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PRESENT AND POTENTIAL OFFENSIVE
CAPABILITIES OF THE CHINESE NATIONALISTS,
AND PROBABLE REACTIONS TO AN IDENTIFIABLE
US PROGRAM OF PREPARING THE NATIONALISTS
FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST
THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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SPECIAL ESTIMATE

PRESENT AND POTENTIAL OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES OF THE CHINESE NATIONALISTS, AND PROBABLE REACTIONS TO AN IDENTIFIABLE US PROGRAM OF PREPARING THE NATIONALISTS FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

SE-29

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 12 June 1952. See, however, footnote of the Director of Intelligence, United States Air Force, on page 1.

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PRESENT AND POTENTIAL OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES OF THE CHINESE NATIONALISTS, AND PROBABLE REACTIONS TO AN IDENTIFIABLE US PROGRAM OF PREPARING THE NATIONALISTS FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the present and potential capabilities of the Chinese Nationalists for various offensive operations against the Chinese Communists; and to estimate probable reactions to an identifiable US program of preparing the Nationalists for offensive operations against the Chinese Communists.

CONCLUSIONS¹

1. The Chinese Nationalists do not now have the capability to undertake an invasion of mainland China or Hainan or to participate in combat operations in Korea or Southeast Asia. At present, the Nationalists are only capable of conducting minor raids and limited air attacks against nearby mainland of China. The scope and nature of these operations would be limited primarily by lack of equipment and training.

2. Given a minimum of three to four months of intensive large unit training, a combat-effective force of 25,000 ground troops could be made available for offensive operations in Korea or Southeast Asia. If three to four months of coordinated amphibious training were substituted for the above, and if sufficient train-

ing craft were available, this force could conduct effective amphibious raids.

3. Although Nationalist naval and air deficiencies would continue to limit the scale of Nationalist raiding operations against mainland China, raids by the force of 25,000 ground troops would prob-

¹The D/I USAF desires to record the following comment: Although in agreement with the facts presented, it is believed that the estimate does not indicate sufficiently the positive asset which the Chinese Nationalist military potential provides the Western powers. If developed into an effective military force and adequately supported, the Nationalists would constitute a growing threat to the Chinese Communists. To counter this threat, the Communists would be required to maintain very large military forces in China proper, particularly in the coastal area from Canton to Shanghai. Moreover, the development of this potential would provide a force in being which would be useful in countering Soviet employment of satellite forces in the Far East.

ably deter the Chinese Communists from diverting for operations elsewhere any important part of the estimated 400,000 Chinese Communist troops now deployed in the coastal area from Canton to Shanghai.

4. After the required advisory and logistic support had been received from the US, 21 reorganized Nationalist divisions could be made effective for offensive operations. These troops, except for the 25,000 men mentioned above, would require about 12 months training for each division. This time estimate does not include the period required for amphibious training. These divisions would be of an average size of 10,000 men. The time required for readying the total 21 divisions would depend on the availability of training facilities and on the necessity of maintaining some divisions in defensive positions on Taiwan.

5. With US air, naval, and logistic support and US over-all direction, this force would be capable of undertaking major operations on the mainland. A US commitment to guarantee the security of Taiwan would be a continuing requirement.

6. In view of the limited manpower available to the Nationalists on Taiwan (see paragraph 18) and the vastly superior manpower resources of the Chinese Communists, the Nationalists could not support sustained large-scale operations on the mainland without substantial recruitments and defections from the mainland.

7. A US program of preparing the Chinese Nationalists for offensive operations would boost the morale of the Nationalists. It would also encourage the Nationalist leadership to interpret such a

US decision as a commitment that US forces would participate in a future Nationalist invasion of the mainland. Feeling confident that the US could not back down once so committed, the Nationalist leadership might embark on independent operations regardless of US directives or the prospects of success.

8. Although the Nationalist leadership would almost certainly prefer to use Nationalist forces for an invasion of mainland China, it would probably renew its offer to make forces available in Korea if given any encouragement to do so. The Nationalist leadership might also be willing to participate in a UN force committed for the defense of Southeast Asia. However, prior to the release of forces for use in Southeast Asia, or forces for use in Korea beyond those previously offered, the Nationalist Government would almost certainly seek additional US commitments.

