# Air Operations in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958

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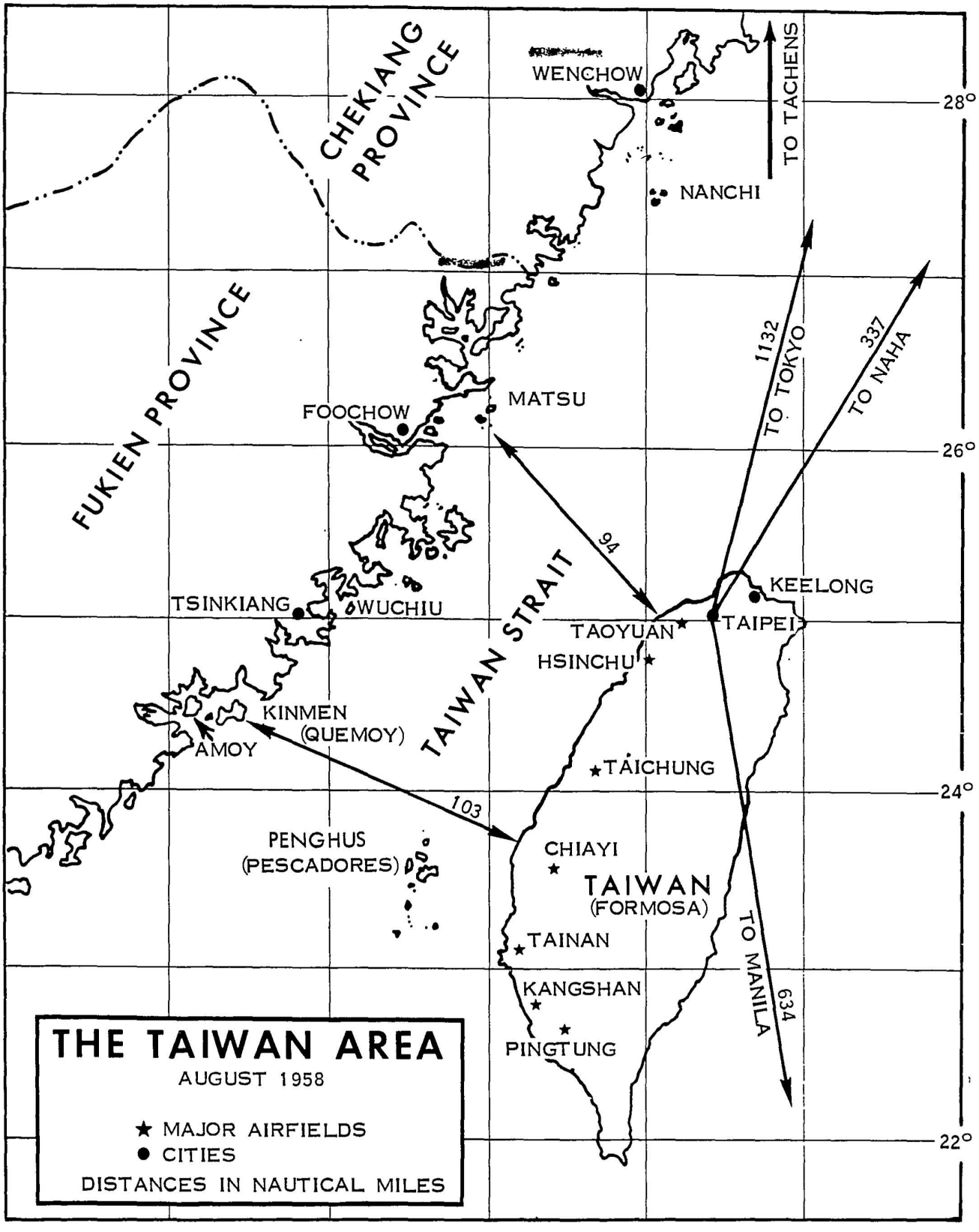
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TO MANILA
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PINGTUNG
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THE TAIWAN AREA
AUGUST 1958
★ MAJOR AIRFIELDS
● CITIES
DISTANCES IN NAUTICAL MILES
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1 INCH = 46 STATUTE MILES

# Air Operations in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958

**By Jacob Van Staaversen**

**November 1962**
**USAF Historical Division Liaison Office**

# 1962 FORWARD

*Air Operations in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958* is one of a series of studies of air operations in international incidents, prepared by the USAF Historical Division Liaison Office at the request of the Directorate of Plans, Headquarters, USAF. This historical narrative, by Jacob Van Staaveren, is based on primary source materials available in 1960 – messages and correspondence – and on histories from many levels of the Air Force, including units, commands, and the Air Staff. Originally prepared in a very few copies, the study has been in great demand by the Air Staff, major commands, and Department of Defense agencies and is now being published for wider dissemination.

The defense of Taiwan has been and will continue to be a source of major concern to the United States and especially to the U.S. armed services. It is likely that there may be more military crises in 1958 provided a test of American military planning concepts that should prove a value for future planning. Occurring in the Pacific almost simultaneously with the Lebanon crisis of July-August 1958, it created certain planning, operational, and logistical problems that had not been anticipated.

Joseph W. Angell, Jr.
Chief, USAF Historical Division

# 2026 FORWARD

This addition of *Air Operation in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958* has been retyped from the original as well as photographs have been added. The historical narrative written by Jacob Van Staaveren in 1962 discusses the issue surrounding Taiwan then, that continues to be an issue today.

R. Ray Ortensie, Jr.
Director, History & Heritage Directorate
HQ Air Force Materiel Command

September 2026

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# I. THE TAIWAN CRISIS OF 1954-55

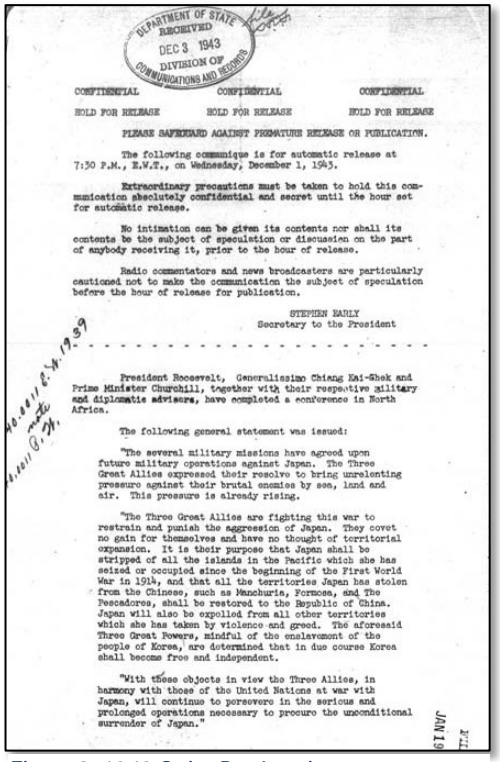
Lying about 100 miles off the mainland of China is the island of Taiwan, also known to the Western world as Formosa. Its 13,429 square miles roughly equal the combined area of the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Taiwan is 243 miles long and from 60 to 80 miles wide. With the US-held island of Okinawa 350 miles to the northeast and the Philippine Islands 225 miles to the southeast, Taiwan is one of the most important military bastions in the western Pacific. About 25 miles from the island, in the Taiwan Strait, are the Penghus, a cluster of islets also called the Pescadores. Historically an appendage of Taiwan, they too are important because of their strategic position.




*Figure 1: Taiwan Strait area*

The people of Taiwan are primarily of Chinese stock, derived mostly from Fukien and Kwangtung provinces, although some come from the south China plateau. About 2 percent are aborigines. During the twentieth century the population of Taiwan expanded rapidly, from about 3.6 million in 1920 to about 10 million in 1956. The latter figure included some 2 million refugees who fled from the mainland in 1946-49. About 480,000 Japanese were repatriated to Japan in 1945.

China ceded Taiwan and the Penghus to Japan at the end of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, but 50 years later these territories were again in Chinese hands. In the Cairo Declaration of November 1943, the United States together with the United Kingdom and the Republic of China called for a return to China of all territories taken from that country by the Japanese. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 the United States and the United Kingdom, with the concurrence of China and the subsequent adherence of the Soviet Union, signed a declaration stipulating that the terms of the Cairo Declaration be carried out. With the defeat of Japan, China assumed administrative control over Taiwan and the



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STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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President Roosevelt, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and Prime Minister Churchill, together with their respective military and diplomatic advisers, have completed a conference in North Africa.

The following general statement was issued:

"The several military missions have agreed upon future military operations against Japan. The Three Great Allies expressed their resolve to bring unrelenting pressure against their brutal enemies by sea, land and air. This pressure is already rising.

"The Three Great Allies are fighting this war to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan. They covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion. It is their purpose that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914, and that all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and The Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China. Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed. The aforesaid Three Great Powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.

"With these objects in view the Three Allies, in harmony with those of the United Nations at war with Japan, will continue to persevere in the serious and prolonged operations necessary to procure the unconditional surrender of Japan."

JAN 19

*Figure 2: 1943 Cairo Declaration*

Penghus. In September 1951, as a last formality, Japan and 26 other nations (not including the Soviet Union) signed a treaty of peace wherein Japan renounced all title and claim to these islands.

At the end of World War II the civil war that had been smoldering since the late 1920's broke out anew between the Chinese Nationalist government under President Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communist forces entrenched in north China. By March 1948 the Communists controlled Manchuria; by year's end they had seized virtually all of the country north of the Yangtze River. Defeat followed defeat until the Nationalists were driven off the mainland of China. They fled to Taiwan, the Penghus, and a number of offshore islands, primarily the Kinmen (Quemoy), Matsu, and Tachen groups.* In December 1949, Taipei became the provisional capital of the remnants of the Republic of China. Meanwhile, in Peiping on 1 October 1949, the Chinese Communists established a new People's Republic of China, a regime recognized by the Soviet Union two days later.



*Figure 3: Gen George C Marshall*

### *US Policy toward Taiwan, 1949-54*

During the immediate postwar period a United States mission, headed by Gen George C Marshall, made an unsuccessful attempt to mediate the Chinese civil war. After the Nationalist lost mainland China, the US State Department attributed the defeat to internal political, economic, and military weaknesses that had bene beyond the power of the United States to remedy

* The Kinmen groups consist of Big and Little Kinmen plus four other islands, all within 10 miles of Fukien Province. Big Kinmen, about 13 miles long and 8 miles across at its widest point, lies only five miles from Fukien Province and Communist-held Amoy Island. The Matsu group consists of seven islands also about 10 miles from Fukien Province. They lie just outside the Min River estuary at the northern entrance to the Taiwan Strait and are about 155 nautical miles northeast of the Kinmen's. The Tachen group consists of 2 main islands, Shang and Hsia, about 10 miles from Chekiang Province, plus 23 smaller islands. The Tachens lie about 250 nautical miles north of Taiwan.

save through outright intervention. Although sympathetic to the Nationalists, the United States initially avoided policy that would risk involvement in the Chinese civil war. President Truman stated on 5 January 1950 that the US Government would provide no military aid for Chinese forces and desired no special rights, privileges, or military bases on Taiwan.[1]



*Figure 4: US President Harry S Truman*

The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 ended this policy and led to the military neutralization of Taiwan. Observing that its loss to the Communists would threaten the security of the Pacific area and US forces serving in that area, President Truman directed that the US Seventh Fleet to prevent an attack on Taiwan. At the same time the fleet was ordered to prevent any sea or air operations by the Nationalists government against the mainland. In July the JCS affirmed the strategic value of the island to the United States. Their recommendations resulted in renewal of military assistance to the Nationalists in February 1951 and the establishment of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Taipei in November 1952.[2]

In February 1953, shortly after assuming office, President Eisenhower altered US policy toward Taiwan when he declared that the US Seventh Fleet would cease to shield Communist China from the Nationalist.[3] However, the "unleased" military forces of the Chiang government did not attack the mainland, and the action had no major impact on the Korean War.

