

Secret

25X1

**Interagency
Intelligence
Memorandum**

*Indian Military Capabilities for
Intervention in Bangladesh*

Secret

DCI/NIO 2494/75
26 November 1975

DIA review(s) completed.

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/02/07 : CIA-RDP80M01066A000800180004-3

Approved For Release 2007/02/07 : CIA-RDP80M01066A000800180004-3

~~SECRET~~

25X1

November 26, 1975

INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: Indian Military Capabilities for Intervention in Bangladesh

(NOTE: This memorandum is a capabilities study. It does not estimate the likelihood of Indian intervention or discuss the political considerations surrounding such intervention.)

The Key Points

- Within three days of a decision to do so, India could commence full scale military operations against Bangladesh.
 - India could readily commit ground forces of over 150,000 men -- without significantly weakening its defenses against China and Pakistan -- against Bangladesh ground forces of no more than 87,000 men who are already at least partially demoralized.
 - Indian air and naval superiority would be even greater.
 - New Delhi would probably use overwhelming force -- including airborne and helicopter assaults -- in the hope that a quick takeover would minimize international reactions.
- India would establish full control over the government of Bangladesh and all urban and administrative centers within a maximum of two weeks -- probably much sooner. Some guerrilla activity against the Indians might continue for a time.
- The December through April period normally provides the most favorable weather for offensive operations in Bangladesh.

* This memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for South and Southeast Asia. It was drafted by the Defense Intelligence Agency and coordinated with the Central Intelligence Agency and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State.

SECRET

SECRET

The Details

1. The paragraphs below examine how the Indian armed forces would carry out a military intervention in Bangladesh, and what the military results of such intervention would be. They do not estimate the likelihood of Indian intervention or discuss the political considerations surrounding such an intervention. This memorandum also does not examine actions short of conventional military operations which India might undertake to bring about a change of government in Dacca -- such as covert instigation of another coup or support of dissident groups within Bangladesh.

The Forces That India Would Use

Ground Forces

2. Indian ground forces at present total more than 1,000,000 men. Over 150,000 of these could be committed to action against Bangladesh without significantly weakening India's defenses against China or Pakistan.* The units to be employed would almost certainly come partly from India's Eastern Command (headquartered in Calcutta), and partly from India's general reserve. Although the Indians might not use so large an intervention force, the following Table shows the units from which the forces would probably be taken, their strengths,

25X1

25X1

Unit

From the Eastern Command

- 57th Mountain Division
- 71st Indep. Mtn. Brigade
- 8th Mountain Division
- 20th Mountain Division

Paramilitary Forces:

- Border Security Forces (BS)
- Special Frontier Forces (S)

From general reserve forces

- 50th Parachute Brigade
- 9th Infantry Division
- 4th Mountain Division
- 36th Infantry Division

TOTAL

* In the 1971 war, India committed 112,500 ground troops against a force of some 72,000 in East Pakistan. As paragraphs 11 and 12 below will show, the present ground forces of Bangladesh are about 87,000 men.

SECRET

3. Maps 1 and 1A show the present location of the units listed above (except for the paramilitary forces, which are scattered along the Bangladesh border), as well as the location of the many other Indian ground force divisions that are not likely to be used in a military action against Bangladesh.

4. Several points should be made with regard to the units shown on these maps. First, one of the Indian divisions closest to Bangladesh, the 23rd Mountain Division headquartered at Rangia, probably would not participate in action against Bangladesh because most of its subordinate units are deployed along the Sino-Tibetan border, and would remain there out of Indian concern over possible Chinese reactions. Second, in central India the 54th Infantry and 6th Mountain Divisions would also probably remain in reserve to counter any Pakistani or Chinese reaction. The 31st Armored Division, also in central India, could easily be added to an intervention force in Bangladesh, but the terrain there is not particularly favorable for armor.