9. Communist reaction to a program of preparing the Nationalists for offensive operations, in addition to an intensification of anti-US propaganda, would probably include: (a) an increase in the capabilities of the Chinese Communists to counter the growing Nationalist threat; (b) seizure of the offshore Nationalist islands; and possibly (c) air attacks on Taiwan. If the Chinese Communists assessed that Taiwan was to become a base of US-supported Nationalist strength from which the mainland would one day be invaded, they might feel compelled to make extensive increases in existing coastal defense forces, at the expense of their military establishment elsewhere. Once committed to such a defensive military posture, their calculations with respect to present and future military

operations would be affected by this threat to the security of their coastal border.

10. The reaction of the Near East to an identifiable US program of preparing the Nationalist forces for offensive operations would in general be apathetic. In the Indian subcontinent and the non-Communist countries of the Far East, reaction would for the most part be adverse. Reactions would be less adverse, particularly in the Philippines, Thailand, and the Associated States of Indochina, to the prospect of any employment of Nationalist troops in Korea or mainland China that might successfully take pressure off

Southeast Asia. The Western European countries would react adversely to such a US program. This unfavorable reaction would probably not seriously interfere, however, with the cooperation of the Western European governments with the US in European affairs.

11. If an identifiable US program of preparing the Nationalist forces for offensive operations were undertaken subsequent to increased Communist operations in Korea, the Western European countries would probably support the US program, and reactions in other non-Communist countries would generally be less unfavorable than as indicated above.

DISCUSSION

FACTORS BEARING ON CHINESE NATIONALIST OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES

The Chinese Nationalist Military Situation

12. *Ground Forces.* The present combat strength of the Chinese Nationalist Army numbers 375,000.² However, no divisions are ready for offensive operations at the present time. Morale is considered satisfactory or better. However, ordnance, signal, and engineer equipment is obsolescent and in short supply; present units are considerably undermanned; serious shortcomings still exist in unit and combined training; and leadership above the division level is incompetent or inexperienced in large-scale combined planning and operations. No Nationalist Army units have had amphibious training.

13. *Air Forces.* The Chinese Nationalist Air Force (CNAF) has in tactical units a total of 311 aircraft (111 F-47 and F-51 fighters; 36

B-24 and B-25 light bombers; 3 F-38 reconnaissance A/C; and 161 C-46 and C-47 transports).³ In the event of hostile attack, virtually all of these aircraft would be required to participate, at least initially, in the defense of Taiwan. CNAF morale and leadership are good, but its combat effectiveness is low because of inadequate spare parts, equipment, and supplies, including POL, and limited operational training and experience, particularly in bombardment-type aircraft. Most important, however, is the fact that the Nationalists have no jet aircraft.

14. *Naval Forces.* The Nationalist Navy is composed of 160 small vessels, the largest of which are 7 destroyer-escort-type ships. Included in this number are 30 amphibious ships, of which 10 are LST's. Morale in the Nationalist Navy appears good. Although the combat effectiveness of the individual ships has improved, the over-all combat effectiveness of the present fleet is low because of: (a) an inadequate logistic capability; (b)

² The combat personnel of the Chinese Nationalist Army are presently organized into 12 armies of 38 divisions, one armored brigade, one parachute group, and six independent artillery regiments. It is anticipated that, by the end of December 1952, this force will have been reorganized into 12 armies of 28 divisions, one armored brigade, and one parachute group.

³ The present personnel strength of the CNAF is 68,046, including 3,487 flying personnel of which 1,777 are trained active pilots. This is the planned maximum mobilization potential of the CNAF.

a failure to understand and apply the principles of command responsibility in coordinated operations; and (c) a system of officer assignment which seriously limits the possibility of improvement. There are 11,000 Nationalist Marines, but they cannot be expected to operate in larger than battalion size, and at present only one battalion is equipped for limited amphibious operations.