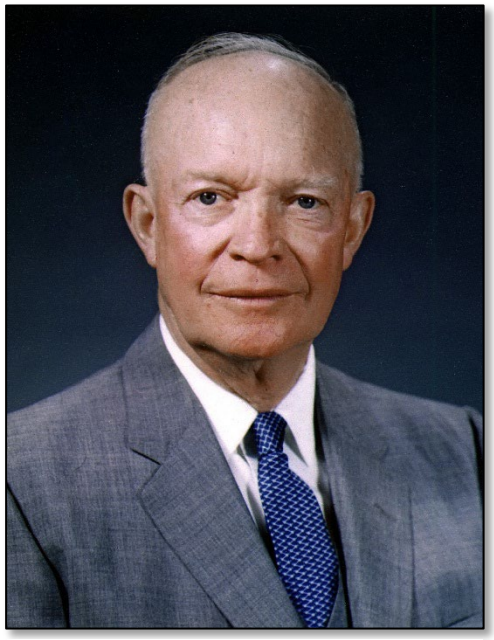

*Figure 5: US President Dwight D Eisenhower*

The cessation of hostilities in Korea in July 1953 eased tension in the Far East only temporarily, The Chinese Communists renewed their assistance to the Indochinese revolutionaries who were fighting French rule. French defeats led to the establishment of a Communist government in North Vietnam. This prompted the United States to enter into new military defense arrangements. It took the lead in concluding a seven-nation Southeast Asia Collection Defense Treaty, signed in

Manila in September 1954. Then, on 2 December, it signed a bilateral mutual defense treaty with the Chinese Nationalist government, assuring the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus and such "other territories" as might be determined by mutual consent – an allusion to the small, offshore islands.[4]

In an exchange of notes between the two governments on 10 December 1954, the United States recognized that the Nationalists possessed the inherent right of self-defense not only for Taiwan and the Penghus but also for "other territory" under their control (i.e., the offshore islands). On their part the Nationalists accepted a limitation on their freedom of action. The use of force in this area by either the Nationalist government or the United States would be a joint decision except in an emergency when the Nationalists clearly might have to defend themselves.[5] The notes reflected US fear that conflict with the Communists might arise from unilateral action by the Nationalists who fervently wished to repossess the mainland.

By this time the status of the Nationalist-held offshore islands had become an increasingly acute problem for the United States. The Communists made unsuccessful attempts to invade the Tachens in May and August 1954, Big Kinmen in September, and Wuchiu Island, about 60 miles northeast of Big Kinmens and Tachens. Against this background of tension, US Secretary of States John Foster Dulles, on1 December 1954, publicly discussed the US commitment to defend the "other territories" referred to in the mutual defense treaty. Explaining that the status of the offshore islands was not affected by the treaty, he said that their defense by the United States would depend on the nature of the specific islands under attack and whether this attack was deemed part of the defense of Taiwan. On this matter the President would probably make the final decision.[6]



*Figure 6: Gen John E Hull, Commander-in-Chief, Far East*

### *US Air Operations during the 1954-55 Crisis*

Meanwhile, Chinese Communist forays against the offshore islands and limited air action by both the Nationalists and Communist air forces spurred US military preparations in the area. On 4 September 1954 the JCS warned the Commander-in-Chief Far East (CINCFE), Gen John E Hull, in Tokyo, and the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), Adm

Felix B Stump, in Hawaii, that it might be necessary to implement the latter's Ops Plan 51-53.* This plan called for augmentation of CINCPAC's air and naval units and for US participation with Nationalist forces, if authorized, in the defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and some of the offshore islands. In approving the plan, the JCS had directed the establishment of a USAF component of the Pacific Command, and, on 1 July 1954, the Air Force had formed the Pacific Air Force primarily for this purpose. Its commander was subordinate to the commander of the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) – a major command of CINCFE – in matters pertaining solely to the Air Force and subordinate to CINCPAC in matters relating to the defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and the Philippines.

In November, JCS directed the Air Force to designate a fighter wing within FEAF for dispatch to Taiwan on short notice. For FEAF, the possibility of deploying a wing posed manifold logistical, maintenance, communication, and fuel problems. FEAF was also mindful of CINCFE's concern lest the transfer of too many military units to Taiwan jeopardize the defense of other areas (Korea, Japan, and Okinawa). It was finally determined that a show of force, if necessary, could be made from Taiwan by rotating squadrons of FEAF's 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing (F-86's) from Japan to the island as part of a training and familiarization program. The State and Defense Departments concurred in the rotation plan on 22 January 1955 during another period of rising tension in the Taiwan Strait.[7]



*Figure 7: Republic of China soldiers being evaluated by US forces from the Tachen Islands in March 1955*

On 17 January, Ichiang, a small island northwest of the Tachens, had fallen to Communist forces. On 24 January, President Eisenhower asked Congress for a resolution to authorize him to employ the armed forces promptly and effectively to assure the security of Taiwan and the Penghus. The President's request was approved by overwhelming majorities in the House and Senate late in January. The resolution passed by the Congress read as follows:[8]

> Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That the President of the Untied States be and he hereby is authorized to employ the Armed forces of the United States as he deemed

* The JCS had transferred responsibility for the defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and the Philippines from CINCFE to CINCPAC on 15 March 1952.

> necessary for the specific purpose of securing and protecting Formosa and the Pescadores against armed attack, this authority to include the securing and protecting of such related positions and territories of that area now in friendly hands and the taking of such other measures as he judges to be required or appropriate in assuring the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores.
>
> This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, and shall so report to the Congress.

Also on 24 January, JCS, with State and Defense approval, ordered the entire 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing to Taiwan. The change in plans resulted from a sudden US decision to evacuate about 40,000 Chinese Nationalists soldiers and civilians from the Tachen Islands, which were considered indefensible. Ships and amphibious elements of CINCFE's naval forces joined the US Seventh Fleet in assisting the evaluation. Following preliminary air deployments on 26 January, three squadrons of the 18th Wing flew from Japan and the Philippines to bases at Chiayi, Tainan, and Taoyuan on Taiwan. Transports of the Fifth Air Force's 315th Air Division lifted personnel, supplies, and equipment.9

To direct air operation from Taiwan, the Fifth Air Force established Headquarters, Air Task Force Fifth (Provisional) at Taipei. Its mission was to cover the Navy's evacuation of the islands, protect the carrier Princeton, and, in coordination with the Chinese Nationalist Air Force (CNAF), provide for air defense, search, and rescue in an area south and west of a line 27°N 125°E to 28°N 121°E.[10]

On 3 February the 18th Wing had on hand 65 combat-ready aircraft and 78 combat-ready pilots. For a brief period, it flew training and familiarization missions. During the evacuation of the Tachens, which began on 9 February and continued until the 13th, the 18th flew 206 sorties, 184 of them over the Tachen and Nanchi islands* in direct support missions. The CNAF, jointly responsible with the US Navy for antisubmarine patrol south of 27N, flew P4Y aircraft 1,000 feet and maintained top cover with their F-47's and F-84's. All forces were cautioned to remain at least three miles from the Chinese mainland. In accordance with JCS instructions, operational control of the 18th Wing passed from CINCFE (FEAF) to CINCPAC (Pacific Air Force).[11]

Thus, what had been initially planned as a show of force through a training exercise became a tactical operation. After the successful completion of the evacuation without Communist opposition, the Taiwan Strait crisis began to wane. By the end of February, the

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* On 24 February the Nationalists also voluntarily abandoned the Nanchi group, midway between Taiwan and the Tachens and 25 miles from the China coast.

18th's aircraft returned to their home stations, ending CINCPAC's control over the wing. The United States continued to display its air strength on Taiwan, however. CINCPAC's squadron rotation plan was put into effect by JCS directive. The first unit to rotate, the 69th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, temporarily stationed at Clark AB, flew to Chiayi AB in February 1955. Other fighter-bomber or fighter-interceptor squadrons followed, initially at about two-week intervals and after 1 July 1955 for longer periods.[12] In January 1958 units again began to deploy more frequently for shorter periods.

The Tachen evacuation focused attention on the ability of US and Chinese Nationalist forces to defend Taiwan, the Penghus, and the offshore islands and to conduct joint air operations from Taiwan. The operational problems were formidable. The major deficiency was communications, for US forces had to rely on inadequate and unreliable Nationalist on- and off-island telephone, teletype, radio, and radar systems. The Joint Operations Center (JOC), a Chinese agency, was almost inoperable, and the use of Chinese installers, operators, and maintenance men created a language barrier that compounded communication difficulties. An important logistical deficiency was the severe shortage of F-86 drop tanks – sufficient for only two days of sustained operations. An intricate US command structure on Taiwan complicated both logistical support and liaison with the Nationalists. There was also an urgent need for closer US and Nationalist defense planning. And the CNAF needed more and better aircraft.[13]



*Figure 8: Admiral Felix B Stump, Commander-in-Chief, CINCPAC*

To rectify some of the deficiencies, plans were prepared for improved communication and radar systems and air-base facilities. A US section of the Chinese JOC was established in June 1955. Meanwhile, US and Chinese Nationalist representatives held a series of defense coordination conferences in March and April.* As a result of the latter conference, Admiral Stump established a Formosa Liaison Center in May as an integral part of the Formosa Defense Command, permitting more intimate US and Chinese working relationships in planning, operations, and training. The CNAF was also strengthened by the acquisition of F-86F fighter-interceptors. Contrary to US military advice, the Nationalists

* Previous defense coordination conferences had been held in May and December 1953 and October 1954.

bolstered the defenses of the Quemoy group with an additional division of troops from Taiwan.[14]

### *Interval between Crises*

Nearly three and a half years elapsed before Chinese Communist pressure against the offshore islands created a new crisis in August 1958. During this interval the United States and the Nationalists made numerous changes in their defenses in the area. The US Air Force offset a decrease of units and personnel by introducing more modern aircraft, capable of carrying a variety of nuclear weapons, and by stationing a Matador missile squadron on Taiwan in February 1958. The expansion of the CNAF also helped to offset the decrease in USAF's numerical strength. By the middle of 1958, Pacific Air Forces* possessed 879 aircraft, including 129 bombers and 401 fighters. The CNAF had nearly 500 jet aircraft, largely F-84's and F-86's. As it grew, air facilities on Taiwan improved, but many inadequacies remained. The communication net was especially weak, since US plans for major expansion of the net had bene rejected as too costly.[15]



*Figure 9: A Matador missile launched from Tainan AB in 1959.*

The period also witnessed the development of a new role for the Tactical Air Command (TAC). In 1955, Headquarters USAF directed TAC to develop a mobile Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) with an atomic capability, to be used in small, localized wars. Earmarked for CASF under TAC's plan Blue Blade (subsequently renamed Double Trouble) were fighter, fighter-bomber, reconnaissance, troop carrier, refueling, communication, and supply units. Assigned to the Nineteenth Air Force for specific operations, CASF units made practice deployments, including one in November 1957 to the Far East under the code name Mobile Zebra. A PACAF-TAC agreement signed in May 1958 set forth the conditions under which TAC forces would deploy to the Pacific.[16]

The US command structure in the Pacific also underwent change. The US Navy emerged as the executive agent for the entire area on 1 July 1957 when the Far East Command with headquarters in Tokyo was disestablished and its responsibilities were transferred to the Pacific Command in Hawaii. In the realignment of subordinate commands, FEAF was

* FEAF was redesignated Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) on 1 July 1957. The Pacific Air Force was dissolved at this time.

redesignated the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), also with headquarters in Hawaii. PACAF was the principal USAF command in the entire Pacific area.[17]

At JCS direction, service commanders sought ways to further streamline arrangements on Taiwan. Here three separate headquarters existed: Taiwan Defense Command (TDC), Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), and Air Task Force (ATF) 13 (P). The Air Force and the Army wanted to eliminate TDC and consolidate all military activities on Taiwan under a Chief, MAAG, who would be an Army lieutenant general, but Admiral Stump considered such an arrangement impractical and politically infeasible at the time. He cautioned against a change that might imply a decline in US interest in Taiwan. Early in 1958, with JCS approval, TDC and MAAG were combined into a single headquarters under a vice admiral. The commander of ATF 13 also served as chief of Air Force Section MAAG. This centralization of command provided one rather than three points of contact between US and Chinese military authorities and also permitted reduction of the US headquarters staff and facilities on Taiwan.[18]




*Figure 10: Lt Gen Lawrence S Kuter, Commander, Pacific Air Forces*

Admiral Stump had major responsibility for overall operational planning. On 16 May 1958 he published Ops Plan 25-58 to guide his major subordinate commanders in updating their respective operational plans.* These subordinates were Gen Laurence S Kuter, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF); Vice Adm Herbert C Hopwood, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT); and Gen Isaac D White, Commander-in-Chief Army Pacific (CINCARPAC).[19]

* For command channels in May 1958, see charts below.

