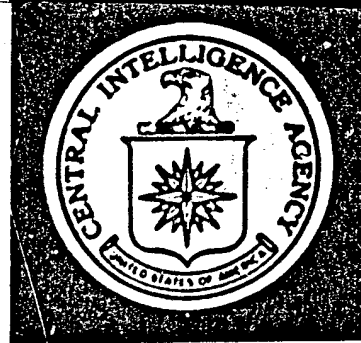


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SINO-SOVIET BORDER CLASH INCREASES TENSIONS

The latest publicized clash on the highly volatile Sino-Soviet border appears to be the result of the high level of tensions that now exist rather than a deliberate prelude to enlarged military conflict. The exchange of protest notes on 13 August indicates that this is the largest clash since the incidents last March on the Ussuri River along the eastern portion of the frontier, but the immediate military crisis appears to be over.

The exchange is one in a series of armed incidents that have occurred along this stretch of the Sinkiang-Uzbekistan border. Last June the two sides exchanged charges of an "armed intrusion," and in May the Soviets claimed that Chinese troops had "illegally" occupied several square miles of their frontier.

Peking was the first to publicize the clash in an apparent attempt to portray the Soviets as the unreasonable, aggressive party in the dispute. Each side almost immediately protested the incident, however, charging the other with a "preplanned attack." The Chinese later on 13 August accused the Soviets of continuing to "amass troops" in the area and "incessantly" firing on Chinese frontier guards.

[Current evidence suggests, however, that] neither side intends to widen the clash into a larger conflict. There are no indications in communications intelligence that Soviet units in the area have been moved or placed on alert. No sizable Chinese army units are known to be in the area

of the reported clash. Moreover, both sides have thus far limited their political response to the exchange of diplomatic notes couched in standard protest style. There have been none of the large-scale demonstrations in China that characterized Peking's reaction following the incidents in March, and Moscow's propaganda coverage has been unusually subdued.

Other recent developments also suggest that neither side wishes the inflamed border situation to get out of hand. Following seven weeks of negotiations, the Chinese and Soviets signed a border river navigation agreement on 8 August. The agreement reportedly made no reference to the larger territorial claims Peking had been pressing on Moscow.

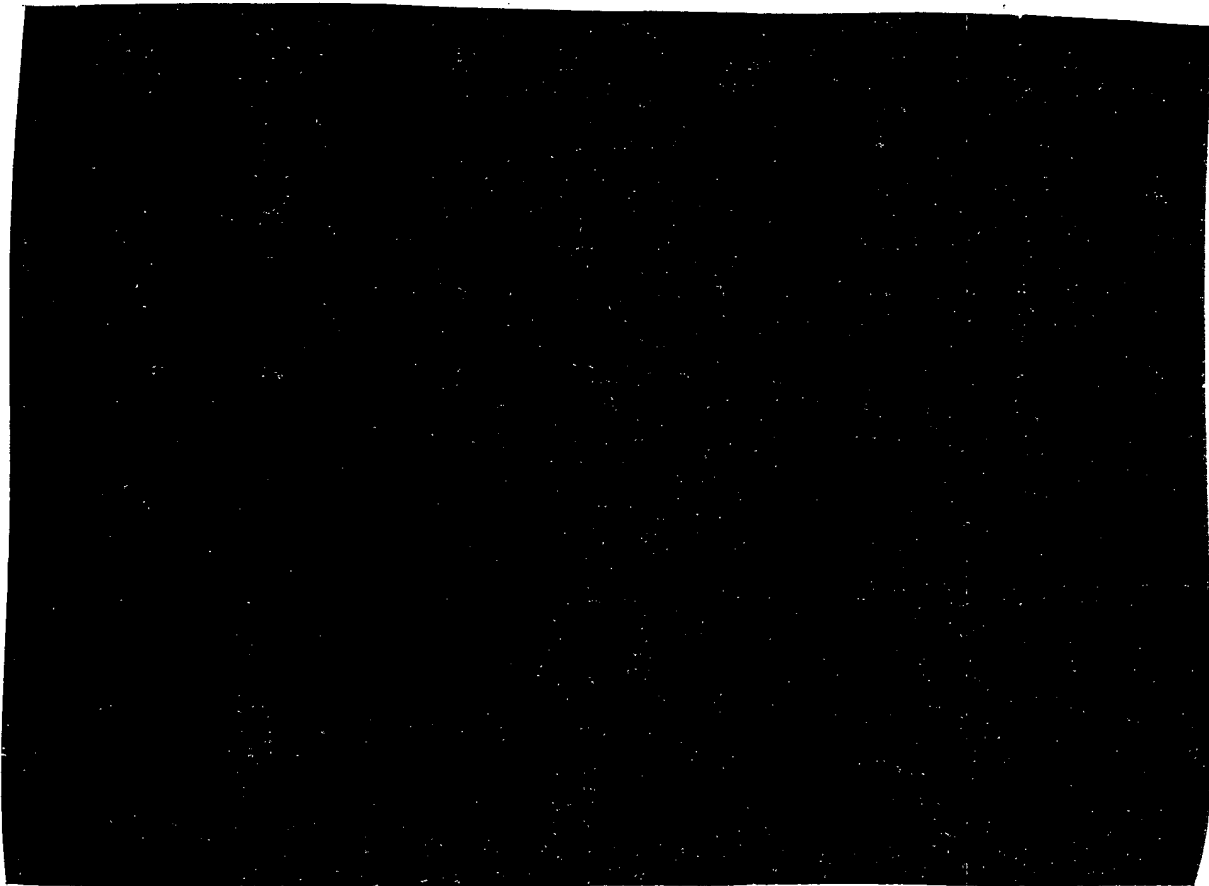
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side is likely to compromise fundamental positions, however, and questions of national prestige could lead to an intensification of a relatively minor incident. The latest clash can only

increase tensions in the border situation and add to its explosive potential. [REDACTED]



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