15. *Guerrilla Forces.* There are approximately 9,000 organized guerrillas on the Nationalist-held offshore islands who have had commando training and experience. These forces are organized in approximately battalion-sized units and are equipped at least as well as Chinese Nationalist regular forces. Although there are an estimated 175,000 guerrillas in scattered units on the mainland, none of these units is believed to be effectively controlled or directed by the Chinese Nationalists.

Chinese Nationalist Manpower Resources

16. Most of the present Nationalist units were organized prior to the end of World War II. Since coming to Taiwan in 1949, these units have had few discharges or new recruits, and consequently normal attrition is becoming an increasingly important problem. Before the Nationalists would be able to commit substantial numbers of troops to operations outside

of Taiwan, additional manpower would have to be found for reserves and replacements.

17. The chief source of available manpower for the Nationalists is the indigenous population of Taiwan. Only a few Taiwanese have been inducted into the Nationalist military forces. If assured of fair treatment, and especially if all-Taiwanese units were formed, the Taiwanese probably would not resist conscription. The great majority of Taiwanese are anti-Communist, and such troops could serve as an effective national guard for the defense of Taiwan provided adequate training and equipment were provided them. It is estimated that there are now on Taiwan about 650,000 physically fit Taiwanese plus about 150,000 physically fit Chinese mainlanders (excluding the military) in the 15 to 29 male age group. In view of existing underemployment, it is probable that up to 300,000 men could be conscripted immediately and possibly 300,000 more over the course of a year without seriously affecting production. Because of the probable Taiwanese aversion to participation in operations against the mainland and Nationalist aversion to the creation of indigenous combat units, only a fraction of the total Taiwanese troops could be integrated into those Nationalist units committed to offensive operations against the Chinese Communists.

18. In sum, the manpower situation on Taiwan is estimated as follows:

| | Total Manpower | Physically Fit* | Physically Fit and Available for Military Service Without Adversely Affecting the Economy of Taiwan | Physically Fit and Available for Offensive Operations Against the Chinese Communists |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---|--|
| Nationalist Military Establishment | 585,000 | 585,000 | 585,000 | 585,000 |
| Civilians in Age Group 15-29 | | | | |
| { Taiwanese | 1,025,000 | 650,000 | 600,000 | 150,000* |
| { Chinese | 300,000 | 150,000 | | |
| | <u>1,325,000</u> | <u>800,000</u> | | |
| Civilians in Age Group 30-40 | | | | |
| { Taiwanese | 400,000 | 200,000 | 600,000 | 150,000* |
| { Chinese | 200,000 | 100,000* | | |
| | <u>600,000</u> | <u>300,000</u> | | |
| Guerrillas on Offshore Islands | 9,000 | 9,000 | 9,000 | 9,000 |
| TOTAL | <u>2,519,000</u> | <u>1,694,000</u> | <u>1,194,000</u> | <u>744,000</u> |

* The proportion of physically fit out of the total population is estimated at 2/3 in the age group 15-29 and 1/2 in the age group 30-40.

* This group is largely entrenched in the Nationalist Government and economy on Taiwan and few if any of this group would be made available to the military forces.

* In addition, a relatively small number of Taiwanese could be utilized for offensive operations against the Chinese Communists (see Paragraph 17).

19. Aside from Taiwan, the Nationalists have few sources of manpower at this time. Political considerations probably preclude the early transfer to Taiwan of the anti-Communist Chinese POW's in Korea or of any significant number of the Nationalist troops in Burma. Nationalist efforts to effect the release of 30,000 troops interned by the French in Indochina have been unsuccessful. (There is some doubt concerning the usefulness or loyalty of these internees, but once released, perhaps half of them might be salvaged for some military use.) The overseas Chinese in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia cannot be considered a significant source of manpower because their loyalties are divided and their attitude toward Peiping and Taipei is one of "wait and see." In addition, these overseas Chinese are largely engaged in business and have little desire to forsake their present relative security. Finally, the various Southeast Asian governments, through fear of antagonizing Communist China or lack of sympathy for the present Nationalist Government, would probably not permit overt recruiting of resident Chinese.

