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INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

INDIA AND COMMUNIST CHINA CONTEMPLATE THE USE OF 1,000-KILOWATT RADIO TRANSMITTERS FOR BROADCASTS TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Research and Reports

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In July 1964, Communist China approached Japan for the purchase of a 1,000-kilowatt (kw) medium-wave radiobroadcasting transmitter. This request probably was in reaction to earlier Indian negotiations in 1963 and 1964 with Free World and Communist countries for the purchase of a similar 1,000-kw transmitter to be located near Calcutta to counter Chinese Communist broadcasts to Southeast Asia. Although neither the proposed location nor the use of the Chinese Communist transmitter is known, it is expected that it will be installed in Southwest China so as to improve broadcasting coverage to Southeast Asia. To date, neither country has concluded negotiations for delivery of the transmitters. Even if contracts are signed in the near future, it is unlikely that either project could be completed before late in 1966 in view of the lag inherent in the design, production, and installation of such transmitters.

1. Indian and Chinese Communist Plans

In the aftermath of the Sino-Indian border war, India and Communist China have sought to increase the coverage and effectiveness of their international radiobroadcasts to Southeast Asia. Within this context of a possible burgeoning propaganda war, both countries are now giving strong consideration to the use of 1,000-kw medium-wave radio transmitters. For its part, India early in 1963 reached an agreement with the Voice of America (VOA) for a jointly controlled 1,000-kw medium-wave transmitter to be installed near Calcutta. In August 1963, India terminated the VOA agreement because of internal political considerations and opened negotiations with other Free World and Communist countries for the import of a similar transmitter that would be completely under its operational control. By early 1964, additional bids had been received from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Japan, the UK, and the US. All of these bids were unacceptable, however, either because of delivery dates or because financial terms did not meet the Indian requirement for payment in rupees. In May 1964 the USSR entered the picture with an offer to provide on favorable terms a 1,000-kw transmitter to be operational within 2 years. Although a flurry of interest followed the Soviet offer, India apparently has postponed any decision at present.

With the advent of the Soviet offer to India, Communist China quickly revealed a strong interest in acquiring a 1,000-kw medium-wave radio transmitter. In hopes of meeting this need, Communist China turned to a Japanese trading company in July 1964, when it submitted a formal request for assistance in the construction of a 1,000-kw radio station with Japanese technology and equipment. [redacted]

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2. Economic and Technical Considerations

