

excluded that the Chinese Communists will adopt a more aggressive policy toward the Offshore Islands, in part because of intense irritation and a sense of affront, in part to emphasize their determination to destroy the Nationalist Government, and in part to test U. S. intentions in the Taiwan area. If they should become convinced that the U. S. would not intervene militarily, they would seek to capture these Islands by military action.⁶⁴

Thus while the NIE did suggest the possibility of Chinese action in the Taiwan Straits and of possible Sino-Soviet disagreement, the overall thrust of the estimate tended to contradict this prediction and to suggest that the Chinese would continue in close cooperation with the Soviets, and were at least not likely to undertake military action against the Offshore Islands. The estimate did point to what was in fact the major calculation of Peking -- United States intervention to defend the Offshore Islands.

Military Operations Plan

In addition to the periodic reevaluations of policy towards Taiwan which had been carried out by the staff of the National Security Council and by the U. S. Intelligence Board, the Military in May 1958 were putting the finishing touches to a revised Operations (OPS) Plan for the defense of the Taiwan Straits.

On May 16, 1958, CINCPAC released revised OPS PLAN 25-58 and distributed it to its subordinate commands. The plan had been previously approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). OPS PLAN 25-58 replaced a plan which had been in effect since 1955.* The new plan provided for the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus, and Matsu and "Chinmen" (Quemoy) when "dictated by appropriate U. S. authority." The basic plan called for operations in two phases; phase I was patrol and reconnaissance, which was then said to be under way; phase II was defeat of forces attacking Taiwan. It envisioned a possible third phase, if so directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which would involve operations by the Strategic Air Command (SAC), supported by CINCPAC, of expanded air operations beyond the scope of the OPS PLAN to destroy the war-making capability of Communist China. The plan made a number of assumptions: The attack would be carried out in conditions short of total war; atomic weapons would be employed by the United States and probably by the enemy;** authority to attack targets on the Chinese mainland would be granted; the United States

*I have not been able to locate the 1955 plan in order to compare it with 25-58.

**The plan was altered on the 16th of August to allow the use of atomic weapons by the United States "when authorized by the President."

would provide logistical support to the GRC forces; and Japan would object to U. S. utilization of American bases and facilities in Japan unless Japan itself were directly threatened.

Basically, then, the operations plan in effect at the outbreak of the crisis provided only for the current phase of patrol and reconnaissance by Chinese Nationalists and American ships and planes and for a situation in which there would be a Communist military offensive against Taiwan that would be countered by an American attack with atomic weapons against the Chinese mainland. The plan indicated to the CINCPAC subordinate commands that they should be prepared for partial implementation of the OPS PLAN in the event that support against enemies in other areas was required at the same time or the reinforcements expected in the report did not arrive, or authority to employ atomic weapons was not granted. The subordinate commands were also advised to coordinate the supporting plans with related general war plans so as to minimize the reduction of their general war capability.

Although the plan concentrated on defeating an enemy landing on Taiwan, in accord with Phase II, it recognized that there might be an intermediate stage between Phase I

and Phase II. It noted that initial action by the Chinese Communists would probably be a minor probing activity, including the build-up of air strength, a demonstration of superiority in local air or ground firepower, and reconnaissance in strength. The plan noted that the purpose of the Communist probing would be to test American and GRC reaction. Following these limited probes, the next probable move was thought to be an attempt to obtain air superiority, through air attacks on airfields on Taiwan, and an attempt to destroy beach defenses by bombing. This would presumably be followed by an attempted landing on Taiwan. The OPS PLAN, however, provided for no counter U. S. actions to the probing stage. It advised subordinate commands as follows:

There may be a 'transition phase' between the Phase I and the overt hostilities of Phase II in which the enemy will demonstrate his local military capability by probing activities short of all-out attack on Taiwan and the off-shore islands in order to determine what the U. S. reaction will be. COMUSTDC [Commander U. S. Taiwan Defense Command] must be prepared to make rapid analyses of these probing actions and to submit flash reports and recommend U. S. counter action to CINCPCAC to facilitate an immediate U. S. decision. The timeliness of this decision and counter action may well determine whether the enemy will decide to proceed with his plans for attack.⁶⁵

The OPS PLAN thus clearly pointed to what was likely to be the first Communist action -- a probe to test American intentions -- and recognized that the American response to this probe might well determine the future course of the crisis. Nevertheless the OPS PLAN provided no guidelines as to what the local commanders should do in the event of this kind of probe, nor did it authorize any action by American forces or permission for action by Chinese Nationalist forces in the event of this kind of probe. The OPS PLAN then pointed to the likely contingency, but the actions that it laid out were other contingencies.

At least part of the reason for this lay in the uncertainty over what U. S. policy was towards the defense of the Offshore Islands. Because of the wording of the Congressional Formosa Resolution of 1955, which authorized defense of the Offshore Islands only if necessary to defend Taiwan, the OPS PLAN did not plan specifically for the defense of the Offshore Islands. This made it difficult to make plans for the situations which it recognized were most likely to develop. Although political constraints required them to be circumspect on whether or not the Offshore Islands would be defended, it was clear from the OPS PLAN that the Joint Chiefs and CINCPAC were determined

to defend the Offshore Islands and expected to get permission to do so. It should therefore have been feasible to produce a contingency plan to be used in the case of an attack directed initially and boldly at the Offshore Islands.

The OPS PLAN noted that "retention by the GRC of Taiwan and other GRC-held Islands will continue to pose a serious obstacle to the attainment of Communist objectives in the Far East and it is considered essential to U. S. interests." [Italics added.]⁶⁶ In Annex B of the OPS PLAN on concepts of operation, the report noted that

certain GRC-held offshore islands are important to the security of Taiwan and the Penghus and are of considerable significance to the political prestige of the GRC....tactically these islands provide GRC bases for intelligence gathering, sabotage, evasion, maritime resistance, and may facilitate escape operation, and may facilitate early detection of and retaliation against a CHICOM [Chinese Communist] invasion. However, the continued possession of these Islands by the GRC is far more important politically and psychologically than tactically. These Islands are a symbol both to the CHINATS [Chinese Nationalists] themselves and to the mainland and overseas Chinese of the CHINAT intention not only to defend their present areas but also to recover the mainland from the Communists. Although the U. S. is not committed to participate in the defense of these islands, the U. S. has encouraged their continued defense by the GRC. Should these off-shore islands fall to the CHICOMS, the CHINATS (and the U. S.) would lose, and the CHICOMS would gain considerable prestige.

An enemy invasion of Taiwan and the Penghus may or may not be preceded by an attempted seizure of those GRC-held offshore islands. While the seizure of these offshore islands would facilitate the later invasion of Taiwan, such an operation would cost the enemy tactical surprise, would permit a corresponding build-up of GRC and U. S. preparations for defense and would afford the U. S. more time to put into effect specific courses of action.

In the event of U. S. participation in the defense of these GRC-held off-shore islands it is dictated by appropriate U. S. authority, defensive operations conducted by CINCPACAF [Commander in Chief Pacific Air Force] and CINCPACFLT [Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet] will be coordinated locally by COMUSTDC in accordance with this plan. In the event Taiwan and the Penghus are attacked at the same time as the off-shore islands, the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus has over-riding priority.⁶⁷

The OPS PLAN indicated that the "Offshore Islands" referred to in the paragraphs just quoted included six islands in the Quemoy group: Big Quemoy, Little Quemoy, Ta-tan, Ehr-tan, Hu-tzu Hsu and Tung-ting-hsu and seven islands in the Matsu chain. As we shall see, with the outbreak of the crisis, the group of islands which the United States decided to include in the Offshore Island chain that it would defend was reduced to the Islands of Big Quemoy and Little Quemoy and five Islands in the Matsu group.*

*See p. 115.

The OPS PLAN which was in effect at the time of crisis was almost entirely inappropriate to the actual course of events. Even in its consideration of the Offshore Islands, though the planners correctly anticipated that the United States would want to defend them, the plan overestimated the number of islands which the United States would be interested in defending and assumed that atomic weapons would be employed against the mainland in their defense.

In the midst of the crisis it became necessary to issue an Annex H to the OPS PLAN for conventional operations in defense of Quemoy.

