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Formosa Straits - Airfield Construction
(Info Dates -- Late April through mid-May)

Recent field interpretation of aerial photography indicates that three Chinese Communist airfields in the Formosa Straits area (Nantai, Swatow Northeast, and Lung Tien) are rapidly approaching completion. The rate of construction achieved during the past few weeks indicates that all three airfields could be made operational by the end of June.

Photography available in Washington confirms earlier field reports that between 25 April and 5 May about one-third of the 7,000 foot runway at Nantai was surfaced. While it cannot be determined whether the surface is concrete, as reported by the field, it is evident from available photography that the surfacing now being carried out is suitable for sustained operational use by jet aircraft. US field interpretation of 13 May photography of Nantai indicates that surfacing had been about 60% completed by that time. 2/

Photo coverage of Ching Hai airfield (Swatow Northeast) available in Washington indicates that in late April grading was far advanced and that on 5 May about 25 percent of the 6,700 foot runway had been surfaced. The surface appears to be the same type as that at Nantai. These photographs confirm status reports received from earlier field interpretation of aerial photographs. Field interpretation of 15 May photography indicates that the surfacing at Ching Hai had been 50 percent completed by that time. 4/

With respect to the Lung Tien airfield, photography now available in Washington reveals that in late April the outline of the runway of about 6,500 feet was taking shape and by 5 May grading was well advanced, thus confirming preliminary field interpretation reports. While no later photography on this airfield is now available to OPR, field interpretation of 13 May photo coverage discloses that about 1,000 feet of runway had been surfaced. 6/

Grading on the Sha Ti and Lung Chi airfields is in progress, according to field interpretation of 15 May photography, but there is no evidence as yet that surfacing has been started. 6/

Analysis of photography received in Washington clearly seems to indicate that the preliminary field reports are generally reliable with regard to the extent of progress of runway surfacing. On this basis, it appears from the reported rate of progress already achieved by the Chinese Communists that runways of 6,000 to 7,000 feet can be completed within from four to six weeks after final surfacing has begun. Accordingly, it is believed that Nantai, Ching Hai and Lung Tien airfields could all be completed by the end of June and it is possible that one or both of the other coastal airfields now under construction could be rushed to completion before September.

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