Between 1955 and 1958 the United States made no basic changes in its Taiwan policies. This country would ensure the military security of Taiwan and the Penghus (the defense of the offshore islands a matter of Presidential discretion), and it would support the Nationalist government as a free alternative to the Chinese Communist government. Maintaining Nationalist morale was deemed essential. However, frustrations on Taiwan mounted as Nationalists saw their hopes of recapturing mainland China fade, their position in the international community decline, and their national existence continue to be dependent on the United States. The determination of the Nationalists to hold the Kinmen and Matsu islands, now defended by more than 100,000 of their 450,000 regular ground troops, troubled US policy planners. On the eve of a new Taiwan crisis, the nature of US reaction of a Chinese Communist attack or an air and sea blockage of the offshore islands was still under discussion by the National Security Council.[20]



*Figure 11: Gen Isaac D White, Commander-in-Chief Army Pacific*

# II. THE RENEWED COMMUNIST THREAT TO TAIWAN

There were signs of renewed trouble in the Taiwan Strait in July 1958 following the overthrow of the Iraqi government and the sudden dispatch of US and British troops to Lebanon and Jordan, respectively, to stabilize the situation in these countries.[*21] In China, the Communists restricted western diplomats to the city of Peiping and intensified the propaganda war, especially their threats to "liberate" Taiwan. After four days of secret talks, Premier Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung added to the tension by their joint communique from Peiping on 3 August demanding the withdrawal of US and British forces from the Middle East.[22]

More ominous were signs of Chinese Communist military preparations. Heretofore unoccupied airfields in Fukien Province, across the strait from Taiwan, soon held an estimated 200 fighters, including MiG-17's. Air dense against CNAF reconnaissance and fighter sorties over the mainland became more effective. Between 23 June and 8 August, 10 CNAF aircraft were shot down, 7 in air engagements and 3 by AAA fire. Communist overflights of the Kinmen and Matsu islands began. Across from the Kinmens the Communists augmented their artillery strength; on 18 August they fired about 100 shells at the islands. Three days later the war of nerves was intensified by the Soviet Union's public pledge to assist the Peiping government's effort to free Taiwan.[23]




*Figure 12: Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-17, on display at the National Museum of the USAF*

### *Initial US and Chinese Nationalist Reactions*

Reacting to the Communist military buildup, the Nationalist government early in August declared a state of emergency for the offshore islands.[24] It asked the United States to speed up military assistance, particularly F-86F aircraft and Sidewinder missiles, and reconsider a previously denied request for F-100D aircraft. The Nationalists also urged the deployment of USAF units to Taiwan.[25] President Chiang Kaishek, in a meeting with

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[*] For a discussion of this operation, see study by USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, *Air Operations in the Lebanon Crisis of 1958*.

American Ambassador Everett F Drumwright and the new Commander-in-Chief Pacific, Adm Harry D Felt, stressed the gravity of the crisis, decried US and British failure to act decisively in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, and warned that this would encourage an attack on Taiwan. Reminded of his treaty commitments with respect to military action against the Communists (i.e., the 10 December 1954 notes), Chiang resentfully promised that his government would honor them.[26]




*Figure 13: North American F-86 Sabre taxies to a stop at Chiayi Air Base*

Improvement of the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, which now had 87,000 men and 826 aircraft (497 of them jets), had previously been under consideration by US authorities. On 7 August the Department of Defense approved sending 60 rehabilitated F-86F's to the CNAF, and on the 15th the JCS decided that the CNAF "should be built up and maintained in such a condition that it is qualitatively superior to the Chinese Communist Air Force." Pending approval of this decision by the Secretary of Defense, commanders were directed to take all practical steps to provide the CNAF with suitable aircraft and necessary pilot training. A week later the Secretary of Defense approved the diversion to Taiwan of six F-100D aircraft earmarked for NATO.[27]



*Figure 14: Gen Otto P Weyland*

On 15 July, the day US troops began debarking in Lebanon, the Air Force had placed all of its commands on alert. Ten days later, when the Middle East crisis appeared to have subsided, Headquarters USAF authorized field commanders to decrease their alert status and resume crew and combat-readiness training. PACAF intelligence, meanwhile, concluded that the next most likely trouble spot would be in the Taiwan area, a prediction given substance by the movement of MiG aircraft to airfields opposite Taiwan and the growing belligerency of the Chinese Communists. On 6 August the Air Force

directed commanders concerned to reexamine their plans to support CINCPAC's Ops Plan 25-58. Gen Otto P Weyland, TAC Commander, was asked to review his command's capability to deploy CASF X-Ray Tango to the Pacific, while Lt Gen William F Turner of MATS and Lt Gen Lawrence S Kuter of PACAF were asked to determine their capabilities to support this deployment. Weyland responded by transferring planning and operational responsibility for deployment of CASF X-Ray Tango to the Twelfth Air Force because the Nineteenth was preoccupied in the Middle East with its CASF Bravo force.[28]



*Figure 15: Boeing B-47 Stratojet somewhere in the Far East*

Kuter distributed the main portions of PACAF's interim Ops Plan 25-58 to his subordinate commanders on 7 August. It provided for US military assistance to the Chinese Nationalist forces in three phases: Phase I, patrol and reconnaissance activities (already under way); Phase II, the defeat of the attacking force; Phase III, air operations to destroy the Chinese Communist capability to make war. The last phase would be conducted primarily by the Strategic Air Command (SAC) with the support of CINCPAC forces. Most important to Kuter was Phase II. Assuming conditions short of a general war and the use of atomic weapons by both sides, PACAF would be responsible for striking 32 of the 62 pre-planned targets. Initial atomic strikes would be launched from Clark AB in the Philippines and Kadena AB on Okinawa, with additional strikes as the situation dictated. The Thirteenth Air Force at Clark AB would handle detailed planning of air operations for both PACAF and Chinese Nationalist air units. The Fifth Air Force, with headquarters in Japan, would provide tanker, tactical, and reconnaissance support to the Thirteenth during the early stages of operations.[29] Phase II was amended on 18 August when the Air Force alerted five Guam-based B-47's that had Mark 6 weapons with C cores to ensure the most effective instantaneous retaliatory strikes against coastal airfields. This move gave SAC a role in limited war. It was uncertain, however, whether these plans could be fully implemented because the American ambassador to Japan, Douglas MacArthur II, warned that the

Japanese government might ask the United States not to use Japanese bases in a war against the Chinese Communists.[30]

PACAF's Ops Plan 25-58 was completed with little time to spare. Kuter distributed Annex F, the logistical part, on 14 August. It required air units moving to forward bases to deploy only the minimum equipment essential to the success of their missions and to make maximum use of prestocked equipment.[31] The plan itself was not published until 20 August, only three days before the Taiwan crisis broke into full force.

### *Bombardment of the Kinmens*

On 23 August the Chinese Communists, using an estimated 300 guns, unleased a tremendous artillery bombardment against the Kinmen islands, firing more than 40,000 rounds on the first day. Communist planes strafed the islands and sank a Nationalist LST. Artillery fire on the second day was equally severe; for each of the succeeding five days it averaged about 10,000 arounds, sufficient to impose a tight artillery blockade. Stepping up its propaganda war, Peiping radio urged the Nationalist garrisons to surrender. Leaflets dropped on Little Kinmen boasted that the defenders were isolated and that the People's Republic of China had an atomic stockpile.[32]



*Figure 16: John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State*

When the bombardment began, Secretary Dulles warned the Peiping government not to seize the Kinmens or Matsus lest such an attempt threaten the peace. To back up his warning, the JCS on 24 and 25 August ordered the carriers *Essex* in the Mediterranean and *Midway* at Pearl Harbor and their destroyer escorts plus other ships to speed to the Taiwan Strait to reinforce the Seventh Fleet. The Army was ordered to expedite the shipment of a Nike battalion to Taiwan and more modern equipment for seven Nationalist army divisions on the offshore islands. Air commanders were directed to be ready to assist Nationalist forces by striking coastal air bases if a major attack threatened the principal offshore islands.[*] They were cautioned that probably only conventional weapons would be initially authorized, but they were also instructed to be prepared to make atomic strikes deep into Chinese Communist territory.[33]

[*] The principal islands were defined as Big Kinmen, Little Kinmen, and five islands of the Matsu group.

US intelligence concluded initially that the Communists were testing US and Chinese Nationalist reaction and might try to seize one or more of the islands if not convinced that the United States would intervene. However, an amphibious force for possible invasion of Big or Little Kinmen had not yet been observed. Intelligence sources did not anticipate an immediate strike at Taiwan or the Penghus, for they did not believe that either the Peiping government or the Soviet Union wanted a major war. But they warned of the danger of a Nationalist attack against the mainland if pressure against the offshore islands became too great.[34]

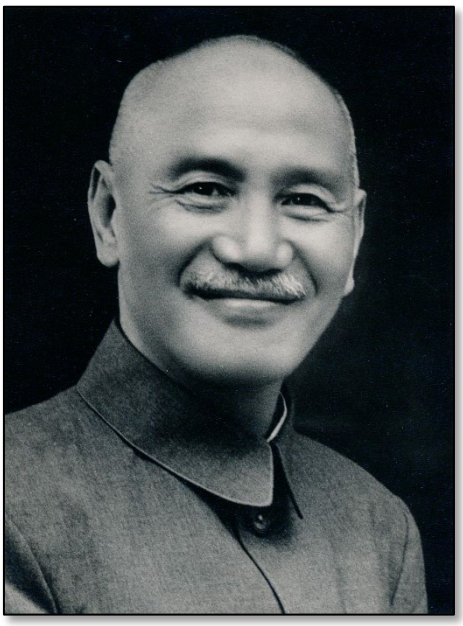

*Figure 17: Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek*

Meanwhile, the United States prohibited retaliatory aerial strikes against the Communists. Chiang Kai-shek vigorously protested against this injunction as inhuman and unfair. Although he promised to consult with the United States before taking any military action, the Generalis-simo doubted whether he could control the moral of his armed forced and the public for more than a few days unless he was granted authority to bomb Communist gun positions, airfields, and communication centers.[35] When the bombardment continued into the second week, Secretary Dulles announced that the United States had not decided whether the artillery attack on the islands related to the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus pursuant to the joint congressional resolution of January 1955.[36] This served to keep both Chiang and the Communists guessing as to whether the United States would assist the Nationalists in defense of their offshore islands.

### *Deployment of USAF Units*

Shortly after the bombardment of the offshore islands began, USAF field commanders requested additional air strength in the Pacific, especially on Taiwan. On 23 August the commander of ATF 13, Brig Gen Fred M Dean, asked for the Fifth Air Force's 16th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, stationed on Okinawa. Two days later General Kuter




*Figure 18: Lockheed C-130 Hercules being refueled at Chiayi AB, Taiwan*

urged the immediate deployment of part of TAC's CASF X-Ray Tango force* from the United States, specifically an advance command element, an F-100 squadron, a C-130 squadron, and part of a communication and control group. Six RF-101's already on Taiwan on rotation were included in the CASF.[37]

These requests were not immediately approved. US military forces were still in the Middle East, and the meaning of the Chinese Communist bombardment was still uncertain. Washington authorities did not authorize any major air deployments within or to the Pacific for several days until they had evaluated all intelligence data and the international consequences of possible US involvement in the Taiwan area.[38]

As a result, about five days elapsed before the 16th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron was authorized to move. On the 29th, all but two of its F-86D's flew from Kadena AB, Okinawa, to Taiwan AB, Taiwan, and were combat-ready seven and a half hours after the movement order. On the same day TAC began the CASF X-Ray Tango deployment. Preceded by tankers sent to staging bases enroute, part of the force departed from George and Hamilton AFBs in California. Brig Gen Alvin P Tacon and members of his advance command element were the first to reach their destination, Clark AB, in the Philippines, on 1 September.[39]

Since the JCS had indicated that only nonnuclear weapons probably would be initially authorized to counter a Chinese Communist attack on the offshore islands, Kuter asked on 31 August for additional CASF units. Noting that one B-36 could carry more 1,000-pound HE bombs than an F-100 squadron, he also recommended alerting one SAC B-36 squadron. The JCS disapproved a portion of Kuter's request and the alert of a B-36 unit, but on 2 September it authorized the deployment of the remaining fore known as CASF X-Ray Tango (Balance). Finally, Kuter received permission on 6 September to deploy on F-101A squadron to Okinawa and 12 Air Defense Command



*Figure 19: Convair B-36 Peacemaker*

* The CASF force for the Pacific was initially composed of two segments, CASF X-Ray Tango and CASF Yankee. Only CASF X-Ray Tango deployments were made during the 1958 Taiwan crisis.