Although the overall OPS PLAN was issued by CINCPAC on May 16, 1958, in the absence of any sense of urgency, it took several months for subordinate headquarters to produce their supporting operational plan. It was not, for example, until August 7 that CINCPACAF distributed the main part of the Pacific Air Force (PACAF) interim OPS PLAN 25-58 to its subordinate commanders.⁶⁸ The interim atomic annex was issued two days later.⁶⁹ The PACAF OPS PLAN for the guidance of air units indicated that Phase II, the phase immediately following patrol and reconnaissance, would involve atomic weapons strikes by both sides. The Thirteenth Air Force Commander was to direct atomic operations, and the initial operations were to emphasize

pre-planned strikes against enemy air bases. No conventional operations by the Thirteenth Air Force were planned.⁷⁰

On August 14 CINCPACFLT issued Change No. 1 in CINCPACFLT 25-57 to anticipate some of the changes called for in CINCPAC 25-58.⁷¹

When the shelling began on August 23, the subordinate commands to CINCPACAF and the Taiwan Defense Command had yet to promulgate final versions of their OPS PLAN in support of CINCPAC OPS PLAN 25-58, so that even this contingency plan, which was to have little immediate relevance to the crisis, was not fully ready when the crisis broke out.

Limited War Contingency Planning

Along with these three routine contingency planning operations by the National Security Council, the U. S. Intelligence Board, and the military, a fourth contingency planning operation for the possible defense of the Offshore Islands was underway but not completed at the time of the outbreak of the crisis.

At the request of President Eisenhower, a joint State-Defense-CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] committee had been created to study possible limited war contingencies.

The Committee had agreed on a total of twelve possible contingencies outside Europe. Half of the scenarios covered the Far East, one involving the Offshore Islands.* This latter contingency plan envisioned a Chinese Communist interdiction and an American expansion of the crisis to include atomic attack against the Chinese mainland. The first meetings of the State-Defense-CIA group on the Offshore Island contingency planning brought into contact with each other the people who were later to work together during the crisis. At the first meeting the State Department participants held out for an attempt to develop a plan which would involve the use of only conventional (HE) weapons by American forces in defense of the Offshore Islands. However the Joint Chiefs, in particular Air Force General Nathan Twining, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, felt that the use of atomic weapons was inevitable and the planning proceeded on that assumption.

In considering how the Chinese Communists might succeed in interdicting the Offshore Islands, the committee considered the possibility of successful interdiction by the use of artillery alone. However, this possibility was played down, particularly on the advice of Chief of Staff of the

*The others in the Far East were Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Laos and Burma.

declared a full alert of their armed forces and had taken emergency measures on Taiwan and the Offshore Islands, but that they appeared to have become calmer in the last few days.⁹³

On August 12 Gordon Gray, the President's Special Assistant for National Security Council Affairs, and the head of the staff of the National Security Council, requested the Joint Chiefs to consider a series of possible Chinese Communist moves in the Taiwan Straits and to propose American responses. The situations as outlined by Gray were:

Chinese Communist aggressive air action in the Straits.

Chinese Communist air penetration of Taiwan.

Chinese Communist blockade by sea and air of the Offshore Islands.

Chinese Communist assault on Taiwan and the Pescadores.

Gray also asked whether any public statement of the American position should be made.⁹⁴ This request to the Joint Staff was to initiate yet another contingency planning operation, a bare twelve days before the outbreak of military action. Yet among the contingencies listed by Gray and considered by the Joint Chiefs was still not

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one which was to follow closely the course of events as the crisis unfolded.

The Joint Chiefs met on the 13th for a general discussion of the Taiwan situation and for an intelligence briefing. They were told that the Chinese Communists now had the capability to control the air over the coastal areas, and over the Offshore Islands, if opposed only by the GRC.⁹⁵

Marshall Green on the same day sent a second internal State Department memorandum urging a strong stand in defense of the Offshore Islands. The memorandum declared that a loss of the Offshore Islands could lead to a Chinese Communist takeover in Taiwan. It ruled out completely the possibility of getting Chiang Kai-shek to abandon voluntarily the Offshore Islands at the time. The risk of war, the memorandum stated, would come largely from enemy miscalculation. The Chinese Communists might think that the United States would not defend the Offshore Islands and might engage in air and naval interdiction as contemplated in the State-JCS limited war study. Their purpose, the memorandum suggested, would be either to force a Tachen-Island-type withdrawal* or to establish a successful

*In 1954 the Chinese Nationalists withdrew from the Tachens under Chinese Communist fire and with American support.

that it was not just the Offshore Islands that were at stake but the whole position of the United States in the Far East. Chief of Staff of the Army General Maxwell Taylor was the only Defense Department official present who voiced any doubts as to whether the United States really wanted to stake so much on the defense of these Islands. The head of the Policy Planning Staff, Gerard Smith, and Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, both expressed some skepticism about a strong policy, and Murphy raised the question of whether there was any possibility of getting the GRC to evacuate the Offshore Islands. However, the general consensus of the meeting, particularly as it reflected the view of Assistant Secretary Robertson, was that it would be impossible to get the GRC to evacuate the Offshore Islands. The former Taiwan MAAG head, General Leander Doan, who was present at the meeting, reported that GRC plans were for holding the Offshore Islands at all costs. He stated that the GRC would try to reinforce the Islands if necessary and would use their Air Force and Navy "in a fight to the finish" over the Offshore Islands.

Apparently largely under the influence of the contingency planning for the possibility of an attack on the

Offshore Islands, in which many of those at the meeting had been engaged, a general unstated assumption at the meeting was that an interdiction attempt against the Offshore Islands would be by air and sea since it was believed that artillery interdiction could not be successful. Twining expressed the view that the GRC must try to cope alone initially with any air and sea interdiction campaign. Any blockade would take a long time to become a complete success, he said, and before it did become completely successful the United States would intervene. Under questioning by Herter, Twining made it clear that the United States would have to use nuclear weapons against Chinese air bases to prevent a successful air interdiction campaign by the Chinese Communists. He noted that the U. S. military would begin by attacking a few of the fields in the Amoy area, using low-yield ten to fifteen kiloton nuclear weapons. At this point the Chinese Communists hopefully would break off. But if they did not, the United States, Twining indicated, would have no alternative but to conduct nuclear strikes deep into China as far north as Shanghai. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs suggested that this would almost certainly involve nuclear retaliation against Taiwan and possibly against Okinawa, but he stressed that if national policy is to defend the

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Offshore Islands then the consequences had to be accepted.*

In response to a question by Smith, Twining expressed the view that the Chinese Communist Air Force could not be successfully opposed by simply engaging it in the air over the Offshore Islands. The United States, if it was not to lose such a battle, would need to hit bases.

Taylor urged the Department of State to clarify what the United States wanted to hold and stressed that the minimum force necessary to hold these areas should be used.

Herter and Twining expressed concern, as Washington officials were to do throughout the crisis, over the possibility that the GRC might engage in some action against the mainland which would lead to a United States-Communist Chinese war. But Herter was assured by Robertson that the GRC was pledged to consult the United States before bombing the mainland and would honor the agreement.

Twining urged that the decision be taken now as to whether or not the United States would defend against

*There was no discussion of whether the Chinese were expected to get nuclear weapons from Russia or whether the Russians would attack Taiwan. The possibility that there would be no nuclear retaliation to an American nuclear attack on mainland China does not seem to have been viewed as a serious possibility. In part at least this reflected normal planning caution; however, it was also a reflection of the then current issues of close Sino-Soviet cooperation.

partial withdrawal

interdiction as well as against a direct attack on the Islands. It was assumed by those at the meeting that the United States would oppose a direct attack against the Islands, but nobody present knew whether the United States would defend against an interdiction attempt, nor was there anybody present who had the authority to make the decision.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of a point raised by Robertson as to whether or not the United States should make a public statement which might have the effect of deterring the Chinese Communists from attacking or interdicting the Offshore Islands. This was rejected in favor of a private approach through diplomatic channels, either by John Foster Dulles approaching Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko directly or by a message sent via the British Ambassador in Peking. [Robertson suggested that if asked at a press conference as to what the U. S. position was, the President or the Secretary of State should follow the proposal of the Chinese Nationalist Foreign Minister and simply say that a Communist attack would be disturbing to the peace of Asia. Twining indicated that he would prefer simply a reference to the Congressional Formosa Resolution.]

The meeting ended with the group agreeing that a decision needed to be taken at the Dulles-Eisenhower level.

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as to what the U.S. reaction would be to an air-sea interdiction campaign against the Offshore Islands. [It was also agreed that the Chinese Communists should be warned through diplomatic channels that the United States would not tolerate capture of the Offshore Islands. ^{101*}]

Following the meeting at the Pentagon, Herter drafted a memorandum to Secretary of State Dulles in which he summarized the discussion and reported its conclusions. [He noted that State and the Joint Chiefs were agreed that the loss of the Offshore Islands would lead to an attack on Taiwan. Herter reported that the meeting confirmed his own view that there was a need to warn the Chinese Communists that if they attempted to seize Quemoy and Matsu by assault or interdiction, they would run the clear risk of U.S. military countermeasures to keep the Islands in GRC hands. While this seemed to Herter to be the most effective way to preserve the Islands as well as the peace, he noted that it also involved serious risks.]

