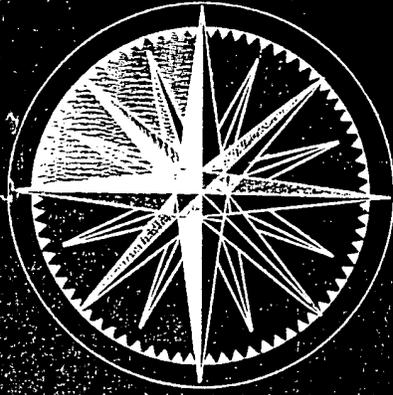


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12 February 1965

SC No. 00657/65C
Copy No. 407

SPECIAL REPORT

CHINESE COMMUNISTS BRACE FOR POSSIBLE SPREAD OF INDOCHINA WAR

RELEASE IN PART
EXEMPTIONS: (b)(1)
(b)(3)
DATE AUG 2001

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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12 February 1965

CHINESE COMMUNISTS BRACE FOR POSSIBLE SPREAD OF INDOCHINA WAR

The steady build-up of Chinese Communist military strength in South China since mid-1964 strongly suggests that Peiping is preparing against the possibility that an expansion of the Indochina war may lead to direct Chinese involvement. Taken as a whole, Peiping's efforts to improve its capabilities appear defensive. There are no indications that the Chinese leaders intend to initiate new military action in Southeast Asia at this time, but it seems clear from their actions that they are determined to continue their encouragement and support for Communist insurgency. The Chinese preparations probably reflect concern that continued successes in South Vietnam will increase the danger of repeated and heavy US blows against North Vietnam (the DRV) or Communist China. This appears to be the sense of Foreign Minister Chen Yi's recent remarks to the French ambassador that the war was going well for the Communists but there was a possibility of US "fireworks" before final victory.

Peiping certainly hopes to avoid a direct confrontation with US forces, and the steps it has taken are probably calculated in part to back up threatening propaganda aimed at deterring the US from actions which would bring it face to face with Communist China. The Chinese are probably committed to respond in some fashion if there is an all-out US attack on the DRV, however, and would be unwilling to "stand idly by" in such a situation. Peiping's official statement of 9 February reaffirmed earlier promises to assist North Vietnam and asserted that the Chinese were "well prepared in this respect."

Planning for joint action designed to counter possible US moves probably began in earnest during

[REDACTED] late June and early July 1964. Evidence of Chinese military preparations began to increase from that time on and the pace picked up after the Tonkin Gulf crisis in August 1964. Chinese actions include [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] improvement of air defenses and naval forces in South China, what may be a substantial enlargement of the armed forces, a militia build-up, and civil defense preparations.

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Early Military Planning

Joint planning for closer Chinese cooperation in defense of the DRV apparently began well over a year ago, probably as part of a long-range strategy involving a gradual build-up of Peiping's strength in South China to be ready for hostilities should the need arise.

[REDACTED]

Shortly thereafter, in August, a regiment of Chinese jet fighters was deployed to Mengtzu airfield

just north of the Vietnamese border.

[REDACTED]

No unusual military activity was noted in South China during or immediately after this period.

MILITARY PREPARATIONS IN COMMUNIST CHINA

[REDACTED]

AUG 1964 Tonkin Gulf crisis; [REDACTED] first regiment of MIGs transferred to North Vietnam; jet fighter base activated at Nanning;

[REDACTED]

SEP 1964 [REDACTED] new naval base established on north shore of Tonkin Gulf.

OCT 1964 [REDACTED] construction began on Ningming airfield; Fenton airfield being improved.

NOV 1964 [REDACTED] Sumao airfield being improved;

DEC 1964 [REDACTED] second regiment of MIGs transferred to North Vietnam; continuing transfers raised South China fighter strength to 350, as compared with 150 in August.

[REDACTED]

Planning for measures to cope with possible US military moves took on a sudden urgency in the spring of 1964. Beginning in early May the US had made it clear to the Communist leaders in Peiping and Hanoi that the deteriorating situation in Laos and South Vietnam was a matter of vital and growing concern in Washington. The core of the US message was a warning that the Indochina war might be enlarged if the Communists did not ease their heavy pressure in Southeast Asia.

