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CUBAN AIR FORCE VHF COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

The object of this report is to provide a preliminary analysis of Cuban aircraft and ground control procedures and terminology as they are reflected in tactical and civil air communications. Primary emphasis is placed on Cuban tactical air communication procedure where possible, but tactical and civil air terminology appear to overlap. Military pilots and civilian pilots use approximately the same terminology to describe or refer to operations or equipment common to both. Cuban weather terminology follows general Spanish language usage.

A tentative resemblance has been discovered between a known Russian system of aircraft plotting and one being used by the Cubans. This plus the fact that the Cuban Air Force is largely equipped with Russian-built tactical airplanes manned by bloc-trained pilots suggests that as Cuba's Air Force communications develop they will probably do so along bloc lines. Tactical training is definitely underway and preliminary linguistic analysis of intercept from it establishes the participation of non-Cuban control personnel. While the pronunciation and accent of these controllers seems to be Slavic or Middle European and several samples of Russian voice have been processed [redacted] no firm generalizations regarding the predominant nationality of these advisors can be made at this time.

COMINT reflections of Cuba's present tactical air capability are somewhat contradictory. Several mentions of formation flying have occurred, but no information could be derived regarding the purpose or size of the formations. There has been at least one instance of a readiness run-through procedure associated with what appeared to be a scramble takeoff or simultaneous airplane launching exercise. This involved at least 7 airplanes. During the exercise the control officer suddenly interrupted to admonish "all pilots" to gently lift their crafts' noses on takeoff. While is seems unlikely that pilots engaged in scramble exercises would require such a warning, this probably reflects the fact that the Cuban Air Force is developing under forced draft conditions. This may

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also explain the lack of uniformity apparent in certain basic procedures. Altitudes are reported in either feet or meters and ground control personnel have been heard asking pilots which was being used.

Voice transmissions are acknowledged by both air and ground personnel in a variety of ways. While a disregard for straight book procedure is not uncommon among veteran pilots and communications personnel, it is felt that the inconsistency of terminology among Cuban personnel might be attributed to their newness at this type of operation.

Other tactical items observed have been limited references to practice bombing and at least one conversation mentioning the launching of anchored target balloons for aerial gunnery practice.

There is little or no information available regarding the location of these activities. Communications security has been very well maintained through a system of cover words and/or callsigns.

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