* The Joint Chiefs of Staff, at a meeting held on the 15th, apparently after the meeting with Herter, decided in principle to build up and maintain the GRC Air Force in a position of qualitative superiority to the Chinese Communists.¹⁰² They recommended that six F-100Bs which had been earmarked for NATO be diverted to Taiwan. This request was approved by Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy on the 21st.¹⁰³

Herter recommended to Dulles that a warning be sent to the Chinese Communists through diplomatic channels.

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However, he cautioned that if the United States made such a warning, it must be prepared to defend the Islands.

Herter suggested that Dulles confer with Eisenhower with a view towards agreeing to convey informally to Gromyko the information that the United States would prevent seizure or successful interdiction of the Offshore Islands. He also stressed the importance of considering the Congressional implications of U.S. action. If the issue came up at a Dulles press conference, Herter recommended that Eisenhower fall back on the Congressional Formosa Resolution.¹⁰⁴

The Herter memorandum was reinforced early the following week by a memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State Robertson to Dulles. In the memorandum Robertson stressed that it was time to make a decision on whether to defend the Offshore Islands. He again summarized the meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and stressed that the Joint Chiefs felt that it was highly advisable to warn Peking that any attempt to seize Quemoy and Matsu by assault or interdiction ran the clear risk of U.S. military moves to hold the Island. However, as Herter had done, Robertson noted that if

3. Eisenhower should say in any case that a Chinese Communist attack on the Offshore Islands would be disturbing to the peace in Asia.*
4. There should be an increased military build-up both of U. S. and GRC forces. 105

Based on the NSC discussion and the meeting afterwards, LeMay responded to Kuter's request for guidance. He informed the Pacific Air Force Commander that should the contingency arise of a wholly unexpected Chinese Communist attack on the Offshore Islands, the United States must be prepared for immediate retaliation. The best means of neutralizing the Chinese Communist Air Force quickly, LeMay noted, would be simultaneous strikes against the coastal airfields using Guam-based SAC B-47's in order to catch the bulk of the Chinese Communist aircraft on the ground. Kuter was advised that SAC had been alerted for this purpose and that if Chinese Communist Beagles were moved south, it might be necessary to augment the Guam

LeMay

*Herter, who feared that the GRC might try to drag the United States into a war with Communist China, had in his memorandum adopted Twining's suggestion that Eisenhower should simply refer to the Congressional Formosa Resolution. Robertson, as he was to do throughout the crisis, defended the GRC as a loyal ally and sought the adoption of the GRC proposal.

capability. Kuter was instructed, in what was the first of a series of modifications of the OPS PLAN which were to become necessary as American strategy to deal with the crisis unfolded, to modify OPS PLAN 25-58 to include this concept. Kuter's advice on these directives was requested before final JCS decision.¹⁰⁶ On the following day Kuter responded by concurring in the proposal that the GRC be permitted to bomb airfields if the Chinese Communists used air attacks against the Offshore Islands. He noted that a second step still short of Phase II of 25-58 might be desirable. "There would be merit in a proposal from the military to limit the war geographically [to the newly operational Chinese Communist air bases] if that proposal would forestall some misguided humanitarian's intention to limit a war to obsolete iron bombs and hot lead."¹⁰⁷ This was to be the first of a series of actions by Kuter designed to make it clear that he felt the United States should not fight with just HE weapons should it be forced into a war in the Taiwan Straits.

On August 18 the American Ambassador in Tokyo, Douglas MacArthur II, reported that there was real concern in certain quarters within the Japanese Government over the mounting tension in the Taiwan Straits. He noted that

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American and Chinese Nationalist caution in response to their activation of the airfields plus the refusal of the United States to state that it would defend Quemoy probably gave the Chinese Communists some confidence in the belief that the United States would not support a defense of Quemoy and perhaps might even force an evacuation of the Islands. The Chinese Communists were then ready for a move against the Offshore Islands, their ultimate objective being to secure the collapse of the Nationalist regime.

By August 23 the Chinese Nationalists had become convinced that a move against the Offshore Islands was in the making. For the Nationalists this could only be viewed as an opportunity to involve the United States in a major military action against the Chinese Communists, which was clearly their only hope for a return to the mainland.

The Nationalists' maneuver to secure a U. S. backing for defense of Quemoy can be seen, as it probably was, as part of the effort to involve the United States in what was expected to be the oncoming military move against Quemoy or Matsu, or perhaps one of the smaller Offshore Islands.

The Chinese Nationalists were probably not interested in deterring a Chinese Communist move by a U. S. declaration, but rather enhancing the probability of U. S. involvement

by securing a public U. S. commitment prior to the outbreak of crisis. Though the Nationalists acted with restraint and caution prior to and throughout the crisis, they continued to drop hints that their patience might run out, that unless strong U. S. action were taken they might be forced to take unilateral action, and that they had every right to do so under the existing U. S.-Chinese Nationalist agreements.

Most American military and civilian officers in the Pacific area and in Washington were convinced that a crisis was about to break in the Taiwan Straits. They had been striving to get both a U. S. public statement which might head off a crisis and a firm U. S. decision on whether the Offshore Islands would in fact be defended. The general assumption was that the Islands would come under attack by an all-out air and sea interdiction campaign and that the United States would defend them with atomic attacks against the mainland. All of the policymaking echelons of the Government concerned seemed to be united in agreeing that Quemoy had to be defended. They were anxious not only to get a decision from Eisenhower and Dulles but also to make it clear to them that a firm decision had to include a willingness to use atomic weapons. Dulles had

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the Offshore Islands had not been an important base for GRC military operations, propaganda or subversive activity. It indicated that the Communists as well as the Nationalists engaged in subversive and propaganda activities and that Communist activity had intensified in the previous year. In response to the statements in the Dulles memorandum linking Eastern Europe and China, it was pointed out that the situations were different in that there was still a civil war in China, hence GRC activity could not be recognized as activity from outside the country unless the United States accepted a two-China policy. The memorandum recommended that the United States stress the effort to get the Chinese Communists to renounce the use of force and should publicize the low level of Nationalist activity from the Offshore Islands. It cautioned that the use of a third party would be difficult without giving the appearance of retreating. The memorandum concluded by reporting that Dulles had committed himself to consulting the Senate Foreign Relations Committee before extending coverage of the American commitment to defend the GRC to include the Offshore Islands.⁵

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PLANNING FOR DECISION

Throughout the weekend of August 23 and 24 officials in the State Department and in the Pentagon worked to prepare for a meeting which was to be held at the White House on the 25th to discuss the crisis.

[In a message on August 24, Admiral Burke attempted to prepare CINCPAC Admiral Harry D. Felt for the expected inclusion in the message to him, which Burke expected to be approved in the White House meeting on the 25th, of a clause indicating that operations might initially have to be conventional and to explain to Felt why it was necessary to plan for conventional operations. He assured Felt that the Joint Chiefs of Staff would continue to press for the use of atomic weapons on Chinese Communist local air fields from the outset of hostilities but reported his impression that the President was not likely to give this authority in advance. Some officials, he reported, believed that there were good reasons for this, including the newly instituted nuclear test moratorium* and the desire to keep the war limited. It was therefore very doubtful, Burke]

*On August 22 the United States and Great Britain had announced that they would suspend the testing of nuclear weapons provided the Soviet Union did not test and negotiations were carried on for a treaty outlawing nuclear tests. 6

indicated, that the Administration would give permission to use atomic weapons against the mainland until Taiwan were attacked, or at least not until after it had consulted many nations. These arguments Burke evaluated as not sound but nevertheless persuasive to top officials.* He suggested in view of this that the Taiwan Defense Command and the Seventh Fleet should have plans for all contingencies, including a completely conventional operation. Burke also proposed that CINCPAC prepare a list of proposed atomic targets since authority to attack particular targets would have to be given by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or an even higher authority. All of this was based, of course, Burke told Felt, on receiving orders from the President to assist in the defense of the Offshore Islands. Although this had not yet been received, Burke advised Felt that Dulles had stated that it would be the intention of the Government to defend the Offshore Islands.⁷ At the same time, CINCPAC was ordered to move his forces into position to support military actions in the Taiwan Straits.⁸

*In the event the message sent did not suggest as great a reliance on conventional forces as Burke had feared. See pp. 113-114.

The Political-Military Section in Navy OP-61 prepared on August 24 a paper which was adopted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the 25th and given to President Eisenhower by Burke at the White House meeting on the 25th. The paper stated:

(1) A major effort by the Chinese Communists to take the Offshore Islands is a beginning of an encroachment on the entire Chinese Nationalist position. It must be stopped initially or it will continue to the destruction of the GRC.

(2) Although attacks on the mainland may have to be initially conventional for political reasons, "we will require atomic strikes on the Chinese mainland to effectively and quickly stop Chinese Communist aggression."