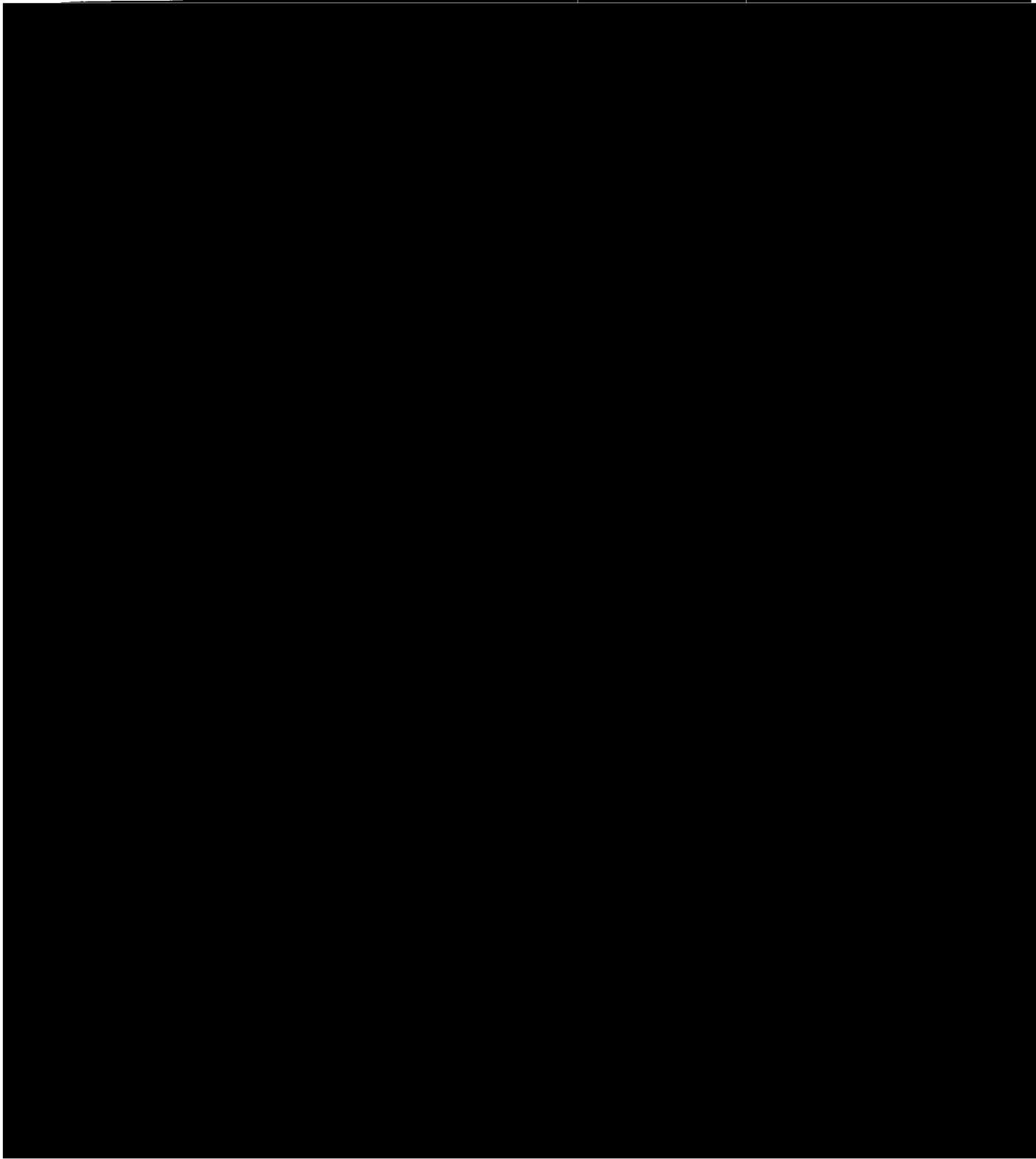
US threats of possible action against the DRV apparently aroused sharp concern in the Communist camp [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] This was forthcoming on 7 July in a formal statement by Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi putting the US on notice that any attack on North Vietnam carried grave risk of countermoves by Communist China.

Evidence of Peiping's determination to help defend the DRV, and indications of the extent to which Chinese moves in support of Hanoi had been prepared in advance began to appear following the Tonkin Gulf crisis in August. Official statements from Washington made it clear that this was a one-time reaction to a specific provocation, not the first phase of a major escalation. The incident demonstrated, however, that under some circumstances the US was willing to intervene directly by mounting limited attacks against the DRV.