20. In view of the limited manpower available to the Nationalists and the vastly superior manpower resources of the Chinese Communists, the Nationalists could not support sustained large-scale operations on the mainland without substantial recruitments and defections from among the mainland Chinese.

Political Factors Affecting Nationalist Offensive Capabilities

21. The Chinese Nationalist political scene is characterized by the centralization of authority in the hands of a few and of power ultimately in the hands of one man. The policy of divide-and-rule and the practice of demanding unswerving loyalty to the Generalissimo as the prime requisite for individual advancement are the means relied upon to insure continuance of centralized control. In the military sphere, these same factors have resulted in the overextension of the power and authority of the political police, in the advancement of military incompetents, and especially in the general failure to delegate to

commanders at all levels authority commensurate to their assigned responsibilities.

22. The Nationalist Government has sought to sustain morale and give purpose to its military programs by promising an early return to the mainland. Continued failure of these promises to materialize will almost certainly result in widespread disappointment and disillusionment. Moreover, many responsible Nationalist leaders recognize that successful large-scale offensive operations in the foreseeable future are actually impossible without substantial outside assistance, direction, and participation.

23. Communist activity on Taiwan has been effectively suppressed and is not likely seriously to affect Nationalist military capabilities unless subversive actions were coordinated with a Communist invasion of Taiwan.

24. The Taiwanese generally resent the presence of the Nationalists. However, although frictions exist, antipathy has diminished and is not strong at present.

Economic Factors Affecting Nationalist Military Capabilities

25. Taiwan does not have adequate resources to support a military force of the size of the present Nationalist military establishment. Total annual production has recovered to approximately 1940 levels, but the population of Taiwan has increased 70 percent since that time.

NATIONALIST CAPABILITIES TO ENGAGE IN VARIOUS OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Raids, Feints, and Diversions against Hainan and the Mainland

26. One Nationalist Marine battalion and 9,000 offshore guerrillas are now capable of conducting limited raiding operations against the mainland. The Nationalist Navy does not now have the capability for supporting operations against Hainan. More extensive and effective operations could be conducted by these forces if present deficiencies in landing craft, fighter aircraft, shipboard antiaircraft

protection, and officer efficiency were remedied.

27. In addition to the marine battalion and offshore guerrillas presently available, a force of 25,000 ground troops, consisting of one army headquarters and two divisions, is approaching a state of combat readiness. Given a minimum of 3-4 months of intensive large unit training, this force could be made available for offensive operations in Korea or Southeast Asia. If 3-4 months of coordinated amphibious training were substituted for the above, and if sufficient training craft were available, this force could conduct effective amphibious raids. Nationalist naval and air deficiencies, however, would continue to limit the scale and effectiveness of these operations.

28. The Chinese Communists would probably be incapable of sealing off the entire China coast from effectively conducted Nationalist raids. Such raids would probably deter the Chinese Communists from diverting for operations elsewhere any important part of the estimated 400,000 troops now deployed in the coastal area from Canton to Shanghai.

Naval Operations against the Mainland

29. The Nationalist Navy is considered inadequate for the defense of Taiwan. If the US continues to assume the responsibility for defending Taiwan, the Nationalist Navy will be capable of conducting small raids and of bombarding the less fortified coastal points of Fukien and Chekiang Provinces. If a Western naval blockade were imposed on Communist China, the Nationalist Navy could also assist the blockade by intercepting shipping in the Taiwan Straits. In its present state of readiness, the Nationalist Navy can more than match any present Chinese Communist naval forces.

Air Operations against the Mainland

30. The total Nationalist air strength, if utilized in air attacks against the Chinese mainland, might initially inflict considerable damage upon Communist installations and lines of communications. However, because of CNAF logistic and maintenance deficiencies and a relatively strong Chinese Communist

capability for counter-air operations, Nationalist air attacks against the mainland would be seriously limited in effectiveness and duration. The CNAF has the capacity at present to transport, in a single airlift, more than twice the present Nationalist strength of 1,500 partially trained paratroopers, although it does not have the capability of providing an effective fighter escort for such an airlift. The CNAF airlift capacity could also be used to transport personnel and supplies in support of guerrilla units on the mainland.