(3) The Chinese must be recognized as aggressive by world opinion lest allies (Japan, Philippines) may not support the United States and may deny the use of bases.

(4) The United States must present reasonable objectives. The Chinese Communist action must be made to appear the beginning of further expansion.

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the United States live up to its commitment and defend the Islands even at the cost of becoming involved in direct military action with the Chinese Communists. Some officials felt that in such a situation the GRC might be tempted to expand the war on its own initiative by bombing the mainland. But whether they did this or not, the GRC could be expected to maneuver so that the United States did come into direct conflict with the Chinese Communists in a way that might lead the war to expand very greatly. Thus Eisenhower was determined that the GRC would be kept somewhat in the dark about American intentions, particularly American willingness to come to the aid of Quemoy if it were attacked and its intention to begin escort operations should these appear necessary. A public commitment to the defense of the Offshore Islands was also to be avoided so that the additional GRC leverage on the United States would not be present.*

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Thus when meeting with his advisors on August 25, Eisenhower was acutely aware of the multiple audiences that

*Eisenhower cites the Nationalist desire for a big war and the small island problem as his reasons for rejecting the proposal to issue a public statement. He incorrectly states that the Joint Chiefs were against a firm public commitment to the defense of Quemoy. (See Waging Peace, pp. 295-96.)

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he faced. He wanted most of all to convince the Chinese Communists that military action would be dangerous and involve a clash with the United States. At the same time he was constrained by pressures and anticipated pressures from Congress and the American public, from America's allies, and from the Government of the Republic of China. Thus the firm decision to participate in the defense of the Offshore Islands was shrouded in some public ambiguity which, it was hoped, would not interfere with communicating with the Chinese Communists.*

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*The press reported that the President had met with General Twining, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others. Presidential Press Secretary James Haggerty stated that it was simply a routine meeting with the situation in the Taiwan Straits being watched very closely. The New York Times reported that it was generally assumed in Washington that the talk included a review of the state of the readiness of the Seventh Fleet, and that speculation in the State Department was that the Chinese Communist objective might be diplomatic and not military. Informed sources reported that the United States was urging the GRC to refrain from retaliatory attacks against the Chinese Communists.¹⁶

At the same time the press reported the first instance of public disagreement with American policy in a statement by Senator Wayne Morse that he would oppose American attempts to help the Chinese Nationalists defend the Offshore Islands.¹⁷

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RESPONSE IN THE FIELD

The decisions made at the White House meeting were communicated via military and political channels on the evening of the 25th to U. S. military and civilian officials in the Pacific and on Taiwan. 18*

The receipt by CINCPAC of the telegram (JCS #947046) authorizing the series of actions was to meet with general approval in Hawaii and Taiwan, with the exception of the sentence which stated that initially operations would have to be conventional rather than atomic. It will be recalled that the CINCPAC OPS PLAN 25-58 which had recently gone into effect had assumed that operations if any in the defense of Quemoy would be atomic.**

*Also following the White House meeting, a State Department telegram was dispatched to the U. S. Embassy in Tokyo informing it that the United States as part of its military build-up was planning to remove some stocks from Japan for use on Quemoy. The Ambassador was told to confidentially advise Japanese Premier Kishi of this but not to convey the impression that the United States felt that Japan had any control over the disposition of U. S. military equipment or its removal from Japan. 19 Throughout the crisis the United States was to be sensitive to Japanese opposition to a defense of Quemoy and to move cautiously in the use of equipment from Japan.

**In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had received a general directive from the President authorizing them to prepare for the use of atomic weapons in any situation larger than a very small brush fire war. 20 Although a PACAF order 21 had required all bombers to have an HE capability as well as a nuclear capability, 22 in fact other more

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It was therefore not surprising that the order to prepare for conventional operations was received with some consternation by CINCPAC officials and in particular by General Lawrence Kuter, the head of PACAF, who was probably not privy to Burke's explanation and warning to Felt of the reason for including the clause* and was to express continual embitterment at the notion that a conventional war might be fought in the Taiwan Straits. Nevertheless, CINCPAC moved as quickly as possible to develop contingency plans for conventional operations in the Taiwan Straits.

Immediately upon receipt of the JCS telegram #947046, CINCPAC ordered a review of its requirements for OPS PLAN 25-58 in case of a non-nuclear defense of the Offshore Islands. It was immediately clear that a supplementary

specific orders given to the Pacific Air Force had required them to concentrate on developing their ability to deliver atomic weapons. Toward the end of 1957, PACAF units received a message ordering them to give first priority to improving their "capability to deliver conventional [sic] atomic weapons" using various delivery systems and techniques. Lowest priority was to be given to "the development of the capability to deliver obsolete [i.e., high energy] weapons."²³

explosive

*See p. 107.

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Quemoy was attacked it would be impossible to withdraw from the Island or to reinforce it. A recent staff study, he noted, had indicated that Quemoy could hold out for from five to seven days without U. S. help.²⁹

Also on the 24th the Commander of ATF 13 (P), which was stationed on Taiwan, asked for reinforcements from the United States in the form of a TAC unit designated CASF X-RAY TONGO.^{30*} On the 25th the Taiwan Defense Command recommended that the United States take over air responsibility for Taiwan prior to Phase II of OPS PLAN 25-58. It was felt by the TDC that this would reinforce GRC confidence in U. S. support and also release GRC Air Force units for action over the Offshore Islands. CINCPACAF for what was described as "highly classified reasons" felt that the United States could not assume total responsibility for air defense over Taiwan.³²

On August 26 both CINCPAC and CINCPACAF provided estimates of the situation to Washington, the CINCPAC evaluation going directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CINCPACAF evaluation going through Air Force channels to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Though

*This deployment was not authorized by the Defense Department until August 28, and the redeployment did not begin until September 1.³¹

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there was basic agreement between the two commanders on the need to defend the Offshore Islands, there was considerable disagreement on the question of the possible role of a conventional defense, which was to continue throughout the crisis and to plague relations between Admiral Felt and General Kuter. It was to lead Kuter to become increasingly bitter about what he felt to be the lack of vehemence with which Felt opposed the decision of the President, transmitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to try to engage in conventional operations in the defense of the Offshore Islands.

CINCPAC concurred in JCS 947046, particularly with reference to withholding information from the GRC on the extent of the U. S. build-up and the willingness of the United States to escort and to contemplate atomic attacks on the defense of the Offshore Islands. Felt reported that the GRC and the Chinese Communists were uncertain as to United States actions in the case of a major attack on the Offshore Islands. He noted that the Chinese Communists appeared to be working up to a major attack on one or both of the Island groups. His estimate was that from the military point of view the Offshore Islands were not worth defending even in a limited war, but he recognized that the psychological factors outweighed military

ones and that the Islands should be defended. Felt cautioned that some Asians did not believe that Quemoy and Matsu were part of GRC territory and hence would not favor their defense.

Felt relayed the belief of the Taiwan Defense Commander that the GRC might attack the coastal airfields without U. S. consent in the event of an invasion of Quemoy but indicated that he did not agree with this evaluation. The Pacific Commander expressed the view that offensive action against the mainland should not be taken except as a last resort, but he reported that all his subordinate commanders were convinced that the Chinese Communists had the airpower to cut off the Quemoy garrison. If the Chinese Communists did make an all-out effort, he reported Smoot's estimate that the garrison could hold out for approximately five to seven days without U. S. aid. At this point, he indicated, an air offensive against the Chinese Communist airfields would be necessary if the United States were to defend the Islands successfully. Felt noted that it was questionable whether the Islands could be defended with only nonnuclear forces, but that planning was now being done on an urgent basis to determine requirements if the use of nuclear weapons were not authorized.

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He concluded by noting that the Chinese Communists were probing and trying to test or provoke U. S. action, and that they could be discouraged short of a full-scale war. The United States, he urged, must keep its own counsel regarding its eventual action if the Chinese Communists forced the issue.³³

While Admiral Felt was expressing uncertainty about the possibility of defending the Offshore Islands against a massive invasion by conventional means, General Kuter was asserting in no uncertain terms in Air Force messages, that this could not be done. On August 25 Kuter had asked for clarification through Air Force channels of whether or not he might be required to defend against an all-out attack on the Offshore Islands without the implementation of current OPS PLAN 25-58. He was assured by the Air Force in Washington that, assuming the necessary high-level decisions were obtained, the current OPS PLAN would be implemented and that SAC would strike first against the newly reoccupied fields, followed by attacks on other airfields to destroy Chinese Communist aircraft wherever they might be.³⁴ On the next day Kuter stated flatly in an Air Force message that U. S. air action had no chance of success unless atomic weapons were used from the outset. He suggested

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that if there were an all-out invasion of one of the major Offshore Islands, the United States should authorize the GRC to bomb the Chinese Communist mainland airfields with conventional weapons, should provide U. S. naval and air support near Quemoy, and should issue an ultimatum to the Chinese Communists to stop or face U. S. bombing. If the Communist Chinese aggression continued, the United States should use nuclear weapons against the mainland in increments. First, the Chinese Communist airfields directly opposite Taiwan and the military control center at Ching Yang should be attacked. Second, selected targets within a 400-mile radius of Taiwan, including Beagle bases and control centers should be struck. Third, the remainder of the targets in Annex E (the Atomic Annex) of OPS PLAN 25-58* should come under attack. Fourth, Phase III of OPS PLAN 25-58, which involved destruction of Chinese Communist war-making capability, should be implemented. He concluded on this point that: "It is estimated that combined U. S./China capability to defend the OSI without discretionary use of nuclear weapons would be costly and probably ineffective. Less forceful alternatives in the long run would prove disastrous."³⁵

*I have not seen this Annex.

