

September 21, 1966

General Vo Nguyen Giap's Decision On North Korea's Request to Send a Number of Pilots to Fight in Vietnam

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Summary:

An excerpt from an official People's Army of Vietnam historical publication describing a North Korean request to send an Air Force regiment to help defend North Vietnam against U.S. air attacks. The request was approved.

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During a meeting of the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee, Comrade Phung The Tai, the Commander of the Air Defense-Air Force Command, reported that our allies had requested permission to send a volunteer air force unit to fight in Vietnam. The request stated that their personnel would be organized into individual companies that would be integrated into our air force regiments, that they would wear our uniforms, and that they would operate from the same airfields as our air force. Our allies said that they could send a large number of technical [support] personnel but that we would be totally responsible for providing ground technical support and for providing supplies for their unit.

After a discussion by the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee, as the presiding officer Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap reached the following decision: The North Korean air force personnel would be called "specialists" but in reality they would be volunteer soldiers. For that reason, we had to agree to respect our allies but at the same time we had to maintain our own sovereignty. During the course of their training and combat operations, we had to clearly delineate their area of operations and assign them both a primary and an alternate airfield. With regard to command arrangements, we would be their superiors, but within the allied [North Korean] regiment they would directly command their own forces with the assistance of representatives from our side, who would give them their specific operational missions. General Giap demanded that coordination arrangements between the two sides must be very clear and precise to avoid any unfortunate complications in the future.