(ADC) F-104's to Taiwan. Although neither had been previously identified as CASF X-Ray units, the F-101 squadron was designated CASF X-Ray Tango (Augmented) because it belonged to TAC.[40]

The entire CASF deployment,* beginning on 29 August and ending on 12 September, took place in three distinct stages, following each other so closely in time that they blended into one continuous operation. Because of the great distances, one or two air refuelings were required for F-100, F-101, and RF-101 aircraft flying from California to Hawaii, then to Midway or Guam enroute to Okinawa or the Philippines. The Twelfth Air Force controlled overall deployment from an air operations center at its headquarters in Waco, Texas.[41]

The movement of CASF X-Ray Tango from the United States to Taiwan Philippines, Okinawa, and Japan was generally successful. Travel times varied from about two to six days, depending on a variety of circumstances. The tropical storm Grace which swept through Guam on 2 September deployed initial F-100 and C-130 flights for 24 hours. Eight aircraft aborted or were delayed enroute for maintenance, some not arriving until 26 September.[42]

This large-scale deployment was not achieved without overcoming obstacles. B-57 and C-130 flights were hazardous because there was only one permanent weather-reporting station for the 2,200 miles between the California bases and Hickam AFB, Hawaii. Without accurate upper-air data, aircraft had to buck high-altitude winds and arrived with only minimum fuel reserves. Some arrived and departed without proper cargoes, in part because of insufficient information concerning the cargo personnel load and destination of each plane. Seaweed equipment prestocked at enroute bases was either inadequate or in poor condition. Time was lost during deployment because refueling tankers had to be sent first to forward bases. Finally, limited cryptographic and other commination facilities at these bases hampered security, coordination, and control.[43]

* For a list of CASF X-Ray Tango units and their home stations, see Appendix.

While the CASF X-Ray Tango fighter and reconnaissance aircraft flew all the way with the aid of refuelings, the ADC F-104's had to be disassembled and transported in C-124 transports. Under the code name Jonah Able the first F-104 Starfighter left Hamilton AFB, Calif., on 8 September, was reassembled at Taoyuan AB, Taiwan, and made its first flight on 12 September. All 12 aircraft were not in place and operational, however, until 19 September. Their mission was to fly combat air patrol.[44]

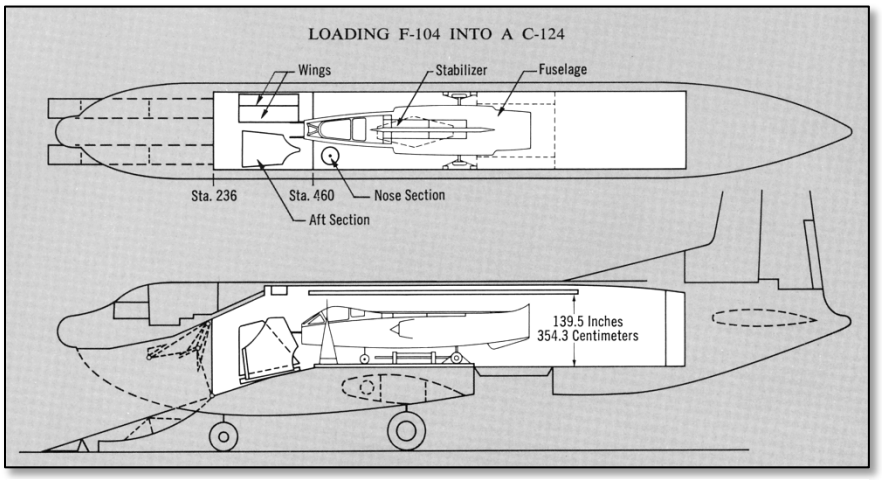

*Figure 20: Loading of an F-104 inside a C-124*

ADC had not anticipated this deployment, which was primarily for psychological purposes. Although the Starfighters had departed in great secrecy, their arrival on Taiwan quickly became a matter of public knowledge. Kuter believed that this type of publicity would firmly convince both the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists that the United States would support the former with the latest weapons.[45]

Support airlift for CASF X-Ray Tango was provided by MATS Ops Plan 115-58 Double Trouble. Like TAX, MATS received orders on 29 August to begin the CASF deployment. Its original plan called for support of the CASF in a single "package" of 36 airlift trips. But the deployment in three stages rather than one and the inclusion of an additional F-101 unit made this plan inapplicable. MATS C-118's, C-121's, and C-124's made 81 trips (19 for the first stage, 52 for the second, and 10 for the third). In all, 1,472 passengers and 860.1 tons of cargo were carried. One C-124 was lost, crashing near Gaum and killing its 6-man crew and 12



*Figure 21: Military Air Transport Service (MATS) Douglas C-124 Globemaster II*

passengers. Although numerous changes in plans considerably increased transport needs, MATS was able to provide TAC with the necessary support.[46]

To airlift the F-104's, including personnel and essential cargo, it was necessary to make 20 C-124 and 4 C-97 trips. Only the wings, tail, and nose assembly of the Starfighter had to be detached in order to fit it into the maw of the giant Globemaster. This was the first large-scale movement of high-performance aircraft by C-124's to a troubled area.[47]

After the deployment,* PACAF had 68 more tactical aircraft available: 42 offensive fighters, or an increase of 24 percent; 14 bombers, or an increase of 28 percent; and 12 defense fighters, or an increase of 6 percent. Adding reconnaissance, transport, tanker, and other supporting units, the augmentation totaled 123 aircraft. The number of PACAF atomic aircraft reached 183. On Taiwan, the center of activity, there were about 4,400 USAF officers, and airmen on 29 September.[48]

### *Deployment of Navy, Marine, and Army Units*

The major US naval deployments to the Taiwan area consisted of the super carriers *Midway* and *Essex* and their destroyer escorts. The *Midway*, under JCS directions of 25 August, left Pearl Harbor on the 27th, arrived northeast of Taiwan, and commenced operations on 4 September, about 10 days later. The *Essex*, ordered to the Pacific on the 24th, passed through the Suez Canal on 29 August ("escorted" by Soviet submarines) and joined the Seventh Fleet on 16 September, about 22 days after the movement directive was issued. The arrival of the two carriers, their destroyer escorts, plus other reinforcements, made this fleet the largest naval force assembled since the Korean War.† During the augmentation period the Seventh Fleet changed its position in the Taiwan Strait to cover general war targets farther north, requiring PACAF units to cover as many former Navy targets as possible. The Navy maintained peak strength in the Strait only briefly, for some elements, including carriers, were soon withdrawn in accordance with the fleet rotation plan.[49]

The Marines deployed 56 aircraft of Marine Air Group 11 (MAG-11) from Atsugi NAS, Japan, to Taiwan. The Seventh Fleet commander, Vice Adm Wallace M Beakley, recommended this move after the JCS, on 25 August, instructed Admiral Felt and the TDC commander, Vice Adm Ronald N Smoot, to reinforce the air defense of Taiwan. MAG-11 had been alerted on 24 August but most of the unit did not move to Taiwan for nearly two weeks awaiting the selection of a suitable airfield. An advanced Marine party spent several days surveying

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* For a list of USAF units available to PACAF after deployment, see the Appendix.

† The Seventh Fleet now had 6 carriers, 3 heavy cruisers, about 40 destroyers, a submarine division, and about 20 other supporting craft. Carriers, in addition to the *Midway* and *Essex* were the *Hancock*, *Shangri-la*, *Lexington*, and *Princeton*. Their aircraft included *Skywarriors*, *Skyhawks*, supersonic *Crusaders*, and *Tigers*; about 96 could deliver atomic weapons. The heavy cruisers were the *Helena*, *Los Angles*, and *Columbus*.

airfields and negotiating with USAF representatives over the use of one to meet Seventh Fleet requirements. Naval and Marine commanders rejected the first two that were suggested because they did not have an 8,000-foot runway and their selection would create logistical problems. The Navy also insisted that MAG-11 be located in an area where it could not only help defend Taiwan but also provide air cover and support for the fleet and augment its carrier strike force. On 29 August, agreement was finally reached on a third airfield, Pingtung North, which could meet requirements.[50]

MAG-11 deployment began partly to support a previously scheduled Marine training exercise, Land Ho. Twelve aircraft of the initial MAG-11 squadron left Atsugi on 31 August and arrived that day at Tainan AB to participate in Land Ho, but six, scheduled for Pingtung, were delayed for nearly two days because of mechanical difficulties or typhoon Grace. The other two squadrons of the group flew from Atsugi to Pingtung nonstop on 6 and 7 September, respectively.[51]

The support airlift between 29 August and 11 September carried about 500 men and 205 tons of cargo in 54 trips – 43 by marine transport, 6 by Navy, and 5 by Air Force. A sealift from Yokohama brought an additional 1,150 men and 3,900 tons of cargo. The gap created in Japan's air defenses by the departure of MAG-11 was quickly filled by the transfer of MAG-13 from Hawaii to Atsugi NAS.52 MAG-11 was ready for limited air defense operations on 8 September,* and on the 11th it began flying night cover sorites for the Nationalists and the US Navy, who were resupplying the offshore islands. The 12 aircraft at Tainan rejoined the main Marine unit at Pingtung North, and MAG-11 became fully operational about 18 September. Taking into account all the obstacles encountered, the Marines considered most noteworthy the deployment of MAG-11 and its achievement of a limited operational status 10 days after the selection of an airfield.[53]

The JCS instructions of 25 August called for the expeditious shipment of a Nike-Hercules battalion of Taiwan. Certain types of modern equipment for the seven Nationalist divisions stationed on the offshore islands were also required within 60 to 90 days. As operational plans had not provided for the deployment of a Nike-Hercules unit, a month passed before it left Fort Bliss, Texas. Meanwhile, a battalion headquarters and four firing battery sites were selected, and construction of semi-permanent facilities began at Taoyuan on 15 September. The advance party of the 71st Artillery, 2d Missile Battalion, arrived by air on 17 September, and the remainder of the battalion arrived by ship on 9 October. It did not become operational until 25 October.54

* With the arrival of the Marine aircraft on Taiwan, 10 FJ4, 30 F4D, 2 TV-2, and 2 R4D aircraft were stationed at Pingtung North and 12 Fj4 temporarily at Tainan.

# III. U.S. MILITARY PREPARATIONS ON TAIWAN

The heavy influx of aircraft, personnel, supplies, and equipment into Pacific bases during the first half of September created some initial confusion. Some air units did not arrive at their assigned destinations, upsetting logistical arrangements. Since more USAF aircraft went to Taiwan than planned, such as the ADC F-104's, air bases were overtaxed, requiring expensive crash improvement projects. Under TAC's operational plan for CASF X-Ray Tango, the command element under General Tacon would have exercised operational, administrative, and logistical control. Because the CASF units had to be widely dispersed, General Kuter scrapped this plan, split up the command element, and integrated its personnel into the Thirteenth Air Force. Only a small CASF headquarters, redesignated the Thirteenth Air Force Command Element, Ryukyus, remained at Kadena AB, Okinawa.[55]

### *Planning for Nonnuclear Operations*

Some of these adjustments reflected in part the lack of firm operational plans at the beginning of the Taiwan crisis. There was insufficient time after the PACAF-TAC agreement of May 1958 to exchange information. The delay in obtaining JCS approval of PACAF's Ops Plan 25-58 prevented Kuter from completing and distributing this plan until shortly before the Communists began their bombardment on 23 August, and subordinate commanders had little or no time for detailed planning. More important, however, was the belated formulation of US policy on defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and the offshore islands. Operational planners were not prepared for the JCS instruction of 25 August that required them to assume more responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan and the Penghus than they had anticipated and also to assist the Nationalists in defending the principal offshore islands, initially without nuclear weapons. This led to changes in plans, modification of the command structure, and a new disposition of air units.[56]



*Figure 22: Adm Harry D Felt, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command*

On the same day – 25 August – Admiral Felt informed his major subordinate commanders that he intended to prepare a special nonnuclear Annex H to his Ops Plan 25-58, and he

asked them to take similar action. Observing that his original plan envisaged the employment of nuclear weapons and that the accompanying logistical system would be inadequate for nonnuclear operations, he requested an immediate appraisal of the nonnuclear capabilities of his commands.[57]

The possible U.S. injunction against nuclear weapons caused Felt and his subordinates much anxiety. They believed that the Communists had sufficient aircraft to stop the resupply of the offshore islands, U.S. airpower would be necessary to prevent their capture, and a U.S. nonnuclear defense might not be successful. Kuter was particularly apprehensive about conducting nonnuclear operations that would require a high sortie rate and weaken his ability to support his emergency war plan. He believed insufficient effort had been made to convince the National Security Council that the most effective way to deal with the enemy's numerical superiority was to use nuclear weapons. However, if nonnuclear operations had to be undertaken, he recommended that U.S. participation be limited to striking Communist coastal airfields opposite Taiwan.[58]

The fears expressed by field commanders concerning a U.S. nonnuclear policy in the Taiwan area were to no avail. On 29 August the JCS defined three new intermediate phases of possible Chinese Communist action against the offshore islands, Taiwan, and the Penghus, and it forbade the use of atomic weapons during each phase. President Eisenhower made a more definitive statement of this policy on 6 September when he granted the JCS emergency authority to order the use of only conventional weapons against any major Communist assault on the offshore islands.[59]

Meanwhile, Felt informed the JCS on 5 September that his nonnuclear forces consisted of four F-100 and one B-57 USAF squadrons, stationed at Clark, Kadena, Naha, and Chiayi Air Bases, and aircraft on four Navy carriers. The squadrons could fly 170 sorties and deliver 400,000 pounds of bombs daily, and each carrier could launch up to 64 sorties and deliver 265,000 pounds of bombs daily, but in bad weather each could manage only 23 sorties per day. The Air Force units had a 30-day supply of POL, spare parts, support items, nonnuclear or "iron bombs," and 20mm ammunition but




*Figure 23: North American F-100 Super Sabres from the 44th FBS, Kadena, deploy to Chiayi AB, Taiwan*

only a 15-day supply of external fuel tanks and pylons for F-100's. Bomb supplies aboard Navy carriers were sufficient for only 24 to 48 hours but were backed by an 18-day reserve in the Pacific area. A substantial amount of aircraft ammunition was available, and logistical support for the carriers was adequate. The CNAF could fly 650 bomb-carrying sorties daily. In his assessment of his nonnuclear strength, CINCPAC did not specify the nature or location of Communist targets or the expected aircraft attrition.*[60]

On 11 September, Felt issued his nonnuclear Annex H. This document and similar annexes prepared by subordinate commanders south by define more precisely possible Communist action and U.S. and Nationalist reaction in the Taiwan area in order to control, if possible, a threatening military situation without resort to nuclear weapons. CINCPAC's original Ops Plan 25-58 had included Phase I (patrol and reconnaissance) and Phase II (defeat of the attacking force) and Phase II (defeat of the attacking force). It had anticipated a possible "transition phase" between the two. Annex H spelled out three intermediate phases of conflict between Phase I and II as defined by the JCS on 25 August.