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On the general question of Chinese Communist intentions, Kuter was in less disagreement with his immediate superior, Admiral Felt. He advised the Chief of Staff of the Air Force that the Chinese Communists were aiming to trigger a GRC reaction and make the GRC appear to be the aggressor, and probing U. S. policy as a start in an interdiction program. He predicted, however, that the Chinese Communists would avoid use of massive air power against Quemoy in fear of U. S. retaliation but that they would probably assault one of the smaller Quemoy Islands (that the United States had decided not to defend) within forty-eight hours. He felt that the GRC would not take much more provocation without attacking targets on the mainland, but that the United States should use all of its efforts to prevent mainland bombing while making a strong show of force, which he felt could be successful in preventing a Chinese Communist all-out sea and air effort against Quemoy and Matsu.³⁶

Kuter made it clear here and in other messages through Air Force channels that he was much less convinced than were other American officers in the field that it was in the interests of the United States to defend the Offshore Islands. He was equally vehement in his belief, in contrast

an opponent in war with US?

to the other officers in the field, that it would be disastrous to attempt a conventional defense of Quemoy.

On the next day Kuter, in a personal message to General Gerhart, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, stated his belief that the United States should keep out unless it were prepared to use its strongest weapons. He expressed surprise about the JCS statement that SAC B-47's on Guam had no capability for HE* since on or before November, 1957, he had been informed of a high level decision that all bombers, fighter bombers and strategic fighters were to maintain a dual capability.

He continued:

On the one hand I would like to give three rousing cheers to the JCS statement. On the other hand it seems inconceivable that the United States might put fleet and marine aviation PACAF into a high explosive air war, and SAC should be incapable of entering the fight.

He expressed the belief that SAC must come in if an HE war were to take place, however distasteful this might be.³⁷ In response General Gerhart informed General Kuter on August 29 that the Air Force could not agree in principle.

*See above, pp. 113-114.

with the use of SAC for nonnuclear operations. He confirmed that the units on Guam did have racks for HE weapons but that ten hours were needed for conversion.

He shared Kuter's concern with the inadequacy of current HE forces.³⁸ Two days later Kuter, in a personal message to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, replied that he, too, abhorred the use of SAC for HE missions. However, he continued, if he were ordered to fight an HE war, he needed to use these forces. One B-36 could deliver more HE than a full squadron of F-100's.

If we must fight the war with HE weapons [he continued] it is in the best interests of the security of the country that part of the load be carried by the great bomb-carrying capability of the B-36's or B-47's rather than expending the entire EWP [Emergency War Plan] forces of this command which have also been organized, trained and equipped and positioned for the primary mission of nuclear strikes in general war.³⁹

Like his military counterparts in the field, U. S. Ambassador to the Republic of China Everett Drumright was moving in the period immediately following the Chinese Communist intense bombardment to implement the actions approved in Washington and at the same time to provide his assessment of Chinese Communist actions to his State Department superiors. Immediately after the outbreak of the

An operational message went from the CNO to CINCPAC authorizing escort to the five Matsus and Big and Little Quemoy.²¹ Just a few hours later, in the early hours of August 30, it was relayed by CINCPAC to the CINCPAC Fleet²² and then passed to Carrier Task Force 72 of the Seventh Fleet which had been created for operations involving the current crisis.²³ In a message to the Taiwan Defense Command on September 1, CINCPAC ordered U. S. escorts to avoid shore batteries if possible but indicated that they should fire if fired upon while moving out of range. Felt noted that the JCS had been given wide latitude and that it therefore was necessary to use strength with the finest judgment possible and not engage in moves which could be construed as offensive actions by the United States.²⁴

The Task Force ships were ordered in line with the original CNO to CINCPAC message to provide convoy protection and escort to GRC supply ships to Quemoy and Matsu up to three miles and to the extent that the GRC could not perform the task alone.²⁵

The Commander of the Seventh Fleet, in a message to all his subordinate forces on September 2, gave them permission to give all possible support in protecting Chinese Nationalist ships whether attacked by surface, air or

subsurface in international waters. They were warned, however, not to provoke fire or invite exchanges with shore batteries. The message concluded: "Remember, the shot you fire will be heard around the world, maybe in the floor of the U. N., be right; however, the objective is to get the supplies through."²⁶

Simultaneously with the order to the Pacific Fleet authorizing it to engage in convoy operations, CINCPAC authorized CINCPACAF to undertake the air defense of Taiwan and to attack any air forces making hostile moves. Hot pursuit was authorized as well as hot chase to enemy territory but not retaliatory attacks.²⁷ PACAF in turn passed the message to its subordinate commanders informing them that the possibility existed that the United States might, at least initially, employ only non-nuclear munitions.

They were ordered to be prepared to use HE against coastal air bases and other targets which posed an invasion threat. The commanders were assured that expansion oper into China would involve the use of nuclear weapons.²⁸

Smoot reported on September 2 that in order to assume responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan he needed one all-weather squadron in south Taiwan and one in the north as well as additional communication facilities. He informed

CINCPAC that these would be available on September 9 and that he would approach the GRC on the 12th.

Also following the White House meeting on the 29th, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that CASF XRAY TONGO, a TAC mobile unit, be deployed to Taiwan.²⁹

On August 31 Drumright and Smoot met with Chiang to inform him of the decisions reached as a result of his letter to Eisenhower. On the basis of JCS #947298

Smoot outlined the American position as follows:

In the event that the Chinese Communists launch air attacks on the Kinmen [Quemoy] or Matsu Islands and such attacks are met by GRC aircraft, the Government of the United States would consider that the GRC's inherent right of self-defense would include GRC air attacks on Chinese Communist aircraft conducting such attacks and that the right to pursuit exists [sic.]. In other words, GRC aircraft would be justified in following Chinese Communist aircraft to their bases and attacking aircraft at these bases.³⁰

This presentation slurred over the question of what islands were in the Quemoy group and did not specify, as the President had indicated at the White House meeting, that hot pursuit should refer only to the bombing of Big Quemoy and Little Quemoy, and not to attacks on the smaller islands which Chiang considered a part of the Quemoy complex.

... the message conveyed to him was one that he

could interpret, and probably in good faith did interpret, as authorizing hot pursuit for air attacks on Erh-tan or Tan-tan. Had air attacks occurred against these Islands, it seems clear that Chiang would have ordered retaliation against the mainland with the feeling that he had received authority from the United States to do so.

During the meeting Chiang, according to Drumright, expressed deep disappointment at the non-concurrence by Eisenhower in his request for retaliatory acts against the mainland. His reaction was described as violent and he was reported to have said that he could not accept limitations on the right of self-defense. He still wished, he said, not to take action without U. S. concurrence and hoped for a positive response within three days. Drumright in reporting this said that he felt that a personal letter from Eisenhower to Chiang would be useful.³¹ However, as was noted, Eisenhower had expressed strong distaste for personal communications between himself and Chiang Kai-shek.

The Drumright telegram had expressed the view that the Quemoy defenders might be strangled and CINCPAC, in a message commenting on the Drumright telegram, concurred in this assessment. Felt noted that the situation was virtually as stated in Phase II of JCS #947298 and recommended that he be authorized

On both September 2 and 3, with Eisenhower vacationing in Newport, top officials in Washington met to consider what should be done if the Chinese Communists launched an invasion against the Offshore Islands. The meeting on the 2d, which lasted from 12:15 to 1:47, included Dulles and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff,⁴⁹ and was to reveal some differences among the Chiefs as well as with Dulles.

