CUBAN MISSILE SCRAMBLE OF TWO U.S. NAVY PATROL PLANES

At approximately 1812Z (1312 EDT) 8 September, the Cuban Revolutionary
Air Force (CREAF) MiGs scrambled on and intercepted 2 U.S. Navy patrol
planes over international waters.

[Redacted] at 1535Z two Navy S2F patrol planes,
S2F-13 and S2F-16, departed in company from the Naval Air Station, Key
West, Florida. At 1812Z while both planes were at position [Redacted]
NSA [Redacted] Ground Control Intercept (GCI) informed S2F-16 of the presence
of an unidentified moving radar target 23 miles from S2F-16. The unknown target
was reported on a true course of 273 degrees with a speed of 300 knots at
9,000 feet. S2F-16 was flying at an altitude of 5,000 feet. At 1814Z the
radar target, tentatively identified by the S2F pilots as a MiG-17, made an
overtaking approach on the S2F-16 passing underneath and pulling up in
front. When visually sighted the range was estimated at approximately
1,000 yards and opening at high speed. Key West radar further tracked the
MiG through a 180-degree turn and observed it making another pass behind
the patrol plane. At this time both objects were on the radar.

At 1834Z while at position 24.41N 82.55W, S2F-16 entered the MiG
making gyratory-type runs on the second Navy patrol plane. The MiG passed
alongside S2F-13 at an approximate range of 500 feet on the initial run.
On the third similar run the MiG, after pulling out, settled in front of
the Navy patrol plane at an altitude of 5,000 feet. The MiG then executed a climbing
right-hand turn and disappeared. The Navy pilots reported the MiG as
being dark in color without obvious markings to reveal nationality. [Redacted]

Intercept of the CREAF tactical VHF frequency parallels this activity
and reveals that pilots using suffixes 12 and 89 were involved in the GCI
alert. Both planes were scrambled and controlled by San Antonio de los
Banos GCI.

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At 1832Z suffix 12 broke off intercept and returned to base because his fuel was running low. While in flight both 12 and 89 passed a series of numbers, possibly grid coordinates pertinent to the target activity, to the GCI controller.

While in contact with GCI, suffix 89 reported that the target was "presenting combat" and requested authorization to "knock it down." Evidence suggests that his request was denied since no hostile action was initiated.

Suffix 89 was instructed to maintain his position and continue surveillance.

COMMENTS: In direct contrast to previously observed GCI operations, most of the information passed was from the interceptors to GCI. Only a minimum of tracking was required by the intercepting planes, indicating increased proficiency.

The term "presenting combat" used by 89 is not understood but most probably reflects the evasive action taken by the Navy planes.

Source: [Redacted]