In Phase I-H, when there was no indication that the Communists would attempt to capture the principal offshore islands, U.S. forces would provide only logistical assistance to the Nationalists. In Phase II-H, when the Communists would attempt to capture one or more of the principal offshore islands, U.S. forces would assist the Nationalists in attacking Communist invasion forces, artillery positions, and airfields in the vicinity of the islands under attack. In Phase III-H, when the Communists would extend the battle of Taiwan and the Penghus or to international waters close to both areas, U.S. and Nationalist aircraft would attack Communist airfields, GCI sites, military control centers adjacent to coastal airfields, and fixed targets. They would attack the airfields on a carefully controlled basis in a gradually expanding arc until they had destroyed all bases in an 800-mile radius capable of supporting Russian-built IL-28 Beagle aircraft.[61]

To coordinate the three intermediate phases of action, Admiral Felt designated the TDC commander, Admiral Smoot, as his subordinate unified commander on 11 September. Felt had maintained that the command structure on Taiwan had to be changed from a highly centralized control of a limited mobile nuclear force to less centralized control of nonnuclear units. To Kuter, such a change seemed unnecessary since it might break up the integrity of PACAF units. He also noted that the command structure would again need revision if nuclear weapons were authorized at a later date. On 10 September, however, JCS authorized the establishment of a subordinate unified command on Taiwan.[62]

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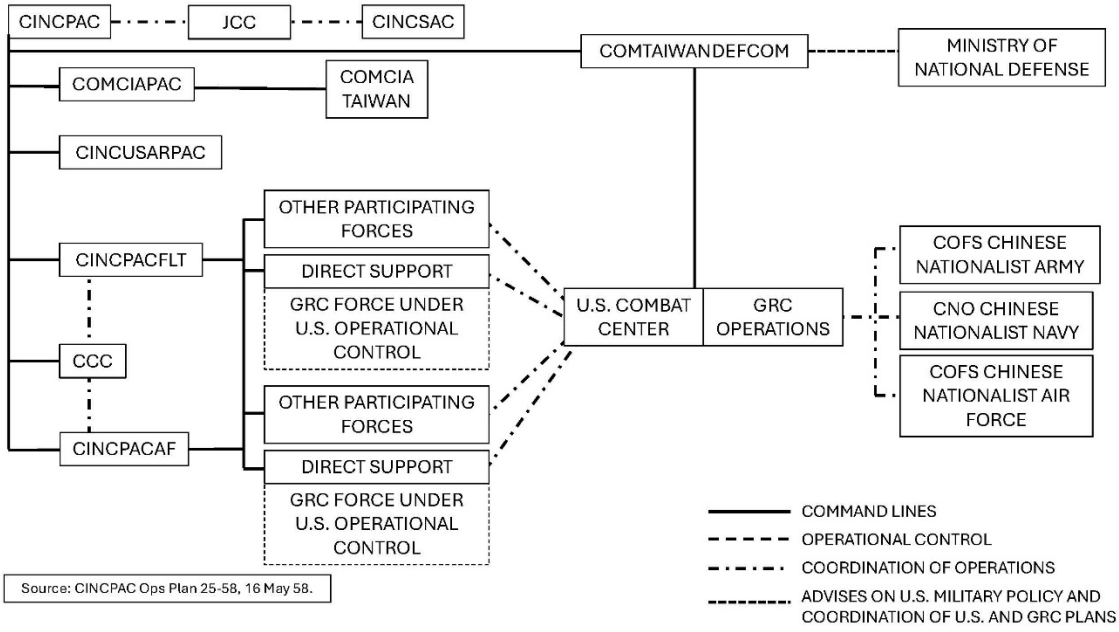
* CINCPAC's hastily assembled report on USAF capabilities appeared unduly optimistic in the light of subsequent analysis of the supply reserves in the Pacific.

Smoot would guide the Nationalists on current or projected military operations, establish and operate a combined operations center (COC) on Taiwan, and assume operational control of specific U.S. forces. He would also conduct patrols and sea and air reconnaissance in coordination with National forces. His three major subordinates on Taiwan were the commanding general of U.S. Army Forces Taiwan (who was also chief of MAAG Taiwan); the commander of the Taiwan Patrol Force (Navy); and the commander of ATF 13 (Air Force).

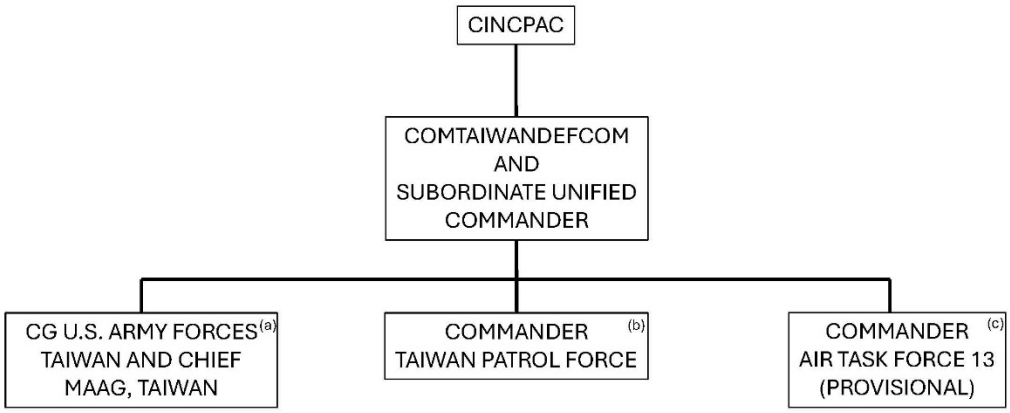
As the designated air defense commander under Smoot, the commander of ATF 13 – General Dean – would carry out air defense measures (including defense of naval units on request) and protect Nationalist ships resupplying the Kinmens and Matsus. These operations would be conducted in accordance with limitations imposed by the U.S. policy of avoiding hostilities except as necessary to support the Nationalists and in self-defense. Operations conducted with any other forces of the Pacific command in support of the Nationalists and by any Nationalist forces placed under U.S. operational control would also be coordinated through the Taiwan COC.[63]

U.S. and Chinese Nationalist Command Relations in the Taiwan Area, 12 May 1958




Kuter and his Army and Navy equivalents relinquished to Smoot the operational control of their units. They were responsible, however, for providing emergency logistical support to these units and to Nationalist forces and for furnishing facilities and personnel to the U.S. sector of the COC. Kuter's manifold duties also included augmenting the CNAF's ground environment system, providing personnel for ACW systems and other communication nets on the island, and bringing to operational readiness the coordination-centers in the Philippines and Japan.[64]

Command Relations of Taiwan After Establishment of a Subordinate Unified Command, 11 September 1985




a. Controls army units assigned to Taiwan less MAAG personnel
b. Controls units assigned to Taiwan patrol force plus Marine Corps units deployed to Taiwan
c. Controls units assigned to ATF 13 (P). Also designated Air Defense Commander of Taiwan-Penghus effective 16 Sept 1958

### *Strengthening Air Defenses*

The Taiwan crisis did not expand beyond intermediate Phase I-H. Overt conflict was limited to Nationalist and Communist artillery exchanges, occasional aerial battles over the Taiwan Strait, and small sea engagements as the Nationalists tried to resupply the offshore islands. Free from direct participation in military action, the U.S. forces could spend the critical weeks of September and October in advising and assisting the Nationalists and in strengthening their own military posture in the Taiwan area.

On 16 September, Admiral Smoot assumed responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan and the Penghus and designated General Dean as his air defense commander. An exchange of letters between Smoot and the chief of the general staff of the Ministry of National Defense, Gen Wang Shu-Ming, confirmed previous U.S. and Nationalist verbal agreements on air defense arrangements. Most of the CNAF could be used to defend the offshore islands against attack, provide aerial cover for surface resupply efforts, or strike at Communist mainland targets, if necessary. About 121 aircraft were eventually assigned to air defense missions: 49 USAF F-104's, F-86's, and F-100Ds; 56 Marine FJ-4's and F-4D's; and



*Figure 24: Republic F-84 Thunderjet's stationed at Tainan AB, Taiwan*

16 CNAF F-86's and F-84G's. These plans were stationed at Chiayi, Hsinchu, Tainan, Taoyuan, and Pingtung Air Bases on Taiwan.

Dean did not exercise complete control of the Marine aircraft, however. The commander of the Seventh Fleet, Admiral Beakley, insisted that they remain an integral part of his fleet because his carrier strike force, tailored for a nuclear conflict, was deficient in escort aircraft for nonnuclear strikes. After some controversy, MAG-11 was given a three-fold mission: air defense, which would have over-riding priority only if Taiwan and the Penghus were attacked or in imminent danger of attack; air support and cover of the Seventh Fleet; and augmentation of the fleet's strike force.[65]

The air defense of Taiwan called for 8 USAF, 2 Marine, and 8 CNAF aircraft to be placed on 5- and 15-minute day alerts and 8 USAF and 2 Marine aircraft on 5- and 15-minute night, all-weather alerts. Fortunately, there was sufficient time to train those pilots who had not yet attained the desired standard of operational readiness.[66]

### *Communication and Logistical Problems*

The concentration of airpower on Taiwan quickly drew attention to the most critical U.S. deficiency in the Pacific – communications. U.S. air units, depending largely on the Chinese communication net, faced formidable problems of language, security, and reliability. Overclassified messages, nearly all dispatched as "operational immediate," created lengthy delays. Circuits from Taiwan to the Philippines, Okinawa, and Japan were woefully inadequate. The lack of sufficient on-line teletype communications alone could have made it virtually impossible to conduct combat operations.[67]

Because U.S. plans for major improvements had been rejected as too costly, crash communication projects had to be undertaken. During September and October about $4 million worth of Army equipment and about $2 million of USAF equipment were flown in. Between 25 August and 25 October, communication circuits on Taiwan increased from 25 to 200, including 120 voice and 30 teletype on-island circuits and 20 and 30 teletype off-island circuits. About 655 CASF, AACS, and other personnel arrived for temporary duty on Taiwan during the critical period to assist in manning communication facilities.[68]

The prospect of engaging initially in nonnuclear operations also required immediate adjustments in logistical requirements. During the crisis PACAF could make limited use of the Seaweed stocks earmarked for its emergency war plans, but Kuter was apprehensive about the adequacy of the stocks. Up to August 1958, stockpiling of Seaweed items was only 75 to 77 percent complete and of "absolute essential equipment" items only about 63 percent complete. Some very essential items were not stocked at all. The critically short items included certain types of conventional ammunition. Because of these shortages and

the prospect of a nonnuclear war, the Air Materiel Command's supply retrenchment program in the Pacific was halted.[69]

To meet the urgent need for supplies and equipment, the Fifth Air Force airlifted about 1,100 tons of essential items to Taiwan during the first two weeks of the bombardment. Thirteenth Air Force transports also brought vitally needed items. And large quantities of supplies were dispatched by sea. Starting and refueling units, war consumables, housekeeping supplies and equipment, and a tactical hospital comprised the bulk of these items. From PACAF and the United States came Sidewinder and other nonnuclear rockets, ammunition, and conventional bombs. External fuel tanks were also needed, and at least 3,500 tanks were flown from Korea and Japan to Okinawa and the Philippines, while some were airlifted from the United States.[70]



*Figure 25: Sidewinder missile being loaded onto a Lockheed F-104 Starfighter*

Prestocked items were not only insufficient, but some were in poor condition. Some were also at the wrong bases and had to be airlifted to where they were most needed. This required considerable intratheater airlift and time, and there was no assurance that both would always be available in a crisis. USAF officers on the scene believed that USAF units could not have sustained more than three days of nonnuclear operations, and that the Navy's carrier strike force was in a similar predicament.[71]

While MATS was diverting much of its effort in early September to support the deployment of CASF X-Ray Tango and other units, a serious backlog of channel airlift* items accumulated at Travis AFB, Calif., the main departure point. To improve this situation, about the middle of the month, MATS began to use commercial airlift, letting contracts to 10 commercial lines for 807 tons but not for an additional 179 tons because of excessive costs. Through commercial airlift and the gradual return of many MATS aircraft to the regular runs the backlog at Travis was reduced, but the problem persisted until the end of October. By then, 5,554 tons had been moved to the Pacific.[72]

* A regular supply airlift as distinct from the airlift of the aircraft, supplies, and equipment of a tactical unit.