The meeting ranged over a wide group of subjects. Discussion centered around problems which were to be faced in the resupply convoy operations and the question of how to defend in Quemoy and in particular the role which nuclear weapons would have to play. The meeting began, however, with the military supplying some of the latest available intelligence data, including the fact that Quemoy then had sixty to ninety days of supplies and that the defenders were carefully rationing their shells although there was plenty of ammunition on Quemoy and on Taiwan. Taylor reported that twelve 8-inch howitzers were being shipped to Quemoy and should add substantially to the Quemoy defensive capability, but he reported that both sides are well dug in and that it was difficult to dig out gun emplacements on either side with

conventional weapons.* The Chinese Communists were reported not to have sufficient air strength in the area to attack the Offshore Islands or to supplement the interdiction by air attacks. A typhoon would prevent supply landings within the next three days by the Chinese Nationalists. There had been, according to Burke, no unusual junk concentrations but there were thousands of junks already in the area. Taylor reported that there had been an increase of two artillery divisions in the area opposite Taiwan. Burke reported that morale on Quemoy was excellent and that casualties had been limited to 180 with 150 killed. He reported that the GRC navy was lacking in top level leadership, that it was technically good, but that due to a lack of naval tradition it did not have the urge to go in and scrap. The navy, Burke said, had only a few ships and feared losses; it had many landing crafts.** Taylor noted that the Chinese Communists had shown in Korea that they could

* No specific study of the possible value of the 3-inch howitzers has been located and none was alluded to in any of the reports of conversations which I have seen.

** Burke was explaining a reference to the relative capability of the GRC Navy in a Navy paper which was discussed at the meeting.

assemble junks rapidly. Dulles asked if the GRC Air Force had the capability to hit junks. He told the group that Eisenhower had indicated to him that the GRC should have the authority to hit concentrations of junks which might be presaging an invasion, but that the GRC had not struck at junks observed at Amoy Harbor or elsewhere. He noted it was difficult to destroy junks without using napalm, which made them very expensive to attack. Twining observed, however, that the GRC did have a good supply of napalm.

Burke believed that the principal threat was not the junks, which the Island guns could handle, but rather the shore batteries. He concurred in Dulles's supposition that the Chinese Communists would not attempt to invade Quemoy until the artillery batteries had been silenced unless they were prepared to take heavy losses. Dulles noted that the Chinese Communists conceivably could stage a major assault at any time. Taylor however countered that this would take 300,000 to 400,000 troops and that the Chinese Communists would probably not want to commit this many. Burke noted that the waters around Quemoy were well mined and otherwise well defended and that the Quemoy garrison would put up determined resistance.

The meeting touched briefly on the problem of getting adequate information as to what was going on in the Taiwan Straits area. Burke replied that there was an Army Advisory Group on Quemoy as well as a CIA representative. General Clovis E. Byers, Military Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, reported that the Advisory Group communication facilities had been knocked out in the first bombardment and that they were using the CIA facility. Burke reported that he had sent a rough message asking for more adequate reporting.

There was then some discussion of what the United States would do if an American destroyer were hit in the convoy operations. Burke stated that the Navy would conduct rescue operations even if this meant entering Chinese Communist coastal waters. Dulles pointed out that the loss of American lives would come as a great shock to the U.S. public and that we had not given sufficient thought to the possible reaction here and abroad. Herter noted that awareness of this was what had kept the convoys thirty miles off the coast (i.e. beyond the range of the Chinese Communist guns). Burke stated that the U.S. public and Congress did not realize

how serious the situation was and that it was not just a question of the Offshore Islands but of the possible loss of the GRC. Dulles concurred, agreeing that nobody would mind very much the loss of the Offshore Islands but that the loss would mean further Communist aggression.

Nothing seemed worth a world war until you looked at the effect of not standing up to each challenge as posed.

Burke continued, noting that there was a danger to the whole U.S. Far Eastern position if we did not take a strong stand, and White commented that a strong stand would have a favorable impact on NATO as well. Dulles noted that a strong U.S. stand, particularly one that included the use of nuclear weapons, would probably lead Japan to demand a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Japan and that as a minimum they would request a cessation of U.S. support operations, including logistics support for the Taiwan operation. Burke noted that the base in Japan was not critical but that supplies from there were.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted largely to the question of how the United States might intervene and in particular if and how nuclear weapons should be used and what military action the United States would take if

it became necessary to intervene militarily. Twining stated that it would be necessary to strike at Chinese Communist airfields and shore batteries with small atomic weapons. He declared that all studies done in the Department of Defense showed that this was the only way to do it. The use of conventional weapons would mean protracted U.S. involvement in another Korean-type conflict. The Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that the Chinese Communists should be told that this was the United States' intention. Dulles observed that the use of nuclear weapons had important implications affecting the Government's whole foreign policy and asked that his staff inquire as to what Eisenhower had said publicly in terms of the possibility of American use of nuclear weapons.

At this point Taylor began a long statement indicating his disagreement with the extensive reliance on the use of nuclear weapons in this crisis.* He pointed to the need to distinguish between three types of attacks or situations: (a) a clear Chinese Communist amphibious attack on the Offshore Islands. (b) a protracted shelling

*cf. his comments at the meeting on August 15, see

operation threatening a breakdown in morale of the GRC defenders, and (c) heavy and continuing air bombardment.

In terms of the first situation, of Chinese Communist amphibious attack, Taylor, expressing greater confidence in current U.S. conventional capability than he had previously, argued that this could be beaten back by the GRC defense with conventional weapons and assistance from the United States. Dulles questioned whether this was in fact true for a surprise attack. Taylor replied that a successful operation would require a continuous back-up operation which could be destroyed by conventional attack and claimed that the JCS agreed that the United States had sufficient conventional capability in the area for this purpose. He stressed that Quemoy was not going to fall within a single day. Nevertheless he declared that the United States should determine in advance what its policy would be in the event of an attack.

Burke, arguing against the decision to depend initially on conventional forces, stated that the United States could beat off an amphibious attack even with heavy bombing only long enough to obtain authorization to use nuclear weapons. Therefore it might make more sense to use nuclear weapons immediately. Taylor countered that

therefore Burke was at least agreeing that it was not necessary to have authority to use nuclear weapons immediately upon the commencement of attack, but he also agreed that it would be necessary to use nuclear weapons if the Chinese Communists were able to and did maintain the attack. Burke agreed that the Chinese Communists would take heavy losses in the initial phase with conventional weapons, but it was then generally agreed that if they persisted, nuclear weapons would have to be used. Dulles summarized the agreement then by noting that it was not necessary to use nuclear weapons immediately but they would have to be used ultimately against a determined enemy prepared to accept the large casualties that could be inflicted by conventional bombing. This in a sense ratified Eisenhower's decision initially to use only conventional weapons, but it made sharper the unanimous belief that this would have to be quickly followed by nuclear strikes unless the Chinese Communists called off this operation. This consensus ruled out prolonged conventional operations for which CINCPAC was developing contingency plans.*

In terms of the second situation, of a protracted massive shelling threatening a breakdown in morale of the GRC defenders, Taylor agreed that elimination of the gun emplacements would require nuclear weapons. Burke concurred, pointing out that the Chinese Communists moved their guns around and had more gun positions than guns.

In terms of the third situation, of heavy and continuing air bombardment, Taylor also agreed that nuclear weapons would certainly have to be used. Dulles raised the question of what kind of nuclear weapons would be used. Taylor replied that according to current operations plans they would be seven to ten Kt. air-burst weapons. He noted that ground burst was more effective but too dirty. The lethal area of an air-burst weapon was three to four miles and there would be no fallout. The initial attack would be on five coastal airfields with one bomb per field. The plan was then to stop so as to observe the impact on Chinese Communist intentions. The result of the attack would be to take out aircraft on the ground and ground facilities, but runways would not be cratered and would be operable. He noted that the coastal fields did not have underground facilities. There was here the notion of a limited use

of atomic weapons followed by a pause during which it was hoped that the enemy would desist. If not, further nuclear strikes would be carried out.

Dulles raised the question that if the anticipated reaction against the use of nuclear weapons, particularly by American allies, was so hostile that we would be inhibited from using them except in the NATO theatre or in retaliation against a Soviet attack, our reliance on them might not be correct and productive. Burke replied that we were engaged in part in a war of nerves. Opposition to the use of nuclear weapons in Japan, for example, was inspired by the Communists. If an attack persisted, the United States could enter with nuclear weapons or lose the Islands, which would result in the loss of Taiwan. A strong nuclear counterattack would result in international opposition, Burke continued, but the leaders of other countries would soon realize that it was in their interests. The United States must stand firm with conventional weapons as long as possible but then must be prepared to use nuclear weapons. Otherwise we would lose the whole world within three years.

Taylor noted that this problem as to what extent we should rely on nuclear weapons was often discussed in the abstract but that this was the first specific case which pointed up to him the need for flexibility of forces.

Twining argued, however, that the United States could not afford the sort of forces indicated by Taylor's position.

