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COMMUNISTS PREPARE TO EXPAND KOREAN AIR WAR

A number of events during the past month signal a long-anticipated Communist effort to enlarge air operations over North Korea. The movement of Communist air units into Manchuria, the recent increase in numbers of enemy jet interceptors operating in Korea, and the intensive preparations to ready Korean airfields point to the imminence of a new phase in Communist air operations in the Korean war.

Communist jet interceptor aircraft appeared in the Korean war about a year ago with the ostensible purpose of defending the Yalu river line against anticipated UN air strikes into Manchuria. Meanwhile, a program of rapid training and equipping of Chinese Communist air units was initiated.

The increase in both personnel and aircraft since the initial engagements were fought over the Yalu has resulted in a definite numerical superiority over comparable UN air strength in the theater. Having attained this superiority, it is possible that the Communists are now embarking on a new aerial phase of the Korean war in which their considerable potential will be used offensively.

The northward movement into Manchuria during the past month of possibly six Chinese Communist air divisions brought the strength of combat aircraft in Manchuria to about 1,000, or three-fourths of the total Communist combat air strength in China. The Manchurian total now includes nearly 500 MIG-15 jet fighters and 100 TU-2 light bombers. This northward shift of air units apparently is continuing.

Existence of a growing number of fully-trained Chinese jet pilots is evidenced by the initial assignment in mid-September of the Chinese Communist MIG-15 equipped 4th Air Division to the combat airfield at Antung. Previous reports that extensive ground support training was being carried on by Chinese air units and ground liaison personnel have been partially confirmed

Prior to beginning extensive air operations from Korean fields, the Communists were faced with the problem of UN detection and destruction of their air facilities before they became operational. Early Communist efforts to rehabilitate airfields followed no discernible geographic pattern, and relied on camouflage rather than on local antiaircraft defenses for protection.

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE DATE: 22-Mar-2010

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The recent Communist effort to put airfields into operation has followed a logical, well-conceived plan which has greatly enhanced the possibilities of its success. The positioning of new fields well within the defensive radius of Manchurian-based jet interceptors, as well as the concentration of both heavy and light antiaircraft weapons at the fields, was calculated to give these embryonic air bases a maximum chance for survival.

The degree of success achieved by the Communists to date is best illustrated by the fact that UN medium bombers no longer venture north of the Chongchon river during the day. While effective UN air superiority has been lost in northwestern Korea, the relative freedom of access of UN F-86 jet fighters equally has prevented the enemy from attaining such superiority. FECOM characterizes northwestern Korea as an "aerial no-man's land." Currently the three-airfield complex at Taechon-Namsi-Saamoham is partially usable, although no operations have been detected from them. Strenuous efforts to repair bomb damage and to construct revetments and lengthen runways continues.

The evolution of a well-integrated air defense system in northwestern Korea was a natural precursor of attempts to base jet fighters at these new fields. A Soviet-operated early warning ground controlled interceptor radar system was first detected in December 1950. This system, centered near Sinanju and possibly operating as far south as Sariwon, has served to alert and to direct Manchurian-based jet interceptors against UN aircraft on missions north of Pyongyang. A further step in protecting northwestern Korea was the appearance of a large quantity of antiaircraft artillery utilizing modern gunlaying radar and concentrated at strategic locations. There are some indications that antiaircraft artillery operations are coordinated through the Soviet-operated radar net. Antiaircraft artillery strength in Korea is now estimated at six Soviet-style divisions.