The backlog at Travis reflected certain deficiencies in airlift planning and operations for the Taiwan crisis. All the services had failed to inform MATS fully of their greatly increased supply requirements. Units constantly upgraded their supply requisitions because of new priorities. MATS delayed procurement of commercial airlift and, occasionally, items were brought by air that should have gone by sea.[73]

# IV. THE CONTROLLED CONFLICT

### *The "War" in the Air*

The deployment of U.S. air units to the Pacific and augmentation of base facilities and supplies occurred against a background of limited air and sea clashes between Chinese Nationalist and Communist forces in the Taiwan area. Under the rules of engagement laid down by the United States for Phase I-H, the CNAF, in self-defense, could only attack Communist aircraft while they (CNAF) were on patrol and reconnaissance missions or defending the offshore islands and the convoys engaged in resupply operations.[74]

Whether the United States could retain control over CNAF's operations was unclear. Nationalist frustrations because of military restrictions increased early in September when the United States and Communist China agreed to discuss the Taiwan crisis through their representative at Warsaw, Poland. Aware that the Nationalists feared possible U.S. concessions, American authorities continued to anticipate some unilateral action such as CNAF bombing of Communist artillery positions. Both Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Assembly in Taipei strongly advocated such action.[75]

Happily, the U.S. fears were not realized. It was conjectured that the lack of a firm U.S. commitment on the defense of the offshore islands kept the Nationalist government generally amenable to the restrictions on its air operations. This restraint was matched by the numerically superior Chinese Communist Air Force, which flew primarily defensive patrols. Thus, the anticipated struggle for aerial supremacy over the Taiwan Strait did not materialize but was limited to occasional air clashes between the two Chinese air forces.

The results were surprising. During the period of crisis, the CNAF, in about 25 separate air engagements, destroyed 32 aircraft, probably destroyed 3 others, and damaged 10. It lost only 2 F-86F's and 2 F-84G's. Most of the encounters were between CNAF F-86's and Communist MiG-17's.[76]

The first major air battle occurred on 8 September when 12 F-86's fought 12 MiG-17's, destroying 7 and possibly 2 others. In three separate engagements on 24 September, the CNAF destroyed 10 and damaged 3. This victory was highlighted by the destruction of 4 MiGs by Sidewinder missiles with which 20 CNAF F-86's had recently been equipped. A third significant air battle on 10 October resulted in the destruction of 5 MiGs, 1 of which was rammed by an F-86. The larger encounters occurred when escorted CNAF reconnaissance flights were dispatched to photograph mainland or coastal targets, and the small ones during routine air patrols.[77]

Analyses of the air-to-air clashes indicated that neither side employed unusual fighter tactics; their tactics were similar to those used during the Korean War. CNAF routine patrols normally flew at 35,000 to 37,000 feet whereas Communist patrols flew at 40,000 to 42,000 feet. When anticipating action, the CNAF used four flights made up of four aircraft each and kept other patrols in the area on call if needed. MiGs generally outnumbered the F-86's by about 3 to 1, but the Communists usually dispatched only a single flight to engage. Although possessing an altitude advantage, MiG pilots frequently demonstrated a lack of skill by permitting F-86's to get on their tails. Nor were Communist pilots very aggressive; CNAF pilots could shake pursuing MiGs by making six or seven turns at lower altitudes. The Communists were also reluctant to pull more than two and a half or three and a half G's. They always tended to make left turns at higher altitudes. Their steeper turns (two or three G's) were made at lower altitudes, likewise to the left. Their discipline and teamwork were poor, permitting CNAF pilots to attack stragglers. Communist pilots used an afterburner on one and possibly two occasions to escape. Their inferior showing was generally attributed to poor Soviet training and to a Communist decision to limit operations to their coastal areas. CNAF pilots, by comparison, were well trained, confident, flew excellent combat formations, were eager to make "kills," and pressed every advantage. Clearly, the Chinese Communist Air Force had been highly overrated.[78]

The CNAF reconnaissance force consisted of seven RF-86F's, 25 RF-84F's, and one RB-57A. At the insistence of the United States late in September, the CNAF curtailed the activities of this force to lessen the provocation arising from flights too near or over the Chinese Communist mainland.[79]



*Figure 26: A Martin RB-57A Canberra*

Meanwhile, during the period of crisis, the CNAF received or was in the process of receiving two additional RB-57's, six F-100F's originally earmarked for NATO, many F-86F's that had been scheduled for Korea and Japan, and 16 C-119 transports. Many of these aircraft, such as the transports, were on loan. By the time most of the transfers were effected and the pilots trained, however, the Taiwan crisis had passed.[80]

### *The "War" at Sea*

Considerably less successful than CNAF operations were the Nationalists' initial naval effort to break the artillery blockade of the Kinmens. These islands, inhabited by 40,000 civilians, were defended by 86,000 troops and 56 medium artillery, 252 light artillery, and 160 AAA weapons. With the Nationalists outgunned about 4 to 1, the JCS on 29 August expedited shipments of 8-inch howitzers from the United States and Okinawa to the offshore islands. On the same day the JCS ordered elements of the Seventh Fleet to convoy Nationalist resupply ships to the offshore islands when necessary. These convoys would be limited, however, to Big and Little Kinmen and the five principal islands of the Matsu group.* The Navy was also advised to be ready to turn over to the Nationalists up to 8 LCM's and 28 LCVP's.[81]

On the basis of these instructions, the United States and the Nationalists quickly prepared a convoy plan providing for U.S. air and surface escort to within three nautical miles of the Kinmens if Communist batteries could be avoided within that range. Admiral Felt indicated that the immediate objective was lift the siege of the Kinmens and to increase the Nationalists' counter-artillery fire. To forestall resupply, the Peiping government announced its sovereignty over the territorial waters to a distance of 12 nautical miles, a claim promptly ignored by the U.S. State Department.[82]

Between 23 August and 15 September, the Nationalists made only four organized attempts to resupply the Kinmens. The first attempt on 6 September, during a lull in the bombardment, was successful, but three others in the following week were not. Communist artillery fire (averaging about 6,675 rounds per day), hazardous sea conditions, poor equipment, lack of skills in handling supplies, incompetent logistical planning, and "utterly unbelievable" military command relationships combined to defeat their effort. CNAF C-46's made a few airdrops, but these provided only token supplies since about half the items initially dropped were either lost or severely damaged. By the third week in September USAF Headquarters estimated that the total Nationalist deliveries by sea and air amounted to no more than one day's requirement, then estimated at 700 tons.[83]

To U.S. authorities on the scene, it was apparent that the Nationalists were exerting less than an all-out effort to break the artillery blockade. In Washington, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the JCS, and the State Department were deeply concerned over the Nationalists' failure to resupply the Kinmens. Suggesting that the Nationalists were being deliberately inept in order to draw the United States into conflict with the Communists, the JCS insisted that they demonstrate an ability to resupply the islands or prove that their

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* The Matsu islands, not under siege, were inhabited by 10,000 civilians and defended by 23,000 troops and 8 medium artillery, 84 light artillery, and 108 AAA weapons.

difficulties were insurmountable despite U.S. training, advice, and assistance.[84] Underlying this insistence was the belief that the Warsaw talks would provide no solution to the Taiwan crisis, that the United States faced another "Berlin blockade" with Peiping applying limited but sustained military pressure to exact political and diplomatic gains, and that the Nationalist government would probably collapse if forced to withdraw from the offshore islands. Meanwhile, the Nationalists continued to threaten unilateral action to prevent the loss of the offshore islands by default, demilitarization, or neutralization.[85]

With JCS prodding and U.S. advice and assistance, the resupply picture began to improve. On 19 September, three Nationalist ships successfully completed their missions under heavy fire, the largest number to reach the islands in one day. Shortly afterward, Admiral Felt reported that a U.S. Navy beach jumper unit and a beach master, plus organized beach parties for receiving supplies, had helped improve supply-handling. Better underwater demolition work opened up additional beach areas and permitted greater dispersion of arriving vessels. With U.S. Marine air cover, Nationalist C-46 airdrops increased in frequency and in deliveries. As with the resupply success at sea, the CNAF's improved airdrop performance was due principally to U.S. advice and assistance. The picture future brightened when estimated supply requirements for the Kinmens were revised downwards to 300 tons and then 200 tons per day. In view of these developments, on 26 September, Admiral Felt instructed Admiral Smoot to undertake a massive resupply effort using all types of fishing boats, junks, and CNAF and Civil Air Transport* aircraft.[86]

Although Communist land-based artillery and gun and torpedo boats inflicted losses on the Nationalists,† resupply during the last week of September proved highly successful. By month's end a total of 3,400 tons had been delivered to the beleaguered islands – 2,560 tons by surface ships, 210 tons by native junks, and 630 tons by air. The CNAF appeared able to airdrop more than 200 tons required daily. When the first large-scale daylight airdrop drew Communist aircraft and an intense bombardment, U.S. and Nationalist officials agreed to nighttime aerial resupply, with daytime missions to be conducted only at irregular intervals.[87]

Early in October the chief of the U.S. Army Section, MAAG Taiwan, verified the fact that the Nationalists had exaggerated the critical nature of the supply situation. On a visit to Big Kinmen he found no grave supply problem; surprisingly little damage from 430,000 rounds of artillery except in the area of Nationalist batteries; low casualties; spectacular improvements in beach operations, with junks proving very successful; and morale,

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* A Chinese Nationalist civil airline.

† Between 23 August and 24 September these losses were as follows: LST's – 1 torpedoed, 2 damaged; LCM's – 3 sunk, 1 swamped; PC's – 2 damaged; LVT's – estimated 3 sunk, 5 damaged.

activity, and appearance of the Nationalist soldiers better than before 23 August.[88] This encouraging report and the advert of a temporary cease-fire in the Taiwan Strait presaged the end of the resupply problem.

### *The Communist Cease-Fire*

Expectation that the Chinese Communists would resist the successful resupply efforts proved unfounded when the Communist Minister of Defense, Marshal Peng Dehuai, on 6 October, suddenly ordered a one-week suspension of shelling "out of humanitarian considerations." Calling for a reconciliation with the Nationalists, he "authorized" them to resupply the offshore islands provided they did not use U.S. Navy escorts. The United States quickly agreed to halt its convoying operations but warned the would be resumed if the Communists reopened fire on the islands. The Nationalists also reluctantly agreed to stop firing* but considered the suspension only the calm before a new storm.[89]



*Figure 27: Peng Dehuai, first Minister of National Defense*

In effect, the Communists were acknowledging that the artillery blockade of the offshore islands had been broken and that they were not prepared to reimpose it or to capture the islands. U.S. intelligence believed that the Communists, motivated by psychological and political considerations, were attempting to elicit U.S. proposals concerning the offshore islands in order to strain U.S. and Nationalist relations. They were also tacitly urging defection to the Communist cause and emphasizing the civil war nature of the conflict. On 13 October the cease-fire was extended for a week, permitting the Nationalists, who were strongly protesting U.S. suspension of convoy service, to continue unhampered resupply of their islands.[90]

The cease-fire gave U.S. authorities an opportunity to exert greater pressure on the Nationalist government to evacuate or at least reduce military garrisons on the offshore islands, particularly on smaller rocks like the two Tans (of the Kinmen group) regarded as indefensible, of little strategic value, and logistical burdens.[91] When Secretary Dulles

* In the artillery duels between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists from 23 August to 6 October the following rounds were fired: against all the Kinmens, 558,000; from the Kinmens, 88,045; against the Matsus, 183; from the Matsus, 13.

conferred with Chiang Kai-shek in Taipei during 20-22 October, he emphasized the Nationalists' loss of Free World support because of the continuing strife and urged Chiang and his government to display less belligerency. Dulles secured Chiang's consent to reduce the military forces on the offshore islands in exchange for two battalions of 240-mm howitzers that would improve considerably the counterfire capability of the Nationalists. Dulles envisaged a reduction of 15,000 to 20,000 Nationalist troops after Communist pressure subsided.[92] In a joint communique issued at the end of their conferences, Chiang also agreed to forego the use of force to restore his government on the mainland,[93] another significant concession in the light of his previous utterances.