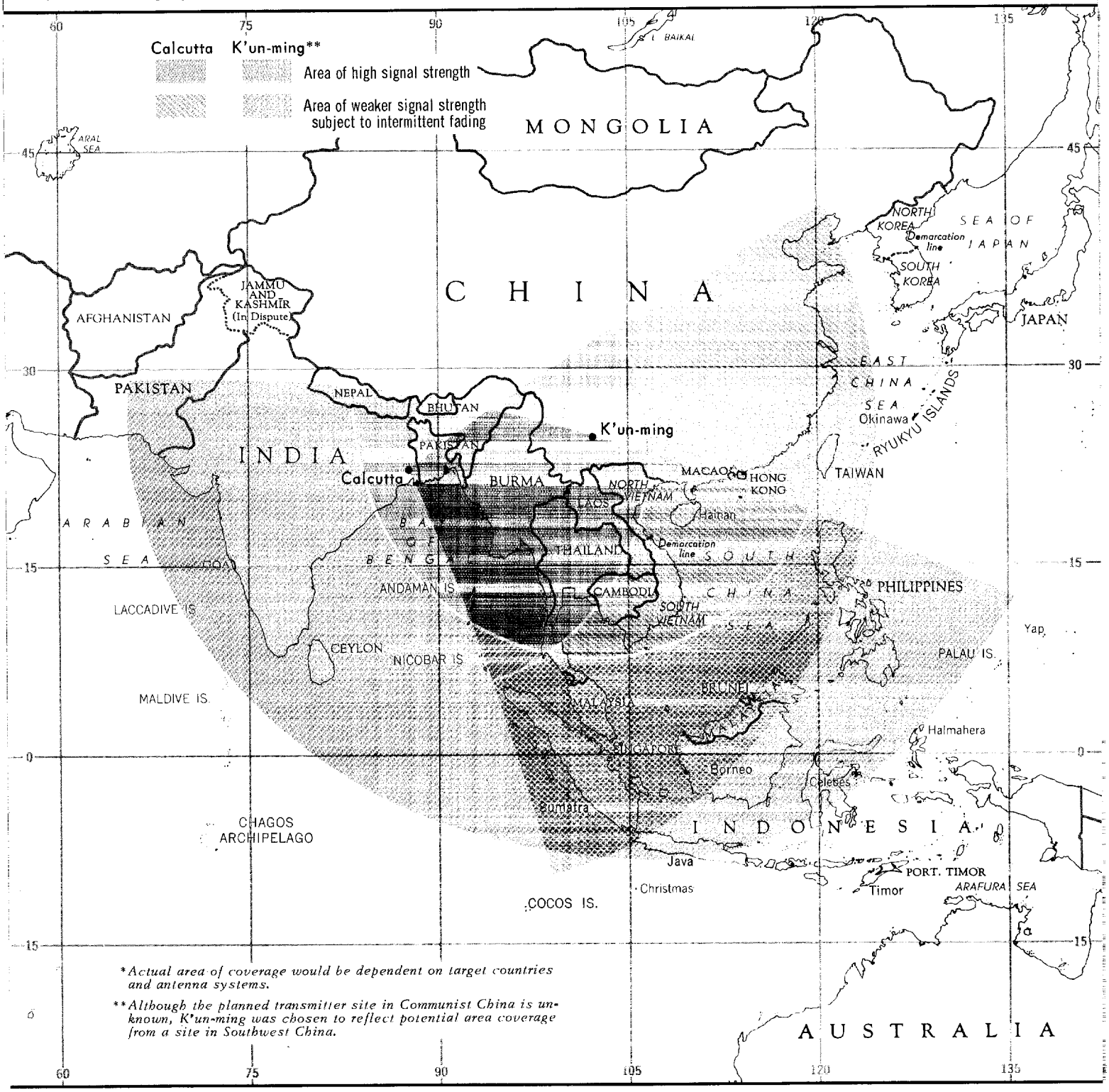
This interest by India and Communist China in 1,000-kw medium-wave transmitters mirrors a growing worldwide interest in supplementing international short-wave broadcasts with powerful medium-wave broadcasts to reach the greater number of conventional medium-wave broadcast receivers. Propagation conditions at medium frequencies, however, are such that coverage beyond a few hundred miles can be attained only during hours of darkness. As shown on the map, the Indian transmitter, which is planned for installation near Calcutta, probably would permit nighttime coverage with a high signal strength to at least 1,000 miles. This coverage would encompass all of Burma and parts of Laos, Thailand, and South China. Communist China could achieve similar geographic coverage by locating its prospective transmitter in the Kunming area. Nighttime coverage from transmitters of this size might in fact extend to 2,000 miles, although the signal strength would be much weaker and subject to intermittent fading.

At present the US has the only operational 1,000-kw medium-wave transmitters -- located in Okinawa and the Philippines -- but the UK and Egypt probably will have operational transmitters of similar power in the near future. This limited use of 1,000-kw transmitters can be attributed to a considerable degree to the requirement for manufacturing specialized component parts for such powerful transmitters and to the high investment and operating costs. Initial investment costs for 1,000-kw transmitters range from US $1 million to US $2 million, and recurring operating and maintenance costs range from US $250,000 to US $500,000 per year.

3. Prospects

Although the Soviet offer to India appears at present to be the most attractive, and indeed the most likely to be accepted, India still has the alternative of a Czechoslovak offer to accept payment in rupees for a somewhat smaller transmitter. Among the bids offered by non-rupee payment countries the two bids rendered by Japan are the most favorable. India has attempted to rationalize its earlier refusal of the Japanese offer on the basis that its electronics industry lacks experience in the design and production of such transmitters, although in fact the electronics industry of the USSR is similarly untested. The advanced stage of development of the electronics industries of both countries, however, would indicate that each has the ability to master the necessary technology and could provide an operational transmitter within 2 years. With respect to Communist China, Japan probably will accede to the request for technology and equipment for the construction of a 1,000-kw radio station. Japan's initial response to the Chinese Communist inquiry probably reflected an awareness that the US would be sensitive to any Japanese assistance in the buildup of Communist China's international broadcasting effort to Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Japan probably will be reluctant to jeopardize its prospective position as a major supplier of telecommunications equipment to Communist China.

Potential Nighttime Coverage of 1,000 Kilowatt Medium-Wave Radio Transmitters from Possible Sites in India and Communist China*



*Actual area of coverage would be dependent on target countries and antenna systems.

**Although the planned transmitter site in Communist China is unknown, K'un-ming was chosen to reflect potential area coverage from a site in Southwest China.

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3. State, New Delhi. T-521, p. 2, 14 Aug 64. S.

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