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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

52942



18 July 1950

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Estimate of Northern Korean Military Strength

1. Ground Forces.

Northern Korean Peoples Army ground forces, at full T/O strength, would total an estimated 74,000 men, consisting of 7 Infantry Divisions (approximately 10,000 men each) and an armored Brigade of approximately 4,000 men. The estimated total of 100 Soviet-made tanks (T-34/76 and T-34/85) in the armored unit at the beginning of hostilities, has apparently been augmented by 100 to 200 additional tanks from stockpiles in northeastern Korea or the USSR. Each Division has eighteen 122 mm howitzers, thirty 76 mm guns/howitzers, fifty-four 45 mm AT guns, eighteen 120 mm mortars, and eighty-one 82 mm mortars. Battle reports indicate that 155 mm howitzers are in use, although not as organic division equipment. The Northern Korean Border Constabulary totals an estimated 28,000 men, 23,000 of which are organized and equipped on tactical lines in the 1st, 3rd, and 7th Brigades and may be added to the People's Army strength to give an over-all ground force total of 97,000 men.

The People's Army and Border Constabulary contain at least 20,000 Korean-Manchurian veterans who have served with the Chinese Communists. Many of the higher ranking ground force officers are Koreans who lived in the USSR before World War II and served as commissioned and non-commissioned officers in the Soviet Army during that war.

All identified People's Army units and the 1st Border Constabulary Brigade are now in the combat zone. Total combat casualties to date are estimated at 8-9,000. The 3rd and 7th Constabulary Brigades are in reserve, and there are no other unit-trained reserves in Northern Korea. A strategic reserve of some 70,000 Korean-Manchurian veterans is believed available in Manchuria, however,

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and other replacements and service troops could be obtained from the estimated 900,000 physically-fit males of military age in Northern Korea, as well as from the large number of Southern Koreans now under Communist control.

2. Air Force.

The People's Army Air Force is estimated to total 1,600-1,700 officers and men, organized as a reinforced air division. The division's 114 aircraft are conventional Soviet World War II types, including YAK 7B or 9s, LA-5s or 7s, and IL-10s. None of these are jet aircraft. The majority of Northern Korean pilots have had Soviet training and experience in World War II.

3. Navy.

GHQ of the People's Navy is located at Pyongyang, and battalion Headquarters are located at Wonsan and Chongjin on the east coast and Chinnampo on the west coast.

Naval personnel total 5,495 men, of which some 700 are attached to ships, with the remainder at shore installations. The People's Navy has some 50 vessels, including torpedo boats, subchasers and minesweepers, grouped in five divisions, four of which are based at Wonsan; the fifth is based at Chinnampo. There are no submarines in the People's Navy.

4. Chinese Communist Military Strength Available for Support of Northern Koreans.

Although there are no regular Chinese Communist ground forces in Manchuria, military district troops in the area total approximately 565,000, including 165,000 ex-Nationalists who were absorbed after the fall of Manchuria. All these troops are fairly well equipped and probably trained under close Soviet supervision. The nearest regular Chinese Communist ground forces readily available for Manchurian service are the 210,000 troops under Nish Jung-chen in the North China area. The Chinese Communists are not able at this time to offer either air or naval assistance to the Northern Koreans.

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5. Chinese Communist Military Capabilities with Regard to Taiwan.

a. Ground.

Some 7-800,000 Chinese Communist troops are estimated to be deployed in the East-Central China area (south of the Yangtze River and east of the Canton-Hankow railway) and available for an assault on Taiwan. Of these troops, approximately half are distributed along the coast from the Shanghai-Hanking sector south to the Foochow-Amoy sector under Chen Yi. The other half of the 7-800,000 is currently located in the general Canton-Hongkong area, under Lin Piao. Although these troops are lightly equipped by Western standards, they are regulars, combat veterans well-trained, and well-led. These units are tactically organized into armies and are believed to possess requisite light and medium artillery as well as some tank and armored car units. Soviet assistance to Chinese Communist ground forces, although reported in such categories as armor and artillery, remains unconfirmed at present.

b. Air.

The Chinese Communists currently possess an air force numbering at least 100 combat air craft. This force is receiving Soviet technical assistance and is capable of limited support of operations against Taiwan Naval forces. Any appreciable increase in the number of combat aircraft possessed by the Chinese Communists would indicate direct Soviet assistance in terms of air crews. Soviet "volunteers" might be technically legal under the provisions of the Sino-Soviet Mutual Aid Pact; there are approximately 25 Soviet jet aircraft presently located in the Shanghai-Hanking-Hsuehou sector.

c. Navy.

The Chinese Communist naval escort and support craft total 3 SS's. No Soviet naval support or escort craft are known to be nearer than the Port Arthur-Dairen area.

d. Water-Lift.

70-75 landing craft of various types, as well as merchantmen, trawlers, and tugs, are in Chinese Communist hands. These relatively modern power craft are capable of an initial water-lift of 60-80,000

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combat troops. During the past year, however, the Chinese Communists have been building and collecting sea-going and motor junks along the East China coast from Shanghai to Swatow and the number of these junks, barges, and other towable craft total 2,000, sufficient to water-lift another 120,000 troops.

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