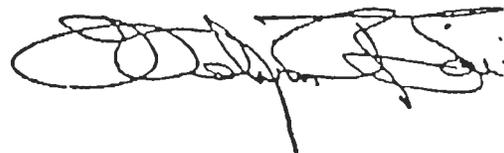
The alleged incidents have been investigated by CINCPAC and the component commanders. As in previous cases, no evidence has been found so far to support either allegation.

I have attached the report of the investigation submitted to me by the Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The restrictive measures I have implemented to control air strikes in the vicinity of the PRC Buffer Zone will make it possible to reconstruct each flight operating near the Buffer Zone. In this way I expect to add to the credibility of any future investigations if additional protests are made by the PRC. But, more importantly, I expect these measures will eliminate future PRC complaints.

If additional facts are established regarding these two incidents, you will be informed immediately.

Attachment



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The Joint Chiefs of Staff
Washington, D. C.

12 July 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Alleged Border Violations and Bombings

1. Reference is made to:

a. PRC allegations concerning the sinking of two fishing boats on 20 June 1972 and border violations and bombings on 5 July 1972.

b. Your memorandum, subject: "PRC Allegations," dated 11 July 1972, which expressed concern over the continued PRC allegations and the need for positive control over all air strikes in the vicinity of the PRC.

2. CINCPAC and component commanders have investigated the allegations and have found no evidence to support their validity. However, one aircraft was reported as being near but south of the PRC border on 5 July 1972. The pilot cleared the area when directed to do so. The details of the incident and results of the examination of the PRC allegations in order of date are as follows:

a. Fishing Boats. Although a final report from COMSEVENTHFL has not yet been received, the only known possible involvement in the alleged attack against two fishing boats at 1700H, 20 June 1972, was a strike against two 80-foot waterborne logistics craft (WBLCs) in the vicinity of 20° 42' N/107° 08' E, at 1630H, 20 June 1972, approximately 39 NM southwest of Cu Xu Island. All evidence confirms that the vessels were in fact WBLCs and not fishing craft. During a surveillance mission, two A-7 aircraft flew north toward Cam Pha remaining west of the larger island along 107° 20' E longitude. Two motorized vessels were noted on a westerly heading, each with a good-sized wake. Pilots' first surveillance pass was at 3500-4000 feet above sea level. Several other vessels in the area had fishing

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nets/associated fishing gear on deck but these specific vessels had clean decks with two stacks of wooden boxed cargo (amidship and forward) and a stack of filled burlap bags on the fantail. Pilots made three more surveillance passes over the vessels at about 1,000 feet above sea level. Pilots then continued on with coastal surveillance mission flying from Cam Pha area south to Vinh area and then returned. Pilots again surveilled vessels at about 1,000 feet above sea level to confirm vessels laden with cargo. Two stacks of supplies previously observed were each estimated approximately five feet high, ten to fifteen feet wide, twenty feet long. On the basis of this evidence, which differentiated these vessels from other craft in area rigged for fishing, the WBLCs were then attacked with bombs. No strafing was conducted. No personnel were seen in the water or aboard the vessels before or after the attack and no strafing was conducted.

b. Border Violations. On 5 July 1972, according to the PRC, US aircraft allegedly intruded in three groups of four aircraft each into Chinese air space. They allegedly dropped one bomb, launched two guided missiles and jettisoned two fuel tanks.

(1) The US Navy ship providing advisory control to approximately twenty-five CAP aircraft, reported the track of one aircraft near but south of the PRC border at 1135H. The pilot was vectored to 180° and away from the PRC border.

c. Bombing/Missile/Reserve Fuel Tanks. There was no evidence of bombings or missiles being launched on 5 July 1972 which would have reached the alleged points of impact in or near the PRC border.

(1) A search of OPREP BDA revealed only one strike north of 21° N and east of 106° 30' E. This strike was a flight of four A-7 and one F-4 aircraft against four large WBLCs at 21° 02' N and 107° 47' E in the vicinity of coastal islands. One WBLC was destroyed and one was sunk.

(2) One AGM-78 (STANDARD ARM) and six AGM-45 (SHRIKE) missiles were launched according to OPREP messages. An analysis of all known firings found only one possible candidate, an AGM-45 (SHRIKE) launched by an F-105 [REDACTED]. The estimated flight path, direction of firing toward the PRC border and range would have placed the impact point some 11 NM south of the border.