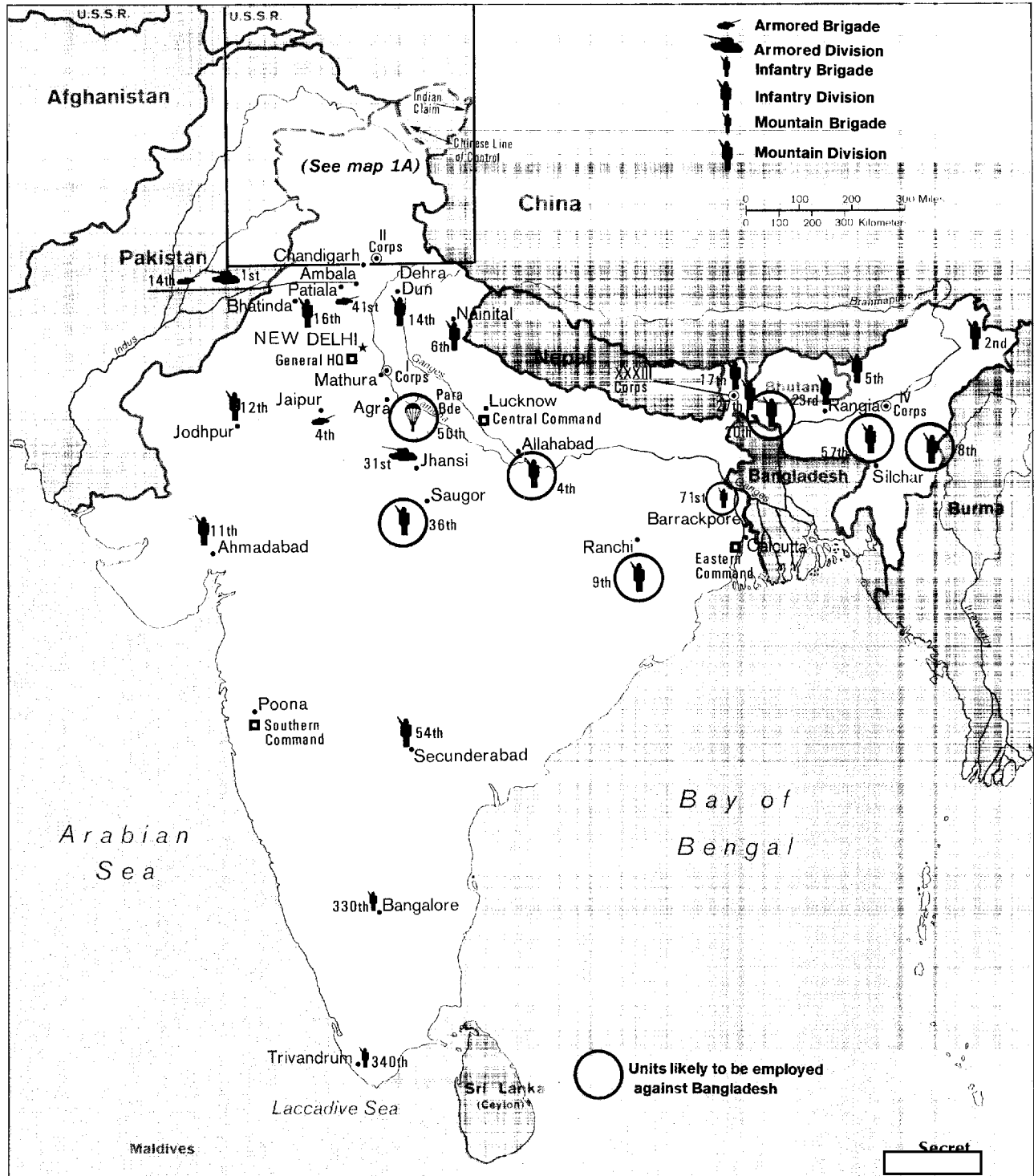
5. Indian paramilitary forces would also play a significant role in any military intervention. An estimated 12 to 15 battalions (15,000 men) of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) are now deployed along the border with Bangladesh, probably supported by two or three BSF Post Artillery Groups. (We do not know the precise make-up of a BSF Artillery Group, but it probably has ten to eighteen 25-pounder field guns.) All of these BSF units are similar to regular army units and can be readily integrated into the regular army. Army commanders can and do employ them as standard infantry and artillery. India also has a highly mobile Special Frontier Force (SFF), an unconventional warfare unit of about 5,000 men who could be employed in long range patrolling and could conduct sabotage, disrupt communications and foment unrest in the interior of Bangladesh. SFF units were used in this manner during the 1971 war.

