

SECRET

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

No. 34-61

CONTENTS

SPECIAL REPORT

COMMUNIST CHINA: THE RED CHINESE AND THE PARACEL ISLANDS

2

25X1
25X1



SECRET

SECRET

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

No. 35-61

South China Seas

SPECIAL REPORT

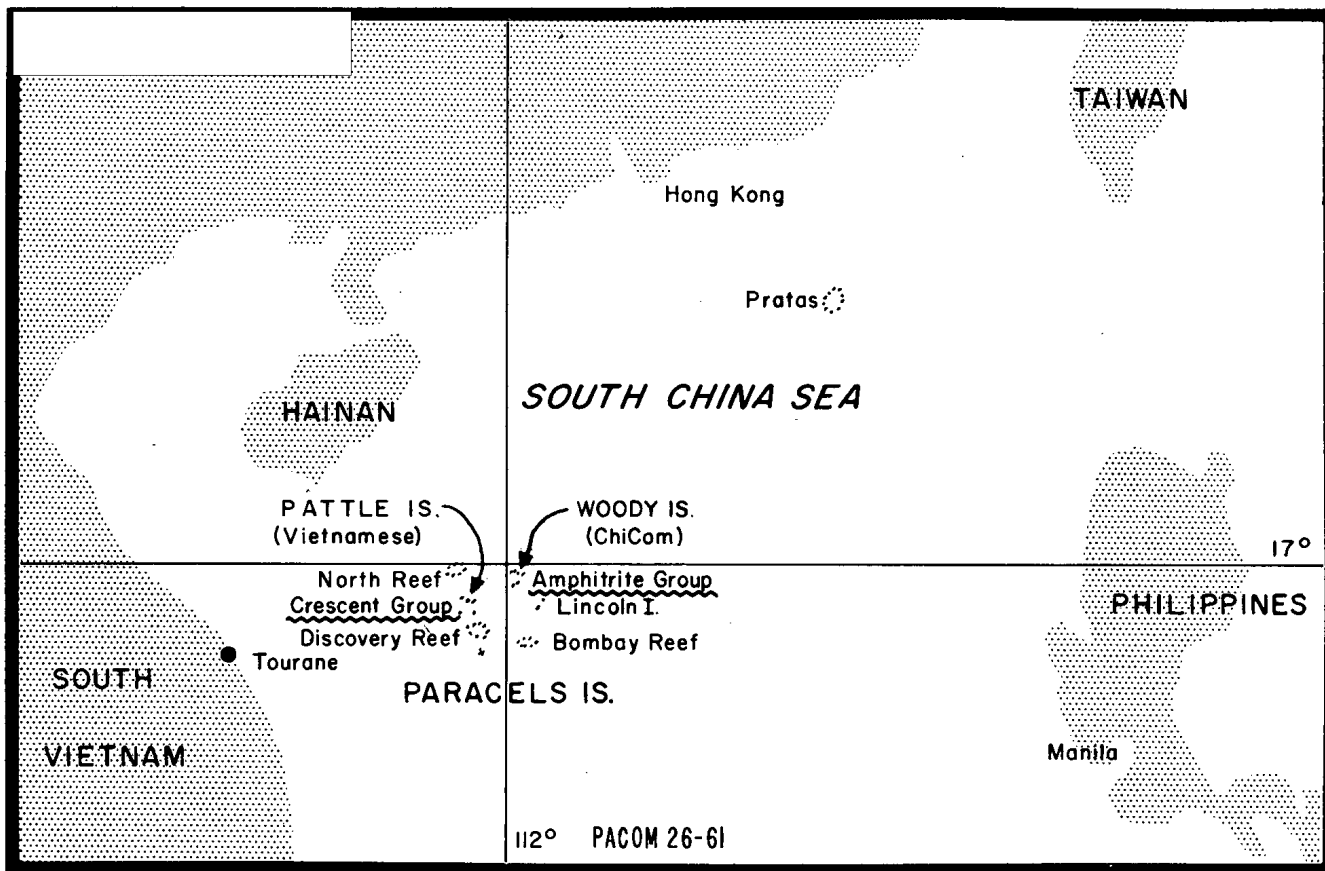
1 Sept 61

COMMUNIST CHINA: THE RED CHINESE AND THE PARACEL ISLANDS 25X1

Chinese Communist occupation in the controversial Paracel Islands appears to be keyed for long-range tenancy. Recently, in the Amphitrite Group new construction of permanent-type buildings appeared, and Red Chinese visits of naval patrol ships in the escort and submarine-chaser size are frequent. Woody Island, 180 miles south of Hainan, appears to be the center of activity with a new breakwater reported under construction between Woody and Rocky Islands. *

The Chinese Communists initiated their colonization of the Paracels in mid-1955 in an intensive effort to exploit the limited natural resources of fishing and excavating guano deposits. However, ownership of the Paracels has been a confused and conflicting question of long standing. Although South Vietnam and Communist China both lay claim to the Paracels, the archipelago presently is divided into two camps—the Crescent Group claimed by the South Vietnamese who occupy Pattle Island, and the Amphitrite Group claimed by the Chinese

*Other names for Woody Island are Boisee Island and Yunghsing Tao.