(3) One flight (2 F-4D and 3 F-4E aircraft) observed the launch of three SA-2 missiles at 1132H against another flight. Based upon the location of the observing flight, the location of the launch site, the time (1135H) of the one radar track near the PRC border, and the maximum optimum impact range of 20.5 NM, the SA-2s could have struck the alleged missile impact area.

(4) On occasion, fuel tanks are jettisoned to engage MIG aircraft or to avoid SAM firings. However, there is no evidence on the alleged dropping or lobbing of fuel tanks across the PRC border on 5 July 1972.

3. As indicated in previous memoranda on this subject, every precaution is being taken to avoid inadvertent intrusion into the PRC air space and to guard against delivery of ordnance against unauthorized targets.

4. Additional strengthening of control procedures to further reduce the possibility of aircraft inadvertently violating the PRC border was instituted on 11 July 1972.

5. I believe that all commanders in the field recognize the seriousness of the PRC allegations and the need to exercise every precaution. I can assure you that if additional strengthening control procedures can be found, they will be instituted without delay.

BRUCE PALMER, JR.
General, United States Army
Acting Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

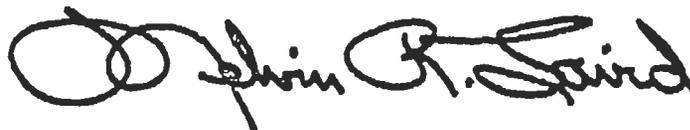
July 11, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs

SUBJECT: PRC Allegations of Border Violations and Bombings
by US Aircraft

In response to your memorandum of June 30, 1972 concern-
ing PRC allegations of border violations and bombings by US
aircraft, I am attaching a report submitted to me by the
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This report indicates that US aircraft neither penetrated
nor bombed PRC territory. Nevertheless, as reported to you in
a separate memorandum today, I have instituted additional
restrictive measures for our air strikes near the PRC Buffer
Zone, which will further assure that our aircraft do not
violate the PRC border.



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EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. EXEMPTION CATEGORY 3
DECLASSIFY ON 31 Dec 82

Sec Def Cont Nr. X- 3480

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

CM-2011-72
9 July 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: PRC Allegations of Border Violations
and Bombings by US Aircraft (TS)

1. (TS) Reference is made to your memorandum of 30 June 1972, subject: "Allegations of US Aircraft Intrusions into China," which requested the reopening of the investigation of this incident.

2. (TS) In their allegation the PRC charge that two US aircraft intruded into PRC air space at 0056H and 0058H (local time) on 10 June in the area of Ping Hsiang, Kwang Si Province. They further charge that during the second alleged intrusion, bombs were dropped on PRC structures in the village of Aikou.

3. (TS) A previous investigation of these allegations indicated that we could find no clear proof that US aircraft had in fact violated PRC air space or bombed PRC territory. It was concluded that the possibility of US ordnance being dropped in China was remote and that all indications were that US aircraft operating in the area at that time had remained in North Vietnam. However, in response to additional evidence subsequently set forth by the PRC, a second investigation of the alleged intrusion and bombing has been conducted. There is still no positive proof of the validity of the PRC charges.

4. (TS) In reexamining this allegation, an analysis of all available information (including reports of planned strikes, reports of strikes flown, computer printouts of SEAsia air operations, a partial trace of ordnance lot numbers, photo interpretation of post strike photography, and field commanders' assessments) for the period 9-11 June 1972 has been conducted. This analysis has established that

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11 JUL 1972

Seventh Air Force had no aircraft operating above 21° North latitude in North Vietnam within four hours of either side of the time period in question. However,

5. (TS) Six A-7 aircraft were launched from the USS KITTY HAWK between 100017H and 100024H with the mission of conducting

6. (TS) All aircraft received a navigational update prior to crossing the NVN coast with all systems indicating

(See Enclosure)

7. (TS) The first four aircraft arrived in the target area at approximately 0047H, 0052H, 0054H and 0058H respectively. This put them within 15 nautical miles of the alleged violation within minutes of the time the intrusion is said to have occurred. The remaining two aircraft arrived at approximately 0116H and 0118H, some 18 to 20 minutes after the alleged incident.