Air Force

6. India would have total air superiority over Bangladesh, facing virtually no opposition from the Bangladesh Air Force. The Indian Air Force (IAF) would be able to dedicate most of its aircraft to logistical and tactical operations in support of attacking ground forces.

7. The IAF Eastern Air Command would be able to support an intervention more than adequately with the air assets normally assigned to bases in its area (see Map 2). These forces

Indian Ground Order of Battle

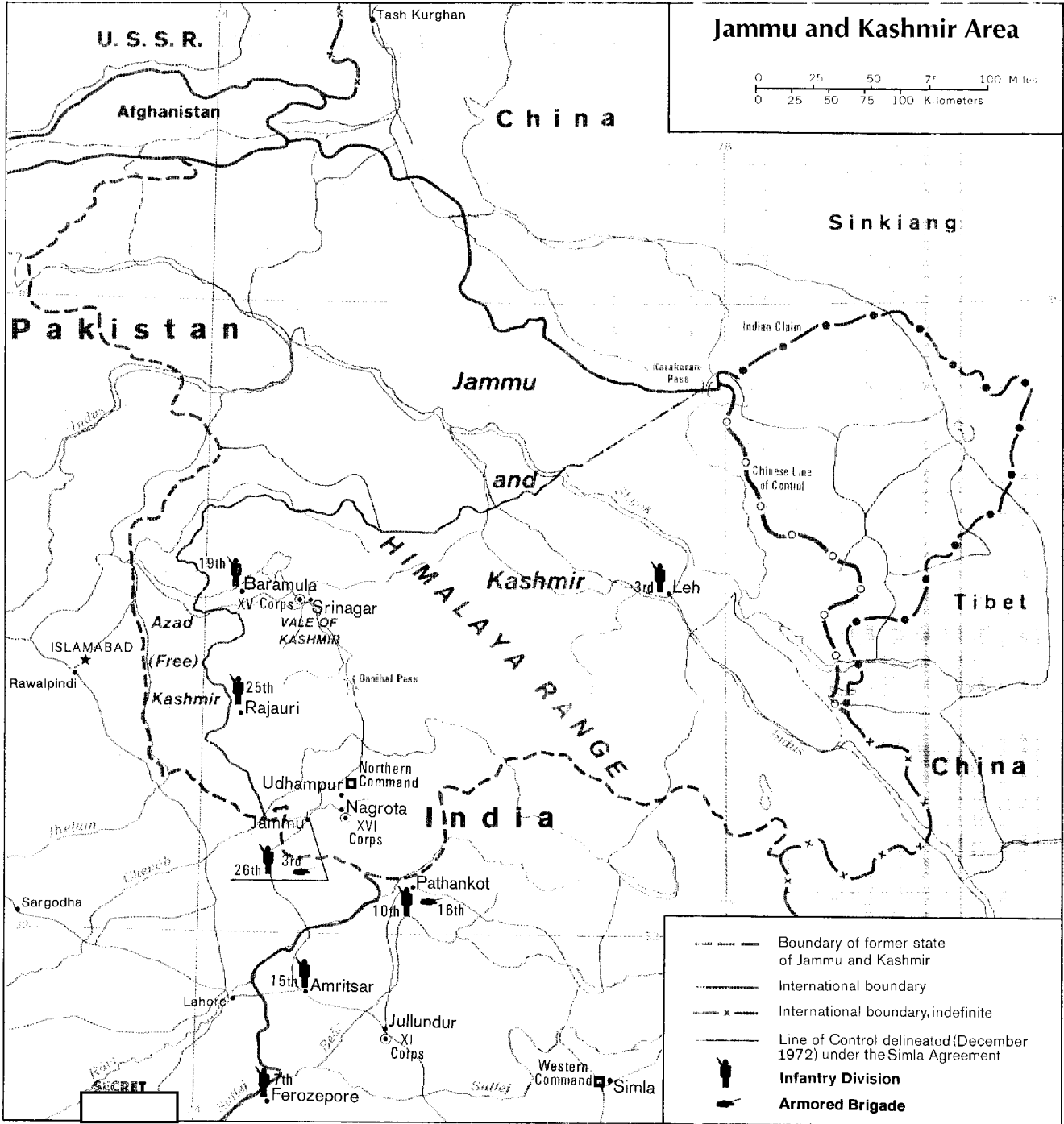


Map 1

568069 11-75 CIA

Secret

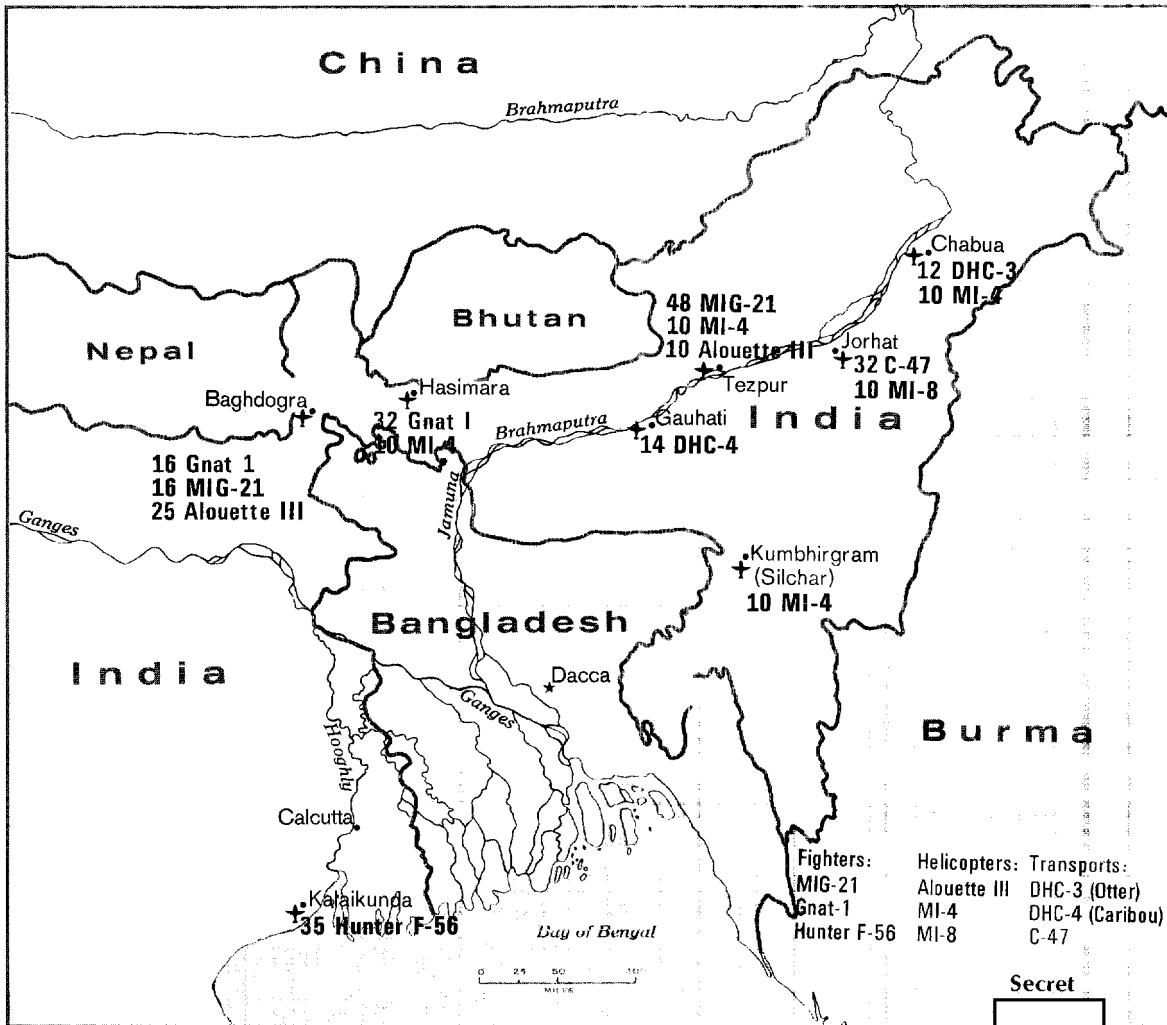
25X1



Map 1A

25X1

Indian Air Order of Battle: Adjacent to Bangladesh



568070 11-75 CIA

Map 2

25X1

SECRET