Dulles agreed, arguing that regardless of the amount of force the United States might have and the amount of flexibility maintained it would still be no match for the manpower and conventional power of the Communist enemies on the Eurasian land mass. Taylor retorted that it was a question of the need for careful orchestration. Taylor stated that the United States should start with conventional weapons and use nuclear weapons only in the final stage. Twining reported that the United States could not support the needed divisions for this kind of planning and White argued that the United States could not maintain the needed air fleets. Burke in turn pointed out that naval aircraft had been stretched too thin to be used for conventional operations. Twining noted that if nuclear weapons had been used in Korea we could have done in two or three days what was done to the enemy in months of

saturation attacks and with fewer casualties on both sides. We must, he said, get used to the fact that nuclear weapons must be used. In fact the Communists might use them.

Dulles repeated the point he had made at a previous meeting that if we shrank from using nuclear weapons when military circumstances required, we would have to reconsider our whole defense posture. We were facing tough questions. Burke retorted that if they are not faced now, they would be harder later.

The meeting concluded with Twining, noting that increasing GRC firepower by supplying them with 8-inch howitzers would not necessarily result in knocking down gun emplacements but might keep them pinned down and would have good psychological effect on both sides. Nevertheless it was clearly agreed that nuclear weapons would be necessary if the United States had to defend Taiwan.^{50*} After the meeting Dulles talked very briefly

*Some of the substance of the meeting leaked to the press, including Taylor's objections. The Army later denied that Taylor had raised any objections. Roberts in the Washington Post on September 3 reported that while the official line was to keep them guessing it appeared that a decision had been made to defend Big and Little Quenoy and the Matsuy Islands but not the lesser islands, including... He reported the Pentagon's belief that it was... a... to hit the mainland... hold the... 51

circulated to the services a first draft of its position paper carrying the number JCS-2118/110. The file consisted of a brief memorandum addressed to the Secretary of Defense, an appendix which elaborated the thinking behind JCS policy, and a position paper, which was later to be approved by the President with only minor changes. The papers received general support among the services except over the question of the emphasis to be given to nuclear weapons. The draft as produced by the Joint Staff had indicated that it was "inevitable" that atomic weapons would be used in the event of a Chinese Communist invasion of the Offshore Islands which was not brought to a halt almost immediately. The Army proposed substitution of a paragraph which indicated that American involvement in defense of the Offshore Islands would be gradual, that initial action would be conventional, and atomic weapons would be used "only as a last resort." The Army proposed such a change in order "to present a more realistic appraisal of the probable sequence of events in case U.S. military power is actively used in defense of the off-shore islands."⁶³

The Air Force in particular objected to any change in the proposed memorandum, indicating that it felt there

would be a need for an immediate counterattack with atomic weapons in the event of an invasion of Quemoy.⁶⁴

On the morning of September 6, the Joint Chiefs formally approved JCS-2118/110, including a slightly altered statement on nuclear weapons which indicated "it is most probable" that atomic weapons would be used.⁶⁵ Table 16 indicates the change brought about by the Army request for revision of the paragraph on the use of atomic weapons. There was only a minor concession towards the Army view, reflecting the fact that the other chiefs, with the exception of Taylor, were united in the belief that nuclear weapons would have to be used very quickly in the event of a Chinese Communist attempt to invade

Quemoy.

The memorandum to the Secretary of Defense approved by the Joint Chiefs began by noting that American forces were spread dangerously thin in the Far East and that this condition of weakness was aggravated by the uncertainty over the use of atomic weapons. It noted that a crisis in Southeast Asia or in Korea might occur simultaneously with the crisis in the Taiwan Straits and that this would require mobilization of reserve forces.

The meeting of October 4 was the last to be held before the Chinese Communist ceasefire in the Taiwan Straits on October 6. It seems clear now that the Chinese Communists were not interested in any kind of negotiation at Warsaw. They had refused to take up any of the U.S. suggestions to discuss what particular Chinese Nationalist actions provoked them, nor were they willing to discuss the demilitarization of the Offshore Islands, even though it clearly might have led to the capture of the Islands by the Chinese Communists. The talks seemed rather to have been simply a device for giving the Chinese Communists a color of reasonableness which would both deter the United States from over-reacting by bombing the mainland, and cause it to put pressure on the Chinese Nationalists not to bomb the mainland while the artillery fire continued. At the same time, the Communists succeeded, simply by holding the talks, in exacerbating U.S.-GRC relations. The suggestion that the Offshore Islands be separated from Taiwan does not appear to have been made by Wang at the first meeting in order to lay the basis for negotiations. The Chinese did not repeat this suggestion and did not ask for an American reaction to it. Peking had no reason to believe that Washington would pull U.S. forces out of Taiwan in return for a Chinese promise

to allow the force to seize Taiwan.

For the United States, the holding of the talks once the Chinese had publicly proposed them was a political necessity. The Administration, faced with opposition from its allies, neutrals and from domestic public opinion, needed to do everything to make it appear that it desired peace. Dulles felt that Chou's proposal to reopen the talks might well be a sign of the Chinese desire to disengage and that the possibility of an agreement could not be entirely ruled out. In addition, the Secretary of State believed that the Chinese Communists had begun the crisis because they were provoked and therefore Beam was continually urged to draw the Chinese Communists into a discussion of what had provoked them so that the United States could eliminate this provocation and thus end the crisis. At the same time, Dulles, as well as his subordinates, was aware of the detrimental effect on U.S.-CPC relations which the talks produced. There was little hope in Washington that an agreement would be reached at Warsaw.

BRITISH PRESSURE ON WASHINGTON

Throughout the crisis the British Government made clear its opposition to American policy. American officials met frequently with British officials in an effort to explain the American position.

Throughout the crisis the British Government made clear its opposition to American policy. American officials met frequently with British officials in an effort to explain the American position.

On August 30 Acting Secretary Christian Herter met with the British Minister in Washington, Viscount Hood, at the British Embassy to discuss the situation.* Herter reported to Hood that there was no Chinese Communist build-up of land or sea forces and that the attempt seemed to be to wear out the defenses by interdiction. Hood asked if the United States had decided on a course of action in the event of a major assault on the Islands. Herter in effect evaded answering the question by stating that the matter was one for Presidential decision and added that the interdiction campaign might not be successful. He noted also that it was not clear whether the Chinese Communists were interested in real estate or simply wanted to create pressure for a UN Security Council seat or other political objectives. He stressed that the United States was avoiding additional commitments to the GRC.¹⁵¹

On the way back from Newport, Dulles dictated a letter to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan which accurately

* On August 29 the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom reported that most British opinion, including the Conservative Government, would oppose the U.S. use of even conventional force to defend Quemoy and Matsu. Macmillan, he predicted, would probably oppose the use of force by the Chinese Communists and urge consideration. Public reaction would be much more adverse if nuclear weapons were used. However, there was still support for the defense of

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summarized his view of the situation at this time and in which he tried to explain the reasoning behind his Newport statement. Dulles noted that it was regrettable that so much seemed to hang on these small islands which were not readily defensible. He argued that the United States had made a serious effort to get the GRC off the islands but that it had never pushed this to the point of coercion because keeping Taiwan in friendly hands was not separable from the GRC holding the Islands. He noted that CIA, State, and the JCS were unanimous in their belief that the loss of the Offshore Islands by subversion or assault would have a serious impact on the Government of the Republic of China and on the U.S. position in the Far East. In this light, he reported to Macmillan that Eisenhower had authorized statements which did not make any formal commitment but which did indicate that Eisenhower would probably act if there were an effort to take Quemoy and Matsu which the GRC could not successfully resist. However, the GRC capability was not negligible. The Chinese Communists had so far avoided aerial attacks, perhaps in the fear of bringing in the United States.

If the United States were to defend the Offshore Islands, Dulles wrote to Macmillan, the result would be of at least

small air-burst atomic weapons without fallout would likely be necessary. The entire military establishment assumed more and more that nuclear weapons would be used in the event of hostilities. If this were not the case, the U.S. would face a grave situation in view of the massive military manpower of the Sino-Soviet bloc. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned about the United States being spread too thin and the lack of world understanding of the U.S. position. Dulles concluded by expressing his belief that a balanced, firm decision would deter Chinese Communist action, but he noted that Khrushchev and Mao might be reckless and so miscalculate. Therefore the U.S. position did involve serious risks, though acting strongly involved less risk than inaction. 152

British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan responded quickly to the letter in which Dulles had remarked that the U.S. had to defend Quemoy and Matsu even though it might lead to a world war. Macmillan warned that the new Commonwealth nations would be against any action, and that the others were hardly more enthusiastic. He also quoted a statement by Winston Churchill, made originally in a private letter to Eisenhower during the previous (more Islands) crisis in 1955, that "war keep coastal lands would not

be defensible here." Macmillan remarked that it reflected public opinion in Great Britain then as well as it had in 1955. A small war was not likely to continue long and the use of nuclear weapons seemed possible. Macmillan asked whether the UN General Assembly or the Security Council could do anything. Picking up a suggestion that Dulles has made to United Kingdom Ambassador Hood that demilitarization would make a good public position, he asked whether the United States shouldn't raise this issue publicly since it might rally public support. Alternatively, Macmillan suggested, it might be presented publicly or privately to the Soviet Union, which might be anxious about the situation. Macmillan concluded by asking Dulles whether he believed the Soviet Union and Communist China had agreed on war.^{153*}

Following the White House meeting on September 6 when the decision on how to defend Quemoy was taken,^{**} Eisenhower replied to Macmillan's letter. It was difficult, he said, for those not in direct contact to appreciate Chiang's temperament and commented that Chiang gave the impression

*The letter is summarized by Eisenhower in Waging Peace, p. 300.

