

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

26490

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 324

8 September 1950

SUBJECT: Probability of Direct Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea

PROBLEM: To assess the probability of an open Commitment of Chinese Communist armed forces in Korea.

SCOPE: The commitment of both regular and local Chinese Communist ground forces, and the use of the Chinese Communist Air Force in support of the North Korean invaders are considered.

ASSUMPTIONS: (1) Limited covert Chinese Communist assistance to the North Korean invaders, including the provision of individual soldiers, is assumed to be in progress at present. (2) The provision of overt assistance by the Chinese Communists would require approval by the USSR and such approval would indicate that the USSR is prepared to accept an increased risk of precipitating general hostilities.

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1. Conclusions.

Although there is no direct evidence to indicate whether or not the Chinese Communists will intervene in North Korea, it is evident that the Chinese Communists or the USSR must supply trained and equipped combat replacements if the North Korean invasion is to achieve complete control over South Korea before the end of the year.

Reports of an increasing Chinese Communist build-up of military strength in Manchuria, coupled with the known potential in that area, make it clear that intervention in Korea is well within immediate Chinese Communist capabilities. Moreover, recent Chinese Communist accusations regarding US "aggression" and "violation of the Manchurian border" may be stage-setting for an imminent overt move.

Note: This memorandum has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force.

The memorandum was prepared in accord with the request of the Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, United States Air Force. Document No. 001

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In view of the momentous repercussions from such an overt action, however, it appears more probable that the Chinese Communist participation in the Korean conflict will be more indirect, although significant, and will be limited to integrating into the North Korean forces "Manchurian volunteers," perhaps including air units as well as ground troops.

2. Present Status of North Korean Forces.

The decision whether or not to commit Chinese Communist forces will depend in part on the availability of Korean manpower, both in Manchuria and that part of Korea now in Communist hands. Current estimates by the Department of the Army state that 40,000 trained Korean veterans who had served with the Chinese Communists in the Manchurian campaigns of 1946 to 1948 remain in Manchuria and there constitute a strategic North Korean reserve. It is noteworthy, however, that (1) since 1 August North Koreans have been using combat replacements with as little as two week's training; and (2) the North Koreans would logically have committed all available organized Korean units soon after UN forces had been committed because at that time the impact of 40,000 trained troops probably would have been decisive.

The foregoing considerations indicate either that any Korean reserve in Manchuria was so dispersed that it did not constitute an effective reserve or that this reserve never in fact existed. Moreover, the possibility that Korean reserves in Manchuria have now been collected and reorganized and that some are now enroute to the combat area tends to be discounted by the fact that the time elapsed since 25 June should have permitted the organization and commitment of the majority of this reserve which would have been far superior in quality to those virtually untrained North Korean troops that have actually been utilized in the fighting. On balance, therefore, it appears highly probable that if a Communist victory in Korea is to be achieved by the end of the year the North Korean forces must now rely on either Soviet or Chinese Communist resources for decisive augmentation.

3. Chinese Communist Capabilities for Intervention.

The Chinese Communists have approximately four million men under arms, including regulars, Military District troops, and provincial forces. Following the fall of Manchuria there were approximately 565,000 Military District troops in Manchuria (including 165,100 ex-Nationalists), and possibly 100,000 to 125,000 of these MD troops have now been integrated into the regular army and organized as combat forces. These units, as well as the remaining MD troops, probably are Soviet-equipped. In addition, reports during the past three months have indicated a considerable increase in regular troop strength in Manchuria. It is estimated that the major elements

of Lin Piao's 4th Field Army—totalling perhaps 100,000 combat veterans—are now in Manchuria and are probably located along or adjacent to the Korean border, in position for rapid commitment in Korea.

Approximately 210,000 Communist regulars under Hieh Jung-chen's command are presently deployed in the North China area. Some of these troops have been reported enroute to Manchuria.

The Chinese Communists are believed to possess an air force totalling 200 to 250 operational combat aircraft, some units of which are reportedly deployed in Manchuria.

4. Indications of Chinese Communist Intention to Intervene.

a. Propaganda.

Numerous Chinese Communist propaganda attacks on the US during recent weeks, charging the US with "intervention" and "aggression" in Taiwan, have been climaxed by two new protests to the UN claiming US air attacks in violation of the Manchuria-Korea border. It is possible that these charges, besides serving a useful propaganda function, may be aimed at providing an excuse for Chinese Communist intervention in Korea.

b. Military Activity.

Since the fall of Hainan in April 1950, reliable reports have indicated that elements of Lin Piao's 4th Field Army were being moved northward from the Canton area.¹ Major elements of the 4th Field Army are now believed to be either in or enroute to Manchuria. Other reports indicate that military construction is in progress near Antung and along the Yalu River. Strengthening of Manchurian border defenses might either be a logical security development in view of the Korean conflict or a prelude to the offensive employment of forces in the area.

Reports of increased activity at Antung on the Manchuria-Korea border include the reported arrival of Chinese Communist aircraft.² Antung has also been reported as the main base of the

1. Reports of preparation for this move were received as early as February 1950, well in advance of the assault on Hainan by LIN's forces. Although these preparations may have been part of announced CCF plans for demobilization, it appears more likely that these elements were Korean troops of Lin Piao's army being released to the North Korean Army.
2. The three airfields in the Antung area could handle a total of 300 aircraft.

North Korean Air Force, where that depleted force can seek refuge from UN air attacks. Numerous reports of recent North Korean activity, including revetment construction at airfields south of the 38th Parallel have been received. These construction reports could indicate the imminent forward movement of air reinforcements for the North Koreans. Although some of this anticipated air support might be provided by the as yet untested Chinese Communist Air Force, there is no firm evidence to support such a contention.

5. Factors Militating Against Chinese Communist Intervention.

The commitment of Chinese Communist armed forces in Korea would clearly transform the Korean conflict from an ostensibly "internal" dispute to an international struggle. The decision to commit Chinese Communist troops to the Korean conflict would significantly affect the Soviet position in China as well as in Korea, and Soviet influence over both Peiping and Pyongyang might be jeopardized. Other factors which might tend to deter Chinese Communist intervention in the Korean war, but which would be of minor consequence in so momentous a decision, are: (1) Chinese national and military pride might cause friction if Chinese troops were placed under Soviet or Korean command; and (2) Chinese Communist intervention would probably eliminate all prospects for China's admission to the United Nations.