The arrival of Secretary Dulles in Taipei had coincided with the end of the cease-fire, allegedly became a U.S. Navy ship had "violated" the "truce terms,"* a charge quickly denied. Communist antiaircraft fire against the Nationalist airdrops was only moderate, however.[94] Five days later the Communists placed the bombardment of the Kinmens on an every-other-day schedule and "permitted" the Nationalists to replenish their offshore islands on even-numbered days. Taking full advantage of Communist concessions, the Nationalists delivered some 43,200 tons of supplies during October – 40,300 by surface ships, 1,500 by junks, and 1,400 by air. Total CNAF resupply losses because of ground fire were two C-46-s destroyed and two damaged.[95]

### *Redeployment*

With the artillery blockade broken and the danger of an enlargement of the conflict decreasing, U.S. commanders began to consider redeployment of their forces from the Pacific. The withdrawal began at the end of October when Adm Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, authorized Admiral Felt to reduce his naval strength in the Taiwan Strait. Felt was instructed to leave two aircraft carriers and supporting ships on station and send the others to Subic Bay in the Philippines or to Yokosuka, Japan.[96] Major redeployment of air units did not begin until December.

Both Navy and Air Force authorities in the Pacific recognized the political and psychological implications of this withdrawal. They were certain that the Chinese Communists would pay it up as evidence of U.S. abandonment of the Chinese Communists would play it up as evidence of U.S. abandonment of the Chinse Nationalists and that the Nationalists would probably feel military weakened. They agreed, therefore, to couple any reduction of air strength with improvement of the CNAF, especially its air defense and all-weather capability. Kuter believed that MiG-19's, MiG-21's, and a Soviet version of the Sidewinder would surely appear in the Chinese Communist air force inventory at an early date.[97]

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* Dulles believed that the Communists were prepared to use any pretext to break the cease-fire.

The Air Force and Navy did not agree, however, on publicity for the return to the United States. Kuter strongly recommended a highly publicized movement of TAC B-57's, F-101's, and F-100's through Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and the Philippines to show that the United States was withdrawing with confidence and strength. He believed this would also rectify a previous imbalance in service publicity since the movement of Navy carriers to the Taiwan Strait at the beginning of the crisis had received much public coverage and the Air Force deployments relatively little. Although Kuter was supported in principle by Headquarters USAF,* Felt recommended no country tour by units and as little publicity as possible. The issue was resolved early in December when the State Department supported Felt's position.[98]

In preparation for the redeployment, Felt transferred responsibility for the air defense of Taiwan and the Penghus, assumed by the United States in September,† back to the Nationalist government.[99] PACAF and TAC agreed late in November on a Twelfth Air Force redeployment plan (Ops Plan 37-58). CASF F-100 and F/RF-101 units would fly to Anderson AFB, Guam, where the Twelfth Air Force would assume operational control of the units. B-57's would go directly to Wake Island and from there to Hickam AFB, Hawaii. CASF tactical units, redeploying according to a prearranged order of precedence, would be supported by two C-130 troop carrier squadrons and a KB-50 air refueling squadron.[100]

The movement of CASF units to the United States began on 9 December. As in deployment, the F-100's and F/RF-101's passing through Pacific bases had one or two air refueling. The C-130 transports carried military coordinating teams and the command element in addition to unit support equipment and personnel. MATS aircraft also provided airlift. Redeployment of the tactical units was completed on 18 December.[101]

The redeployment was successful, but it pointed up a number of problems. There was not enough time to distribute the Twelfth Air Force's Ops Plan 37-58. No provision had been made for weather reconnaissance aircraft between Hickam AFB and air refueling areas. Military coordinating center units were undermanned for 24-hour duty. The receiving base for B-57's had to be changed from Moffett NAS, Calif., to George AFB, Calif., because of unfavorable weather conditions and inadequate facilities at the former base. The Twelfth Air Force operations center at Waco, Texas, had trouble encrypting messages to PACAF, and many "launch" messages arrived either with little time to spare or too late for implementation. The problem was sufficiently acute to warrant waiving the encryption requirement in order to insure a reasonable efficiency in redeployment.[102]

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* HQ USAF believed that the country tours should be limited, however, to Thailand and the Philippines.
† See above.

Meanwhile, F-86D, F-104, and MAG-11 units remaining on Taiwan were soon subject to rotation. An F-86D squadron from Okinawa and elements of another from Tainan AB replaced a redeployed F-100 unit at Chiayi AB. A *Starfighter* squadron on Okinawa replaced the F-104 unit at Taoyuan AB. Both Felt and Kuter desired F-104's on Taiwan for psychological reasons, and they hoped that the CNAF would soon receive these fighters. MAG-11 units began to return to Japan on 1 February 1959, and by mid-March only a small Marine squadron remained in Taiwan.[103]

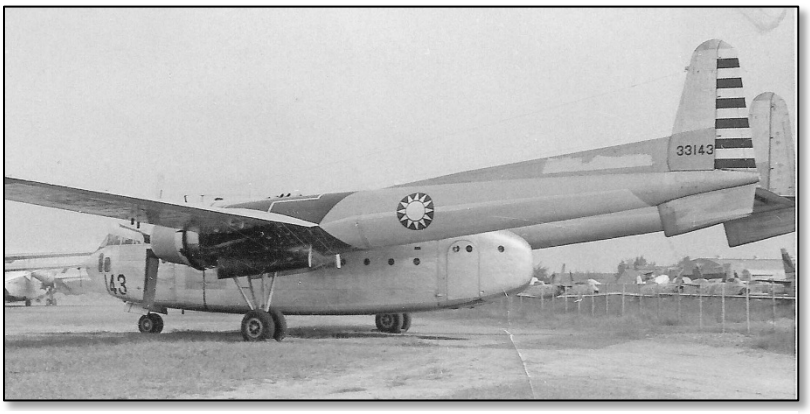

*Figure 28: Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar on Tainan AB, Taiwan*

The redeployment underlined anew the importance of modernizing the CNAF in accordance with JCS decisions. In addition to aircraft transferred or being transferred during the Taiwan crisis, further progress in 1958 and early 1959 included approval and funding under the Military Assistance Program (MAP) of 6 F-100F's, 80 F-100A's, 4 RF-100A's, and 4 RF-101's. Several of the reconnaissance aircraft were delivered by the of 1958. The Air Force also considered transferring under grant aid the 16 C-119 transports on loan to the CNAF. No immediate action was taken on recommendations by Felt and Kuter to further augment the CNAF with 10 RF-84F's, one F-104 squadron, one F-86D squadron, or other MAP-financed aircraft.[104]

# V. AN APPRAISAL

The Taiwan crises of 1954-55 and 1958 were both preceded by numerous indications of Chinese Communist pressure against the offshore islands. The initial U.S. response in each instance reflected an ambiguous policy toward the islands. In January 1955, this country hastily decided to evacuate Nationalist military and civilian personnel from the Tachens only two days after making a decision to meet the Chinese Communist threat by a show of air strength from Taiwan. In mid-August 1958, despite considerable evidence of renewed Communist pressure, the U.S. Government still debated what its military response and its public policy should be in the event of a blockade or an attack against the islands. Not until 25 August, two days after the artillery bombardment of the Kinmens began, did the JCS direct U.S. forces in the Pacific to prepare to assist in the defense of only the **principal** offshore islands. Almost a week elapsed after the beginning of the Communist artillery bombardment before Washington authorized the deployment of USAF units within or to the Pacific. Meanwhile, the military initiative was left in the hands of the Communists.

U.S. policy was based on the recognition that the importance of the offshore islands was political and psychological (to the Chinese Nationalists) rather than strategic[105] and that their defense was a matter of Presidential discretion. Whatever the merits of this policy, it made military planning difficult. USAF commanders, understandably, chafed at the slowness of the "decision making machine" in Washington after there was ample evidence, in their opinion, of an impending military threat in the Taiwan Strait. They were uncertain whether they would be required to "fight or bluff." The JCS subsequently agreed that political guidance had been inadequate for developing defense plans for the offshore islands.[106]

In the area of diplomacy, the United States followed the policy of keeping the Japanese government fully informed during the crisis about this country's utilization of military bases in Japan. This assuaged Japanese feelings sufficiently to make unnecessary a request for "permission" to use them.[107]

The 1958 Taiwan crisis underscored a need for more expeditious and more definitive operational planning. PACAF did not issue its operations plan until shortly before 23 August, thus precluding detailed implementation by subordinate commands. Planning between PACAF and TAC was incomplete on the eve of the crisis. PACAF believed that TAC's failure to provide sufficient detail (such as the type of equipment and the number of people required) did not enable the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces to plan for adequate support.[108]

The unexpected JCS instruction not to use nuclear weapons during the initial stage of conflict upset previous planning assumptions, for air units were operationally and logistically tailored primarily for nuclear warfare. USAF and Navy commanders viewed the injunction with apprehension for they were dubious of the success of nonnuclear operations against a Chinese Communist air force of unknown quality but formidable size. Air Force commanders were particularly concerned lest such operations affect their emergency war plans. They considered a nonnuclear requirement as a step backward in the art of warfare and a retrogression in national defense policy.[109]

If U.S. policy makers intended to authorize only a few nonnuclear strikes in order to warn the Chinese Communists against enlarging the conflict, it might be argued that this anxiety was overdrawn and that there had been no change in U.S. weapon policy.[110] However, the JCS directive of 29 August strongly suggests that relatively extensive nonnuclear operations were envisaged. In Phases II-H and III-H, U.S. airpower would make only iron bomb attacks against a widening range of coastal airfields, GCI sites, military control centers, and fixed targets plus certain other airfields up to a radius of 800 miles. Unless the Chinese Communist air force and antiaircraft defenses proved woefully weak, it appears doubtful that available airpower in the Pacific could have engaged in such sustained operations.*[111]

Whether adequate and timely augmentation of aircraft, supplies, and equipment would have been forthcoming is questionable. General Kuter thought not. Certainly, the field commanders believed that neither their military planning assumptions nor their prestocked assets were compatible with the concept of operations for the Taiwan Strait area directed by Washington authorities. They also agreed that the most important "lesson learned" during the 1958 Taiwan crisis was the need for a firm U.S. nuclear weapon policy.[112]

U.S. authorities banned early use of nuclear weapons undoubtedly because they were determined to keep military activity localized in the Taiwan Strait while working for a cease-fire. They believed that a U.S.-Chinese Communist conflict could be kept from expanding into an all-out war if U.S. forces limited themselves to using only conventional bombs. The goal of localizing the conflict was achieved, but since there was no test of the concept that the use of nonnuclear weapons would minimize the danger of all-out war, its validity can only be conjectured. That the United States belatedly modified its weapon policy for the Taiwan area appears borne out by the strong reaction of military commanders to the

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* Based on established USAF war planning factors, PACAF concluded that it would require four squadrons of F-100's (or B-57's) or 20 squadrons of F-101's operating from Kadena or Clark Air Bases to neutralize one Communist airfield with bombings every fourth day to sustain neutralization. The aircraft requirement was based on the assumption that the Chinese Communists had more than 200 jet interceptors on coastal airfields and concentrations of heavy- and medium-type anticraft defenses.

prohibition against the initial use of nuclear weapons. It is also indicated in Admiral Felt's query in mid crisis about his nonnuclear capability, his decision to prepare a nonnuclear annex to his operations plan, his establishment of a subordinate unified command on Taiwan to conduct nonnuclear operations, and his subsequent decision to amend all contingency operations plans to provide for nonnuclear warfare. For the JCS the iron bomb policy reemphasized the need for an awareness by military planners of political objectives and by political authorities of the implications of their decisions on military planning.[113]

Whether the command structure on Taiwan should have been altered in preparation for possible iron bomb operations remains debatable. Felt believed the need for a subordinate unified command was confirmed by subsequent events, but Kuter did not.[114] Once the change was made, it functioned satisfactorily, and the appointment of the commander of ATF 13, General Dean, to head the air defense system on Taiwan created no important difficulties. The major objection to the subordinate unified command was that in the event of nuclear war there would be insufficient time to revert to a more centralized command.[115]

Unit movements to and within the Pacific theater were achieved without major difficulty. TAC's Twelfth Air Force believed that the CASF concept of deploying substantial, mobile, tactical forces to a troubled area in a short time appeared confirmed, although Kuter through the deployments were not quite as rapid as advertised.[116] The Marine commander of MAG-11 believed that this unit displayed much greater mobility in the transfer from Japan to Taiwan than did CASF X-Ray Tango.[117] This seems a highly questionable comparison in view of the greater problems inherent in flying tactical aircraft over distances of the Pacific.

