

1963 CINCPAC China Assessment

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Countering the Chinese military influence in 1963, CINCPAC described to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, meant that PACOM was "occupied holding in check the biggest part of the Red Chinese dragon, the head of which was in Manchuria and the body in the area of the Taiwan Strait and Southeast China so that the tail in Tibet cannot lash out too violently." This colorful description was given in connection with a proposal to transfer military jurisdiction over India to PACOM. CINCPAC rejected such a change, believing that PACOM had enough to do already.

As for Chinese military developments during the year, line divisions were reduced by one, although ground forces had a small percentage increase in personnel. The air forces experienced decreases in personnel as well as aircraft, mainly due to an inability to replace aircraft lost through normal attrition. Surface-to-air missile sites, however, grew from eight to sixteen at the end of the year, and early warning radars increased as well.

Not reflected in the CINCPAC history, but evident from a [Special National Intelligence Estimate](#) from the Director of Central Intelligence (obtained by the [National Security Archive](#)), was that new information (mainly from photography) led the intelligence community to conclude that China had "embarked on a more ambitious advanced weapons program than we had earlier thought likely." China would probably have enough fissile material to conduct a nuclear detonation in "early 1964," and might be capable of producing one or two crude weapons a year by 1965. Medium-range ballistic missiles would probably not be ready for deployment before 1967, and "China is not likely to develop [a missile-compatible] warhead until 3 or 4 years after a first detonation." ([full PDF-backup](#))

CINCPAC plans involving nuclear options included a general war plan (OPLAN 1-63) for full-scale strategic war against Soviet and Chinese forces, two smaller scenarios in defense of South Korea (contained in OPLAN 27-63) one of which included nuclear strikes, and a regional plan (OPLAN 32-63) for Southeast Asia. In addition to that, a new plan (OPLAN 99-64) was drawn up to stabilize the situation in Laos. Although the use of nuclear forces were not contemplated, U.S. forces were to be ready with nuclear weapons if China made a large-scale invasion.

These plans and operations are described in more detail in the selected pages from the 1963 CINCPAC history provided below:

Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, "CINCPAC Command History 1963," April 27, 1964. Only selected pages.

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