8. (TS) The lead aircraft observed many vehicles with their lights on moving on Route 1A. He attacked these vehicles and caused several fires which were seen by all subsequent pilots. The lead aircraft also drew AAA fire, probably from mobile units with the convoy, which was seen by the second and third pilots while the fourth pilot observed AAA fire directed against the number three aircraft. The vehicles on the road continued to flash their lights on periodically and this, coupled with the fires along the road caused by the first strike, made it possible to see the vehicles and follow the line of the highway out of the target area.

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9. (TS) The number four pilot reported that he attacked the northernmost target struck. The point at which he reports having dropped his ordnance is approximately 13 nautical miles from the area of the alleged incident. Considering the accuracy of the navigational systems, the good visibility and the well-distinguished checkpoints, an error of this magnitude appears unlikely.

10. (TS) One MIG was reported in the area for about 10 minutes. Its lights were seen by two US pilots at approximately 0110H. One MIG took off from Phuoc Yen at 0100H headed north and returned prior to 0120H when a second MIG took off to the north. There is no evidence of more than one MIG airborne at any one time in the area of interest.

11. (TS) The ingress and egress of all aircraft was monitored by an E-2 Airborne Early Warning aircraft which also confirmed their position prior to crossing the coast on their ingress route. While not holding all aircraft continuously, the E-2 did not observe any border violations and, upon request from the Tactical Air Control Center aboard the USS LONG BEACH, recalled all aircraft from the target area. The last two aircraft completed their strikes at 0110H before heading home.

12. (TS) There is a marked geographic similarity between the Lang Son and Ping Hsiang areas and, though the two cities are some 15 nautical miles apart, it is conceivable that a navigational error and resultant misidentification could have occurred. Further, there could have been an inadvertent ordnance release. However, such a unique set of circumstances seems most unlikely. Further, a review of all naval tactical data system tapes does not reflect any tracks crossing the PRC border.

13. (TS) The lot numbers of the two MK-20 bombs identified by the Chinese as having been dropped in the vicinity of the village of Aikou have been traced as far as possible. These lots, 34-C-71 and 48-C-71, were handled by NAV MAG SUBIC during 1971 and 1972. However, it could not be determined that bombs from these lots were or were not in fact delivered to the USS KITTY HAWK.

14. (TS) In addition to the foregoing, the following apparent discrepancies merit consideration.

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CM-2011-72

a. The MK-20 (ROCKEYE II) dispenser (cluster) bomb contains 247 MK-118 MOD O anti-tank/anti-personnel bombs in a bomb-shaped canister. Thus, if two MK-20s were inadvertently released near Aikou, 494 MK-118 bombs should have fallen in the area. When a MK-20 is released from 5,500 feet or less, which is the usual dive bombing release altitude, the normal dispersal pattern covers an area of 1,000 feet or less in diameter. However, this coverage pattern would increase to approximately 2,500 feet in diameter when the weapon is released from 8,000 feet in level flight. The MK-118 bombs would be scattered over an extremely large unpredictable area if released over 10,000 feet. Further, depending on several aircraft flight variables, such as climbing, banking, speed, etc., the MK-118s could travel more than three nautical miles in an inadvertent release situation. Thus, it seems more likely that the few MK-118s which were reported to have fallen on the village of Aikou were as a result of an inadvertent high-altitude MK-20 release over North Vietnam rather than as a result of a release during a direct fly-over of the PRC village as alleged.

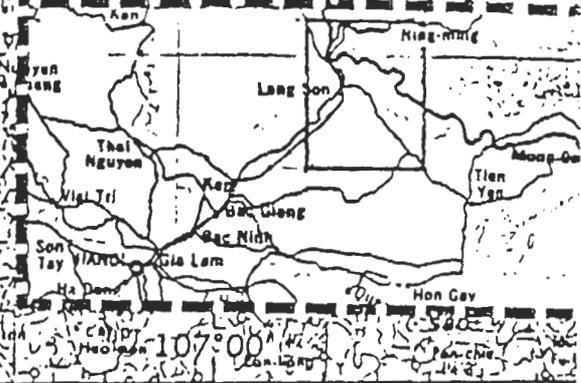
b. Improbability of US pilots flying on a northerly heading knowing their close proximity to the CHICOM border.