31. If given sufficient materiel and training support, the CNAF, with its present personnel and organizational structure, could probably develop one jet fighter-bomber group; a tactical air capability, utilizing F-47 and B-26 aircraft; a jet photo reconnaissance capability for surveillance of Communist marshalling ports, airfields, and other strategic installations along the China coast; and a 24-hour operational air defense system with ground-controlled intercept (GCI). Such a program could probably be accomplished within two years.

Anti-Communist Guerrilla Operations

32. In the foreseeable future, Nationalist capabilities to conduct guerrilla operations will probably be limited to conducting commando raids from the offshore islands, establishing communication links with mainland guerrilla units, and infiltrating guerrilla cadres onto the mainland.

Employment of Troops in Korea or Southeast Asia

33. The Nationalists could, within a period of three to four months, prepare the 25,000 troops discussed in paragraph 27 above for operations in Korea or Southeast Asia.

*To implement this program the Air Section, MAAG, Taiwan, recommends equipping the CNAF with 78 F-84F jet fighters, 225 F-47N piston fighters, 48 B-26 light bombers, 16 RF-80 jet reconnaissance aircraft, 14 F-89 or F-94 all-weather jet interceptors, and electronic equipment required for an effective air defense system, and providing training and incidental materiel support to accompany such aircraft and equipment.

An Invasion of Mainland China

34. The Nationalists do not have the capability to undertake an invasion of mainland China at the present time. Preparation of 21 reorganized divisions on Taiwan and the Pescadores for offensive operations would depend on the timely receipt of equipment and the arrival of US advisory personnel. After the required logistic and advisory support had been received from the US, these 21 divisions could be made effective for offensive operations. These troops, except for the 25,000 men mentioned in paragraph 27 above, would require about twelve months training for each division. (These divisions would be of an average size of 10,000 men.) The time required for readying the total 21 divisions would depend on the availability of training facilities and on the necessity of maintaining some divisions in defensive positions on Taiwan. This time estimate does not include the period required for amphibious training. Even after all of the above requirements had been met, Nationalist naval and air capabilities to support these forces in a major amphibious operation would be inadequate. However, with US air, naval, and logistical support and US over-all direction, this force would be capable of undertaking major operations on the mainland. A US commitment to guarantee the security of Taiwan would be a continuing requirement.

PROBABLE NATIONALIST REACTION TO A US PROGRAM OF PREPARING THEM FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

35. A US program of preparing the Chinese Nationalists for offensive operations would boost the morale of the Nationalists and give meaning to their programs of military and psychological conditioning for a return to the mainland. It would also encourage the Nationalist leadership to interpret such a US decision as a commitment that US forces would participate in a future Nationalist invasion of the mainland. Feeling confident that the US could not back down once so committed, the Nationalist leadership might em-

bark on independent operations regardless of US directives or the prospects of success.

36. Although the Nationalist leadership would almost certainly prefer to use Nationalist forces for an invasion of mainland China, it would probably renew its offer to make forces available in Korea if given any encouragement to do so. The Nationalists might also be willing to participate in a UN force committed for the defense of Southeast Asia. However, prior to the release of forces for use in Southeast Asia, or forces for use in Korea beyond those previously offered, the Nationalist Government would almost certainly seek additional US commitments.

PROBABLE INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO AN IDENTIFIABLE US PREPARATION OF THE CHINESE NATIONALISTS FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

Reaction of Communist China and the USSR

37. The Communists probably believe that the US is already preparing the Nationalists for future offensive operations, and they may believe that the US is preparing to support such operations with its own forces.

38. If it appeared that US assistance to the Nationalists were limited to training and logistics, Peiping and Moscow would probably estimate that the Chinese Communists could counter any foreseeable Nationalist operations. If the Communists estimated that US air and naval forces would support a Nationalist invasion, they would probably increase their defensive capabilities to the extent necessary to counter the increased Nationalist threat. If the Chinese Communists assessed that Taiwan was to become a base of US-supported Nationalist strength from which the mainland would one day be invaded, they might feel compelled to make extensive increases in existing coastal defense forces, at the expense of their military establishment elsewhere. Once committed to such a defensive military posture, their calculations with respect to present and future military opera-

tions would be affected by this threat to the security of their coastal border.