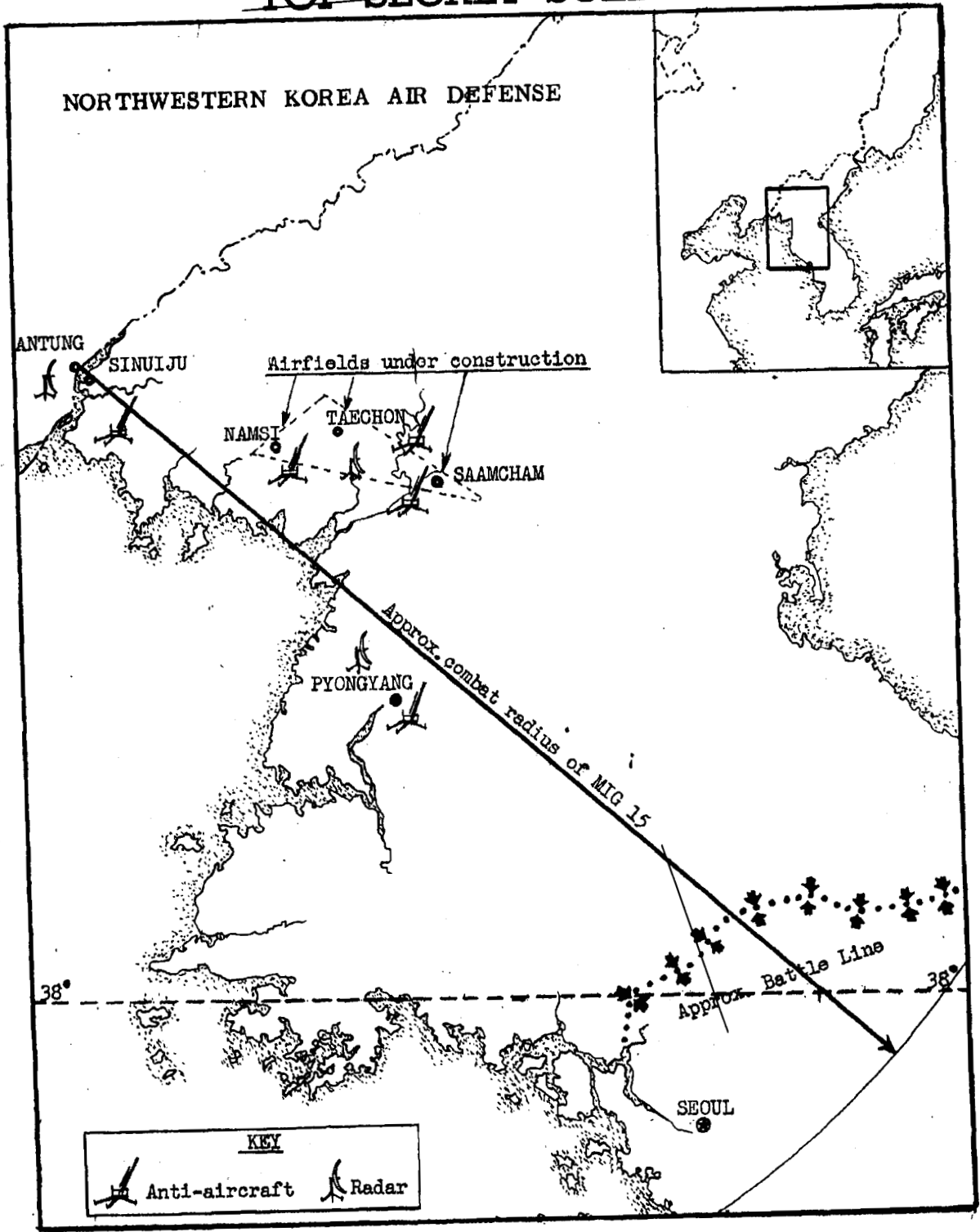
The emphasis placed on the defense of airfields is noted in a recent Far East Command estimate that the most heavily defended locations in North Korea are, in descending order:

- (1) Pyongyang east airfield,
- (2) Taechon airfield,
- (3) Sinuiju airfield,
- (4) the city of Pyongyang,
- (5) Namsi and Saamoham airfields.

A further indication of Communist intent to use airfields in Korea for combat operations is contained in recent reports alleging the presence of a stockpile of aircraft parts near airfields. No information has been received on the stockpiling of fuel or ammunition for combat air

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operations at Korean airfields.

The enemy's determined efforts to attain air superiority over northwestern Korea have been adequately demonstrated by the sustained October level of Communist daylight jet interception sorties. Another significant development was the sustained rate of night interception activity in late October. While some of these night flights were probably flown from small Korean fields, night combat patrols by Manchurian-based conventional fighters--not noted prior to 10 October--have now become routine.

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The depth of the enemy's jet interceptor penetration into Korea is well illustrated by an encounter on 24 October in which the UN aircraft were pursued for the first time to the Wonsan area on the east coast; and by an interception on 27 October during which UN F-80 fighters were pursued as far south as Chinnampo, the second time that penetration to such depth has been noted.

The US Far East Command, in the light of these developments, foresees that the enemy may develop his air strategy along the following lines:

- (1) Attainment of air superiority over the Sinanju area;
- (2) Construction and rehabilitation of airfields in the area, under protection of aerial cover;
- (3) Movement of jet fighters onto these new fields to strengthen the forces maintaining air superiority;
- (4) Expansion of the area of Communist air superiority further southward once jet strength on Korean fields has been increased;
- (5) Movement of conventional fighters and ground attack and light bombers to these secured Korean fields;
- (6) A challenge to UN air superiority over the immediate battle area and initiation of air to ground strikes against UN ground forces and installations.

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