The deployments did not follow original operational plans in every respect, largely because the Air Force had earlier diverted some tactical and support units to the Middle East following the outbreak of the Lebanon crisis in July. For example, TAC reassigned responsibility for deploying X-Ray Tango units left the United States in three closely related stages rather than in one stage; and the movements of 12 F-104 *Starfighters* and MAG-11 to Taiwan were not provided for in initial planning.[118]

MATS airlift for both CASF and non-CASF units was adequate, but its channel airlift was not and had to be augmented by commercial carriers.* Even this did not eliminate the substantial backlog of supplies that existed at the MATS Pacific coast terminal, Travis AFB, during September and October. The backlog varied, but a contributing cause was the failure of commands to inform MATS in time of their increased requirements. The supply problems also confirmed the need for high-speed surface transportation to the Pacific outposts.[119]

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* Excessive costs precluded MATS from contracting for as much commercial airlift as was needed.

The U.S. injunction against early use of nuclear weapons gave renewed importance to the possession of well-equipped, well-stocked, forward bases. Military assets at these bases were seriously inadequate, with iron bombs, ammunition, and auxiliary fuel tanks topping the list of critically deficient items in addition to insufficient spare parts and equipment. Many logistical experts believed that preparations for iron bomb operations would require a partial reversal of the trend toward direct resupply from the United States.[120]

Even more serious was the communication problem in the Pacific, especially on Taiwan. Fully recognized during the 1954-55 Taiwan crisis, deficiencies had not been greatly remedied by 1958. The Hardtack high-altitude nuclear tests of August 1958, which resulted in widespread disruption of radio signals, also pointed up the inadequacy and the vulnerability of the military communication net in the Pacific.[121]

The Air Force conceded that in public relations the U.S. Navy was more successful during the Taiwan crisis, primarily because command responsibility in the Pacific gave it a preferred position. News media representatives were cleared by Navy officers. Navy information offices were also generally better staffed. USAF information officers claimed that releases on units and personnel were either withheld or "pared to the bone" by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs). The Air Force believed many of its informational problems could be alleviated by raising the professional standards of its career information officers.[122]

The 1958 Taiwan crisis provided a good test of the relations between the United States and the Chinese Nationalists. Politically, the Nationalists proved more amenable to U.S. advice and practiced greater restraint than expected. The willingness of President Chiang Kai-shek to agree to a reduction of his Army forces on the offshore island (in exchange for more artillery from the United States) and his "renunciation of force" statement with Secretary Dulles in October 1958 were milestones in U.S. efforts to ameliorate the problem of the offshore islands.

In Nationalist military operations there were pluses and minuses. The CNAF was tactically much superior to the Communist Air Force, and its pilots were quick to learn how to fly later-model aircraft and use more advanced weapons such as the Sidewinder missile. Its limited airlift capacity also contributed to alleviating the artillery blockade of the Kinmens. The CNAF demonstrated how a force that had been reasonably modernized and well trained under the U.S. Military Assistance Program could aid in the attainment of U.S. objectives in a localized conflict. The CNAF was also overgenerous in providing USAF forces on Taiwan with supplies and facilities. Deficiencies were most apparent in Nationalist counter artillery-fire and in logistical planning for and surface resupply of the offshore islands. The Nationalist navy, in contrast with the CNAF, performed poorly at first

and required much U.S. urging, training, and guidance before demonstrating effectiveness. A need for more compatible Nationalist and U.S. military planning was also evident.[123]

In summary, the Taiwan crisis of 1958 remained a localized conflict and subsided without loss of Nationalist-held territory to the Chinese Communists. The reasons given for the success of U.S. policy were varied and inevitably reflected service and command viewpoints. In Kuter's opinion, the full-speed convergence of the "massive Seventh Fleet" toward the Taiwan Strait and the deployment of TAC's and ADC's Century fighters scored the greatest psychological impact on the Communists. The naval movement had the most immediate influence only because it was the most publicized.[124] The U.S. Navy believed that its attack carriers and combat Marines were principally responsible for keeping the conflicts in both the Taiwan Straight and in Lebanon from spreading. This view was strongly challenged by the USAF Chief of Staff, Gen Thomas D. White, who gave primary credit to the Strategic Air Command.[125] Regardless of service claims, it seems likely that the U.S. tactical show of force, backed by strategic airpower, deterred the Chinese Communists from enlarging the conflict after the artillery blockade of the Kinmens was broken. Other factors that undoubtedly contributed to U.S. success included intelligence assessments of Chinese Communist probing operations and the diplomacy used to prevent the Chinese Nationalists from taking unilateral military action.



*Figure 29: CSAF Thomas D White*

The ultimate success of U.S. policy in 1958 did not obviate the fact that the United States was confronted with great risks in the Taiwan Strait area. These risks were intensified by the requirement that tactical forces be prepared to conduct nonnuclear operations for which they were ill-prepared from the standpoint of aircraft, supplies, equipment, and facilities. There was evidence that U.S. weapon policy was not firm and that a balance in tactical and logistical strength to conduct nonnuclear as well as nuclear operations remained to be achieved. Failure to achieve this balance could deprive the United States of a choice of weapons – nonnuclear or nuclear – to deal with a future military crisis. In view of the possible, even likely, recurrence of trouble in the Taiwan Strait, the lessons of the 1958 crisis held great significance for U.S. political and military leaders.

# GLOSSARY

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| AACS | Airways and Air Communications Services |
| ACW | Aircraft Control and Warning |
| AFHTC | Air Force Missile Test Center |
| AIIR | Air Intelligence Information Report |
| ALMAJCOMS | All major commands |
| Anx | Annex |
| AOC | Air Operations Center |
| ATF 13 (P) | Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) |
| ATIC | Air Technical Intelligence Center |
| CASF | Composite air strike force |
| CCC | Combat control center |
| CINCARPAC | Commander-in-Chief, Army, Pacific |
| CINCFE | Commander-in-Chief, Far East |
| CINCPAC | Commander-in-Chief, Pacific |
| CINCPACAF | Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Forces |
| CINCSPECOMME | Commander-in-Chief, Special Command, Middle East |
| CMC | Commander, Marine Corps |
| CNAF | Chinese Nationalist Air Force |
| CNO | Chief of Naval Operations |
| COC | Combined operations center |
| COMCIAPAC | Commander, Central Intelligence Agency, Pacific |
| COMNAVPHIL | Commander, Navy, Philippines |
| COMSEVENTHFLT | Commander, Seventh Fleet |
| COMTAIWANDEFCOM | Commander, Taiwan Defense Command |
| COMTDC | Commander, Taiwan Defense Command |
| COMUSJAPAN | Commander, United States in Japan |
| DA | Department of Army |
| FEAF | Far East Air Forces |
| FEALF | Fair East Air Logistic Force |
| FEC/UNC | Far East Command, United Nations Command |
| FMFPAC | Fleet Marine Force, Pacific |
| FRC | Federal Records Center |
| GCI | Ground control intercept |
| GRC | Government, Republic of China |
| JCC | Joint communication center |

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|---|---|
| JOC | Joint operations center |
| MAAG | Military Assistance Advisory Group |
| MAG | Marine air group |
| MAW | Marine air wing |
| MATS | Military Air Transport Services |
| MHA | Marine Historical Archives |
| NAS | Naval Air Station |
| OCB | Operations Coordinating Board |
| RP | Republic of Philippines |
| TDC | Taiwan Defense Command |

# APPENDIX 1: CASF X-RAY TANGO UNITS AND THEIR HOME STATION

| Parent Unit | Unit Deployed | Type Aircraft | Home Station |
|---|---|---|---|
| 312th Tactical Fighter Wing | 388th Tactical Fighter Squadron | F-100 | Cannon AFB (NM) |
| 312th Tactical Fighter Wing | 477th Tactical Fighter Squadron | F-100 | Cannon AFB (NM) |
| 27th Tactical Fighter Wing | 522nd Tactical Fighter Squadron | F-101 | Bergstrom AFB (TX) |
| 345th Tactical Bomber Wing | 499th Tactical Bombardment Squadron | B-57 | Langley AFB (VA) |
| 314th Troop Carrier Wing | 50th Troop Carrier Squadron | C-130 | Sewart AFB (TN) |
| 463rd Troop Carrier Wing | 773rd Troop Carrier Squadron | C-130 | Ardmore AFB (OK) |
| 837th Air Division | 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron | RF-101 | Shaw AFB (SC) |
| 837th Air Division | 20th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron | RF-101 | Shaw AFB (SC) |
| 4505th Air Refueling Wing | 429th Air Refueling Squadron | KB-50 | Langley AFB (VA) |
| 507th Tactical Control Group | Command & Control Element | | Shaw AFB (SC) |
| 2nd Tactical Depot Squadron | Command Element | | Langley AFB (VA) |

# APPENDIX 2: USAF UNITS AVAILABLE TO PACAF AFTER DEPLOYMENT

| Country | Bases | Unit | Type & Number of Aircraft | Mission |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Taiwan | Taoyuan | 83 FIS (NORAD) | 12 F-104 | Air Defense |
| | Hsinchu | 26 FIS (13th AF) | 6 F-86D | Air Defense |
| | Tainan | 16 FIS (5th AF) | 25 F-86D | Air Defense |
| | Chiayi | 388 TFS (CASF) | 16 F-100D/F | Air Defense and HE Offense* |
| | Tainan | 868 TMS (13th AF) | 20 TM-61 | Offense (atomic) |
| | Tainan (dispersed) | 507 Communications & Control Group | | Communications & Electronics |
| | Taiwan-Kadena | Command Element | | Command augmentation |
| Philippines | Clark | 1 WMT (CASF) | | Atomic weapon maintenance |
| | Clark | 26 FIS (13th AF) | 7 F-86D | Air Offense |
| | Clark | 72 TFS | 25 F-100D/F | Offense |
| | Clark | 50 TCS (CASF) | 15 C-130 | Airlift |
| | Clark | 17 TRS (CASF) | 6 RF-101 | Reconnaissance |
| | Clark | 4505 ARW (CASF) | 5 KB-50 | Refueling |
| Okinawa | Naha | 25 FIS (5th AF) | 29 F-86D | Air Defense |
| | Kadena | 522 TFS (CASF) | 13 F-101 | Offense |
| | Kadena | 477 TFS (CASF) | 16 F-101D/F | Air Defense |
| | Kadena | 499 TBS (CASF) | 14 B-57 | Offense |
| | Kadena | 20 TRS (CASF) | 6 RF-101 | Reconnaissance |
| | Naha | 429 ARS (CASF) | 5 KB-50 | Refueling |
| Japan | Ashiya | 773 TCS (CASF) | 16 C-130 | Airlift |

NOTE: ARS = Air Refueling Squadron; ARW = Air Refueling Wing; FIS = Fighter-Interceptor Squadron; TBS = Tactical Bombardment Squadron; TCS = Troop Carrier Squadron; TMS = Tactical Missile Squadron; TFS = Tactical Fighter Squadron; TRS = Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron; WMT = Weapons Maintenance Truck.

* HE stands for High Explosive offense (or conventional high-explosive strike/offensive mission capability), used to categorize the tactical air force combat assignments during Cold War deployments.

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[123] Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 15 Dec 58; AU Eval Study of Taiwan; file Ops 22, 1 Jan 59; 13th AF Rpt, Taiwan Straits Ops, p 228.

[124] Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 15 Dec 58; file Ops 22, 1 Jan 59; Hist, PACAF, 1 Jul-31 Dec 58, Vol I, Pt I, p 268.

[125] Hearings Before the Subcmte of the House Cmte on Appropriations, 86th Cong, 1st Sess, *DOD Appropriations, 1960*, Pt 1, pp 894-95.