39. In any event, Peiping and Moscow would almost certainly react to Nationalist preparations by intensifying the tempo and virulence of their present anti-US propaganda, by seeking to drive a wedge between the US and its allies, and by conducting a "hard-soft" policy designed to intimidate potential supporters of the US-Nationalist program and to convince the world of the Communists' peaceful intent. In addition, Communist reactions would probably include accelerating preparations for the defense of coastal China and seizing the offshore Nationalist islands. Finally, the CCAF might undertake attacks on Taiwan.

Reactions of Non-Communist Countries

40. *Japan.* Japan undoubtedly desires to reduce the combined Far Eastern power of Communist China and the USSR. However, Japan is for the time being almost wholly dependent on the US for its security, and moreover is fearful that any extension of hostilities in the Far East would involve Japan directly. Reaction to a US-Nationalist program — which to the Japanese might seem to risk serious diversion of US strength from Japan's defense and an expansion of hostilities in the Far East — would therefore probably be apprehensive if not unfavorable. In the event that Nationalist offensive preparations were undertaken when Korean operations had been substantially increased, either on Communist or US initiative, this Japanese reaction might be appreciably modified, particularly if the Communists suffered major losses. Japanese apprehensions would probably be increased, on the other hand, if Nationalist offensive preparations were undertaken after an armistice had been reached in Korea.

41. *Southeast Asia.* The countries of Southeast Asia would in general react unfavorably to an identifiable US program of preparing the Nationalists for offensive operations. Reactions would be less adverse, particularly in the Philippines, Thailand, and the Associated States of Indochina, to the prospect of any employment of Nationalist troops in

Korea or mainland China that might successfully take pressure off Southeast Asia. In general, the countries of Southeast Asia would fear that the Chinese Communists would be provoked to attack them, or that there might be an expansion of hostilities in the Far East which might develop into general war. In addition, widespread distaste for the Nationalist regime and a generally low appraisal of Nationalist offensive capabilities would contribute to the generally adverse reaction. These attitudes would probably be intensified should Nationalist offensive preparations be undertaken under conditions either of a Korean armistice or a US-initiated expansion of the Korean war. If Nationalist offensive preparations followed substantially increased Communist operations in Korea, reactions in Southeast Asia would be less unfavorable but would remain generally negative, except perhaps in Thailand, the Philippines, and the Associated States of Indochina.

42. *Australia and New Zealand.* General disdain for both the Nationalists and their offensive capabilities, the desire to avoid the risk of general war, and domestic political pressures from vocal Labor oppositions would militate against support for an identifiable US program of preparing the Nationalists for offensive operations.

43. *South Asia.* US-sponsored preparations of Nationalist China for offensive operations against the Chinese Communists would elicit adverse reactions throughout South Asia, particularly in India. Such operations would be regarded by South Asians as bringing general war nearer and as definite evidence of US aggressiveness. These attitudes would be little affected by the course of events in Korea.

44. *Near East.* There is general apathy throughout the Near East with respect to events in the Far East. These countries, largely neutralist, would probably interpret an observable US program of preparing Nationalist forces for offensive operations as an effort to expand the war in the Far East. This reaction would not be significantly modified by events in Korea. However, Turkey would probably ultimately support such a program.

45. *Western Europe.* The Western European countries would react adversely to such a US program. This attitude would be prompted by the conviction that the decision would not only divert US resources to Asia but would be indicative of a US intention to expand the conflict in the Far East. This unfavorable reaction would probably not seriously interfere, however, with the cooperation of the Western European governments with the US in European affairs. In the event of increased military operations in Korea initiated by the Communists, the Western European countries would probably support a US program of building up the Nationalist forces. However, the Western European governments would wish to be consulted concerning the eventual use of the Nationalist troops.