include nine fighter/bomber squadrons with about 150 combat aircraft, four transport squadrons, and seven helicopter units. Additional heavy and medium transports, and strategic reconnaissance aircraft are readily available in central and western India and could be temporarily reassigned to the Eastern Air Command if required.

Naval Forces

8. Naval forces available to support intervention include almost the entire Indian fleet, but only ships from the Eastern Command headquartered at Vishakhapatnam would probably be committed. Should it choose to do so, the Indian Navy could also move its largest ship, the aircraft carrier VIKRANT, from the Western Command at Bombay into the Bay of Bengal to provide a limited naval air strike, reconnaissance and ground support capability. (The VIKRANT was moved in this fashion in 1971, and its aircraft did take part in the action in East Pakistan.) The redeployment of the VIKRANT from Bombay would take four to five days, and it would normally be accompanied by additional destroyer escorts (frigates) from the Western Command for protective escort. Once the aircraft carrier had arrived in the Bay of Bengal, some of the three "F"-class submarines already stationed at Vishakhapatnam would also probably be assigned to screen the VIKRANT's operations off the coast of Bangladesh (see Map 3).

9. The Indian Navy could also completely blockade the port of Chittagong, the only international port in Bangladesh, with relative ease, using the five PETYA-class destroyer escorts based at Vishakhapatnam.