** See pp. 285-293.

that coercion would end his capacity to retain Taiwan in friendly hands. This stood in the way of what man, considered a reasonable solution. Eisenhower said that he hoped the Chou statement would mean the end of the crisis.¹⁵⁴ Dulles met with British Ambassador Lord Hood apparently to transmit the letter and to discuss the crisis.¹⁵⁵

On September 11 British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd in a letter to John Foster Dulles said that the Western line of defense, including Taiwan, was weakened by the GRC retention of Quemoy and Matsu. He cautioned that if the defense of them involved even the use of tactical nuclear weapons, the risk of a chain reaction was obvious. The letter asserted that GRC withdrawal would strengthen the GRC position and might be the only way to avoid defeat. With reference to the possibility of a demilitarization of the Offshore Islands, which was currently being considered by the American Government, Lloyd greatly doubted that the Chinese Communists would accept such a proposal even if the GRC did. He alluded to the importance of the Warsaw talks and suggested the value of talks at a higher level. In concluding, Lloyd indicated that the United Kingdom was opposed to the American policy of defense of the Offshore Islands (if in fact that American policy since this had

never been formally made clear to the British), but said that the United Kingdom was willing to make a trial balloon of any idea if the United States thought it would help and concluded finally by asking how the United Kingdom could help. 156

On the next day, Dulles met with the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Harold Caccia, to explain the American position in greater detail. He attempted to link the Chinese Communist move with the worldwide Communist offensive by noting that the Soviets were trying to give the impression that they were militarily dominant and that their military threat had caused the Western powers to back down at Suez, in the Turkish-Syrian clash, and in the recent Lebanon-Iraq crisis. The Secretary of State argued, apparently without any success, that if the United States seemed to be backing down, the whole Western defense structure in the Far East might collapse. 157

On September 26 Dulles met with Lloyd at the UN and took the line that the blockade could be broken. Lloyd reported to Dulles on information obtained from the Indian Ambassador to Peking, from the Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, Krishna Menon, and from Lloyd's conversations

The Indian Ambassador reported that the

Chinese Communists would not stop their actions if the U.S. military build-up in the area continued and that they would insist on withdrawal from the Offshore Islands but not Taiwan. Menon had reported that he was certain the Chinese Communists would not push for Taiwan at that time. Gromyko, according to Lloyd, first demanded withdrawal from the Offshore Islands and then asked if the United States might be willing to separate the Offshore Island issue from the issue of Taiwan. 153

While Washington acted to keep London informed and took British opposition as a sign of widespread dissent from American policy, the British position did not, as should be clear, have any specific direct effect on U.S. policy.

CHAPTER X: THE CHINESE COMMUNIST CEASEFIRE (October 6, 1958 --)

MILITARY ACTION

On October 6 at 1:00 a.m. local time, the Peking radio broadcast to Taiwan a statement by Chinese Communist Minister of Defense Peng Te-huai announcing a one-week ceasefire provided that "there be no American escort." The passage stated that the fire had been in retaliation for Nationalist actions against the mainland. Peng called for negotiations to bring the two sides together.¹ The statement was as follows:

All compatriots, military and civilian, in Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu!
We are all Chinese. Of all choices, peace is the best. The fighting round Quemoy is of a punitive character. For quite a long time, your leaders have been far too wild. They have ordered aircraft to carry out wanton raids on the mainland, dropping leaflets and secret agents, bombing Foochow and harassing Kiangsu and Chekiang, reaching as far as Yunnan, Kweichow, Szechuan, the Kangting area and Chinghai. How can this be tolerated? Hence the firing of a few shells, just to call your attention. Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu are Chinese territory. To this you agree, as proved by documents issued by your leaders, which confirm that they are decidedly not territory of the Americans. Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu are part of China, they do not constitute another country. There is only one China, not two, in the world. To this, you also agree, as proved by documents issued by your leaders. The military agreement signed between your leaders and the Americans is unilateral; we do not recognize it. It should be abrogated. The day will certainly come when the Americans will let you in the lurch. Do you not believe it? History will bear witness to it. The clue is already there in the statement made by Dulles on September 30. Placed in your circumstances, how can you help but feel dismayed? In the last analysis, the American imperialists are our common enemy. It is hard to stand for long the lack of civilians in Quemoy and Matsu, suffering from hunger and cold. Out of compassion, I have ordered the

morale and declared in conclusion that if Quemoy were lost, the effect on Taiwan would be disastrous and defense would crumble.⁵⁸ Dulles and Chiang met again informally for dinner that evening.⁵⁹

Taylor reported to his colleagues in the JCS that the Dulles-Chiang talks were being conducted on a very private basis with no military officials present. However, Dulles briefed the group after his meeting with Chiang on the 21st, telling them that he had raised the question of reducing forces on the Offshore Islands after the firing ended. He expressed his view that it was neither practical nor necessary to reduce the garrisons to the point of being lightly held outposts and he asked the military to work out a solution to reduce the garrison by about 15,000 or 20,000 men.⁶⁰

During their first meeting on October 22, which was held at 10:30 a.m., Dulles read to Chiang the full text of the talking paper which he had prepared. The paper began by noting that the greatest danger to the GRC was political, stemming from the world feeling that the GRC wanted war. It declared that the GRC could have an assured future if it made clear that its ultimate

purposes were not military. The GRC's image must be a peaceful one. This part of the talking paper, as noted, had been read by Dulles to Chiang at their meeting on the 21st without it being clear that it was from a formal paper. On the 22d Dulles read the entire paper and then left it with Chiang. The paper recommended the following provisions, among others, for creating a peaceful image:

- (1) The GRC will conduct itself as if there were a de facto armistice and will proclaim that it is willing to conclude an armistice.
- (2) The GRC will re-emphasize that it will not by forceful means initiate a return to the mainland.
- (3) The GRC will avoid commando raids and overflights.
- (4) The GRC will accept any solution of the Offshore Islands problem that does not turn them over to the Chinese Communists. The GRC will not use the Offshore Islands to prosecute the civil war, for example, by blockading Amoy or Foochow, or as a jumping off point to the mainland.
- (5) Forces on the Offshore Islands will be revised to make them more mobile.

(6) Education, art and culture will be emphasized.

The talking paper continued:

Thus the GRC can better thwart the materialistic efforts of the CPR on the mainland; it can be a symbol which the mainland will observe and envy; attract more lasting support on Taiwan; can better hold loyalty of overseas Chinese; and can make itself into something which not only the U.S. but the free peoples everywhere will want to stand for and cherish.

And the paper was signed "John Foster Dulles."⁶¹

After presenting the paper, Dulles stated that the GRC must make clear its willingness to work for an armistice. He declared that blame for disturbing the peace must be put on the Chinese Communists and that unless the GRC moved in this direction many nations would switch their recognition of the GRC to the Chinese Communists. To prevent this, the GRC must take steps along the lines suggested in the paper.

Chiang agreed to consider the paper but noted that his Government, as a revolutionary one, attached great importance to principle.⁶²

At this meeting and the one that was to be held later in the day, Dulles was accompanied by Drumright and Robertson from the Department of State, but on these occasions were in military officers

present. Between the Dulles-Chiang meeting and the meeting at 7:00 p.m., Chinese Nationalist Foreign Minister Huang met with Drumright and told him that the Chinese Communists wanted all the Pacific. He said that the Chinese Nationalists had exercised great restraint and would not oppose a de facto ceasefire. He indicated, however, that the suggestions advanced by Dulles had shaken the foundations of the Republic of China. They were tantamount, he declared, to a voluntary acceptance of the two-China idea, which would cause the GRC to lose the support of the Chinese on the mainland. If the GRC had to choose between the loss of support of China by espousing a two-China principle and losing the support of the free world, it would choose the latter course.⁶³ At the same meeting, Drumright gave to the Chinese Nationalists the U.S. draft of the proposed communiqué to be issued at the conclusion of the Dulles-Chiang conversations.

During the same day Drumright met at the Embassy with U.S. authorities on Taiwan. At a meeting with military officials it was noted that the GRC had agreed to the withdrawal of 18,000 men, which is one full division of