15. (TS) In summary, there were six US Navy aircraft within 15 nautical miles of the area of the alleged violation within minutes of the time in question. However, all were flown by experienced pilots, carefully selected for this mission, flying fully-systems-capable aircraft under good weather conditions. The only plausible explanation for the few MK-118 bombs to have been dropped in the vicinity of the PRC village of Aikou, if in fact the PRC facts are accurate, is that one of the aircraft had a high altitude inadvertent release. This could have resulted in two MK-20 cluster bombs being dropped in the vicinity of the PRC border scattering the MK-118 bombs over a wide area, a few of which were found in Aikou. Since the MK-118 bomblets in possession of the Chinese were "duds" and did not explode it is obvious that they were not released with the intent to strike a target.

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PIN HSIANG
ALLEGED INTRUSIONS
0056 & 0058H



3 NM
AIKOU

3 NM

LANG SON

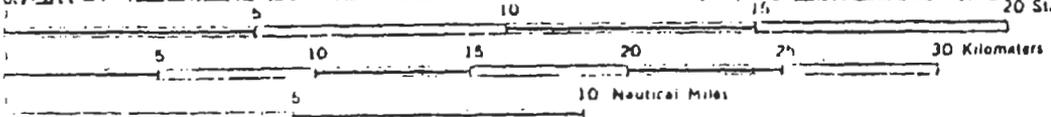
NORTHERN MOST
STRIKE

RT 1A

TARGET AREA

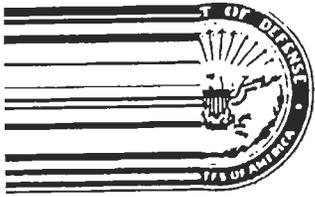
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NAV CHECK POINT
INTERSECTION RT 4/13



RTE 13

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

July 13, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: PRC Merchant Ship Firing Incidents

In response to your request for information relating to subject incidents, the following is provided:

1. 090800Z June 1972. Two A-7 aircraft from CORAL SEA conducting lighter interdiction/airborne recce in vicinity Hon Nieu anchorage made two passes parallel to centerline of an anchored PRC merchant ship. First low pass was at 0715Z with one aircraft on each side of ship at 1500 yards range. The second similar type low pass at 0800Z was at range 300 yards and the aircraft passing between the ship and Hon Nieu Island observed muzzle flashes from the forward gun mount on the ship. No damage to US aircraft.
2. 261208Z June 1972. One of two CORAL SEA aircraft assigned to Hon Nieu anchorage surveillance made a wings level pass at 2000 feet altitude crossing the western end of Hon Nieu Island to observe the three merchant ships at anchor. The westernmost PRC ship opened fire and muzzle flashes, tracers and bursts were observed. On the second pass the two aircraft, in trail, again passed over the western tip of Hon Nieu at least 1/2 mile from the PRC merchant ships and again tracking fire and bursts above the lead aircraft were noted by both pilots. No damage to US aircraft.
3. 010600Z July 1972. Section of 2 A-7 aircraft from SARATOGA had located two waterborne logistic craft (WBLC) about three-quarters of a mile from nearest of three PRC merchant ships anchored at Hon Nieu and commenced strafing attacks. On third strafing run, aircraft passing astern of PRC merchant ship at 2000 foot altitude with a closest point of approach 3/4 mile, observed numerous tracers coming from the stern of the PRC ship. No damage to US aircraft.

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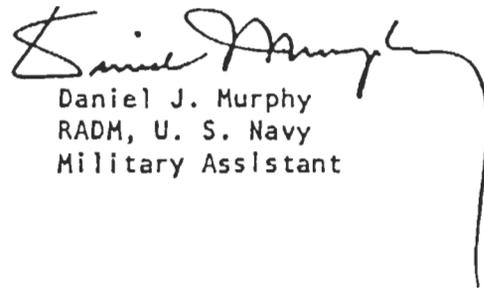
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4. 102005Z July 1972. A pilot from the HANCOCK [REDACTED] flying a visual search pass at 3000 feet altitude, 3000 feet from the PRC merchant ship observed small arms firing at his aircraft. No damage to US aircraft, and the pilot reported the firing originated from the PRC merchant ship.



Daniel J. Murphy
RADM, U. S. Navy
Military Assistant

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