The Air and Naval Build-up

Peiping's response to the employment of US air power against targets in the DRV was a blast of belligerent propaganda and a series of moves to strengthen air defenses in North Vietnam and South China. The speed of the reaction suggests that well-prepared contingency plans were being put into effect. The Chinese moved a regiment of jet fighters into North Vietnam's Phuc Yen Airfield in August and a second regiment in December. Fighter strength in South China has been more than doubled. About 200 jet fighters have been moved into the area since August,

raising the total deployed there to 350. This build-up has included some MIG-19 (Farmer) and a few MIG-21 (Fishbed) jet fighters. Their transfer was accompanied by a substantial increase in radar installations and anti-aircraft artillery.

Since October, an airfield suitable for use by tactical jet fighters has been under construction at Ningming, ten miles north of the Vietnamese border. This probably will be serviceable by this spring. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There are indications that the 4,700-foot unpaved runway at this field is being improved. Another airfield, near the Burma border at Peitun, which can already accommodate jet fighters, is also being improved.

There are increasing indications that the Chinese may intend to use their growing air strength in the area to defend North Vietnam, as well as South China. On 2 January, Chinese MIGs stationed at Nanning followed a drone vehicle across the Vietnamese border and shot it down over North Vietnam. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This and other evidence suggests that China may be preparing to assume tactical air defense responsibility

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for North Vietnam under some circumstances.

Peiping's South China Fleet has increased its capability in the Tonkin Gulf since August.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a small naval facility was established in the Peihai area on the north shore of the Tonkin Gulf. Although the South Sea Fleet has no major naval vessels, it has numerous patrol craft and motor torpedo boats which could constitute a limited threat to US naval operations in the Tonkin Gulf.

Expansion of the Army

There are some indications that the Chinese Communists have decided to expand their already large armed forces.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] From 1955 to 1959, the army had recruited and demobilized during the winter to coincide with the farming cycle, as most inductees were from rural areas. Because peasant recruits had fewer skills and had become less reliable during the disaster

years of 1959-60, recruiting shifted largely to an urban base in 1961. While no solid figures on the summer recruitment target for 1964 have been made known, extrapolation from the number inducted [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] would indicate a total national goal of about 700,000, which would be in line with normal annual quotas.

[REDACTED]
On 19 January, Peiping decreed a one-year extension of the terms of service for the army, air force, and navy to four, five, and six years, respectively. This order presumably halts the demobilization which has been going on concurrently with the second conscription drive. The net effect of retaining most of those who would normally be demobilized at this time and the two subscription drives last year would be to increase the size of the armed forces by a substantial

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CHINESE PEOPLE'S MILITIA PASSING IN REVIEW

number. Another effect of the mandatory extension of tours, of special importance to heightened military preparedness, is that the army will be able to retain its best-trained troops for an additional year. At the same time, the proportion of raw recruits in the service at any one time will be reduced. In fact, the proportion should be significantly lower this year, because the militia, from which the army draws most recruits, has greatly stepped up its pre-induction basic infantry training.

Militia Build-up

At the same time that the regular military forces apparently have been quietly expanded, a major build-up of the civilian

People's Militia has been taking place under the full glare of propaganda. From a claimed peak of 230 million during the Great Leap Forward, the militia collapsed and was all but disbanded in 1960, and militia activity remained limited even through early 1964. With the general hardening of the regime's policies in June, however, recruiting and training of militiamen was suddenly stepped up. By now, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the militia may [REDACTED] a strength on the order of 20-30 million. Current training covers most basic military skills, including the use of live ammunition on a large scale for the first time in four years.

Peiping intends to use the militia partly as a new tool for controlling domestic dissidence, particularly in conjunction with the intensifying "socialist education" campaign. Nevertheless, Peiping has also played up the militia's potential as a defensive reserve which can release regular troops for duty elsewhere. Despite the regime's hopes, however, it is questionable whether a trustworthy militia force can be organized on a large scale.

Civil Defense Preparations

For the first time in several years, indications of civil defense preparations in South China have begun to appear. On Hainan Island, according to a refugee who left in November, air raid trenches were being dug and air raid drills conducted.

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it as "quite miserable and ludicrous."

Despite this bold talk, Peiping's preparations for defense indicate continued respect for US power directly applied in the field. The Chinese may well despise the US "strategically," heavily discounting the possibility of an all-out attack against China, but are getting ready to cope with stepped up "tactical" thrusts against the DRV. Their emphasis on air defense and the build-up of

naval capability indicates the kind of limited US action they regard as most likely. The recent moves to increase the overall strength of their ground forces during the next six months or so are probably insurances against an all-out US attack which the Chinese accept as possible but do not think is very likely. [REDACTED]

* * *

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