1982 CINCPAC China Assessment

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After a pause in 1981, China resumed nuclear testing in 1982 with an underground explosion in October. Overall, nuclear forces continued to evolve with 10 ICBM sites reported including 9-20 launchers, and 64 shorter-range surface-to-surface missile (IRBM/MRBM) sites like the previous year. The number of ICBM launchers represented an increase over the previous year, although they continued to be deployed at only 10 sites.

The formulation of China's contribution to U.S. security interests in Northeast Asia continued in 1982 after the "normalization" of diplomatic relations in 1979. Although not an ally, CINCPAC said that U.S. policies toward China acknowledged its importance in Asia's balance of power and overall contributions to peace and stability in the region. To that end, CINCPAC said that U.S.-Chinese bilateral relations "had developed because they served the broader security and economic needs of both countries."

In terms of the Taiwan situation, CINCPAC concluded that China, "in 1982 at least, did not appear intent on invading Taiwan." The existing strategy, CINCPAC stated, was to "nibble away" at Taiwan's international political and economic ties while calling for peaceful unification. China could, however, successfully attack Taiwan, CINCPAC estimated, if three conditions were met:

- If the United States did not intervene;
- If China gained air and naval superiority by attrition; and
- If China could augment it naval forces with motorized junks to transport troops to Taiwan.

CINCPAC's assessment of China's military capabilities and the forces need to launch such an attacks as follows:

> "For an assault on Taiwan the PRC would be able to mass approximately a million ground forces personnel located in the coastal military regions, in spite of the strategic deployment requirements of China's borders with the USSR and Vietnam. It could also mass 61 amphibious ships and approximately 500 landing craft to transport some 435 tanks or armored personnel carriers and 38,000 troops in the initial assault. A motorized junk force could follow when the beachhead was secured, and air superiority was

> obtained over the Taiwan Strait. Over 1,100 aircraft could be employed for attack missions. The PRC also had a significant capability to continuously provide replacement aircraft from resources outside this coastal area."

Regardless of these capabilities, however, CINCPAC concluded that China in an attack on Taiwan would have to be willing to accept "extremely heavy losses, suffer major economic disruptions, and accept a damaged international image in the process."

The U.S. continued to supply arms to Taiwan despite the acceptance of the "one-China-policy," and CINCPAC acknowledged that this matter was "an active issue" in U.S.-Chinese relations. China's viewed it as interference in its internal affairs, and said that although it wanted to accomplish unification by peaceful means, "it could not renounce the use of force because to do so would be to abandon one of its own national prerogatives." CINCPAC was "confident," however, that the difference over the arms sales issue would be overcome and the U.S. could "continue to improve that relationship which recognized parallel interests." Describing the hedge against future developments, CINCPAC added that, "it also permitted the United States to take complementary actions when those interests were challenged."

Other China-related security issues discussed in the assessment include the territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and its impact on Thailand's relations with China, and attempts to improve relations with IndiaFunding for this project was provided by the The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation andPloughshares Fund.

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