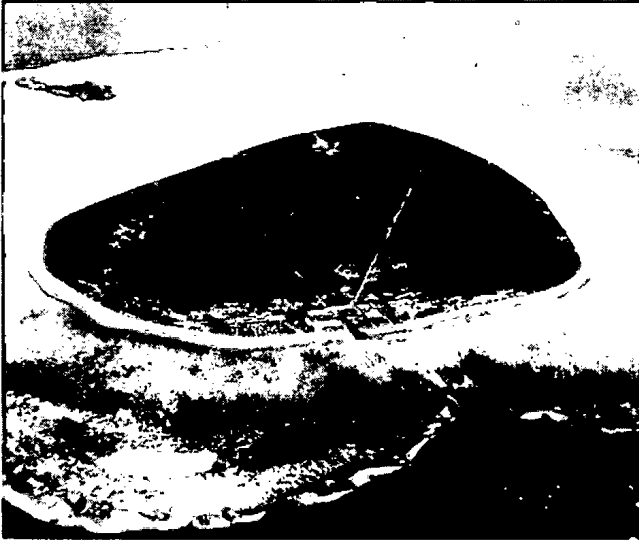
25X1

SECRET

SECRET

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

No. 35-61



Woody Island

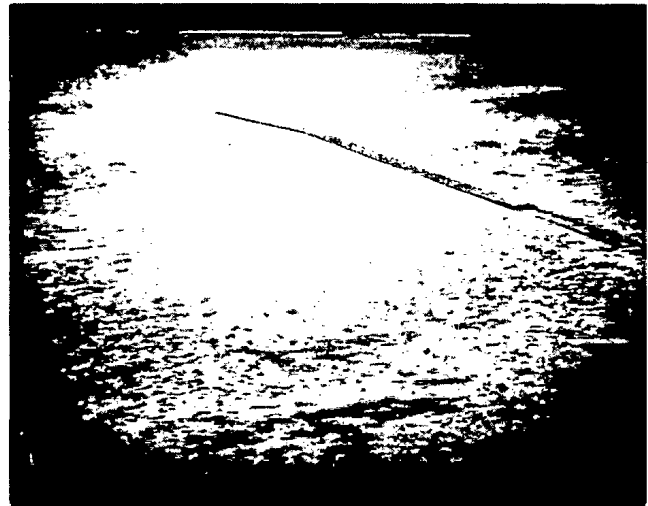


Lincoln Island

Communists who occupy Woody Island, a few smaller islands, and Lincoln Island.*

The objectives of the Chinese Communists in the Paracels may include more than innocent fishing and excavating of fertilizer. US overflights usually are immediately followed by Peiping claims of "provocations and aggression." These warnings probably have a two-fold purpose: 1) to reinforce Red Chinese claims to the islands, and 2) to eliminate US aerial reconnaissance. In Communist eyes, forced cessation of the US flights could imply tacit

*In February 1959 on Duncan Island South Vietnamese marines seized 50 Chinese Communist fishermen who were released a week later. The only notable consequence was stepped up Peiping propaganda of South Vietnamese "pillage" and "piracy". Since that time the South Vietnamese and Chinese Communists generally have confined their activities to the respective western and eastern groups.



Breakwater under construction between Rocky and Woody Islands nears completion.

SECRET

SECRET

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

No. 35-61

recognition of their claims.

The Paracel Islands as a whole do not appear to offer much military worth since they consist largely of coral reefs and coral sandkeys. On the small islands, vegetation is largely restricted to dense scrub five to six feet high. Larger islands of the Paracel Islands have dense forests with trees up to 40 feet tall. These forests are interrupted by patches of scrub about 10 feet in height.

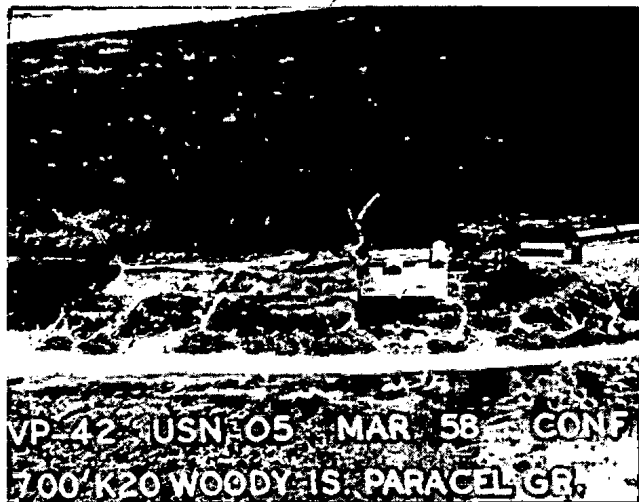
Adequate supplies of fresh water for most military operations are generally unavailable. Surface water is lacking and ground water is commonly brackish. Meager amounts of fresh ground water may be obtained locally from shallow wells in sand. However, unless the rate of pumping in such wells is carefully regulated to balance the rate of intake, the water will become brackish or salty. Rainwater collected in tanks may also provide a limited supply.

The soil, composed of light colored stones or coral sand a few inches to several feet deep, is slightly darkened by organic matter in areas of vegetation. The ground is dry except when it is actually raining, and cross-country movement is possible in all kinds of weather on bare coral sand surfaces for both tracked and wheeled vehicles. Surfaces covered with coral rubble and steep rocky slopes are unsuited to cross-country movement. Clearing of vegetation also would be required for cross-country vehicular movement on the larger Woody and Lincoln Islands. Much work would be necessary for construction of any landing facilities for aircraft.

The smaller reefs and most of the sand keys are not large enough to support either road networks or runways long enough for most military aircraft.

The islands generally are unsuited for the construction of any type of underground installation. Although the coral is easily worked for the construction of tunnel-type installations, excavations for bunker-type installations would fill with water.

Obviously, the islands leave much to be desired for emplacing field fortification type defenses. However, the Japanese found military exploitation worthwhile during World War



New construction evidenced by pier. Left photo taken March 1958, right photo July 1960.

SECRET