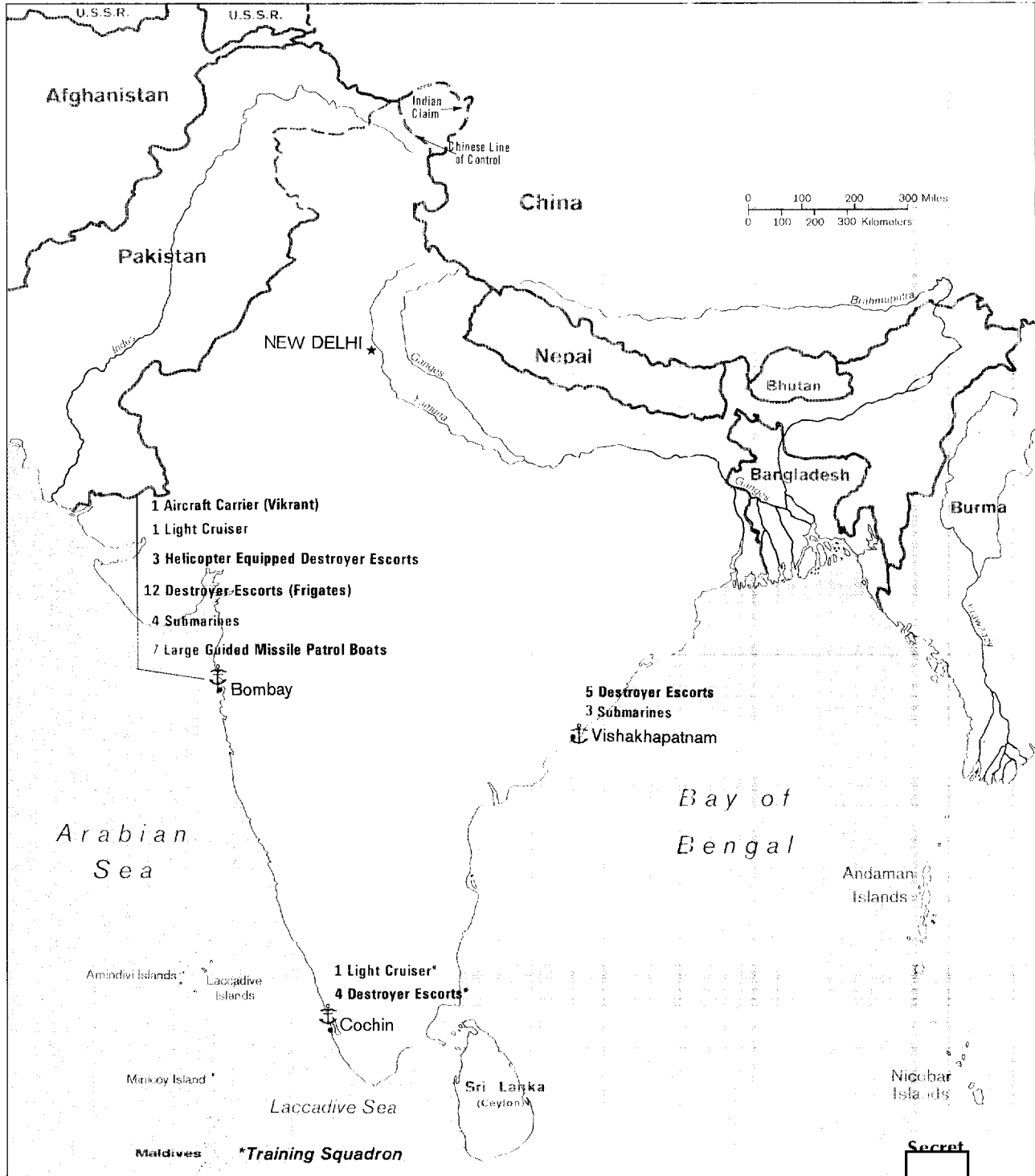
The Forces That Would Defend Bangladesh

10. The armed forces of Bangladesh at present are in a state of at least partial demoralization, and in some parts of the country officers may not have effective control over their men. This factor should be borne in mind in assessing the quantitative data on Bangladesh forces which appear immediately below.

Ground Forces

11. India's ground forces would be opposed by the Bangladesh Army, which has about 47,000 men organized into five brigades and another 20,000 men in 15 battalions of the former

Indian Naval Order of Battle



568971 11-75 CIA

Map 3

25X1

SECRET

Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (the JRB, or National Defense Force). The JRB was a paramilitary organization loyal to ex-President Mujibur Rahman, and it has reportedly been integrated into the regular army since the August 15 coup. The fighting effectiveness of its members in the case of an Indian intervention would be open to question. The army could be further augmented by the 20,000 man Bangladesh Rifles, a paramilitary border security force. Thus the maximum number of troops in ground units would be some 87,000. (Bangladesh also has a force of Armed Reserve Police, but it is lightly armed and probably could not be integrated into the army and used effectively in military operations.)

12. As Map 4 indicates, the five brigades of the Bangladesh Army are fairly evenly spread around the country -- one each in the northwest, southwest, northeast, southeast, and central sector (Dacca). A brigade-sized element of the JRB is also located in Dacca, as are the East Bengal Lancers (EBL), an armored regiment with 30 T-54 tanks. The Bangladesh Rifles are organized in Sectors, which are roughly equivalent to brigades, and are deployed at various locations near the country's border.

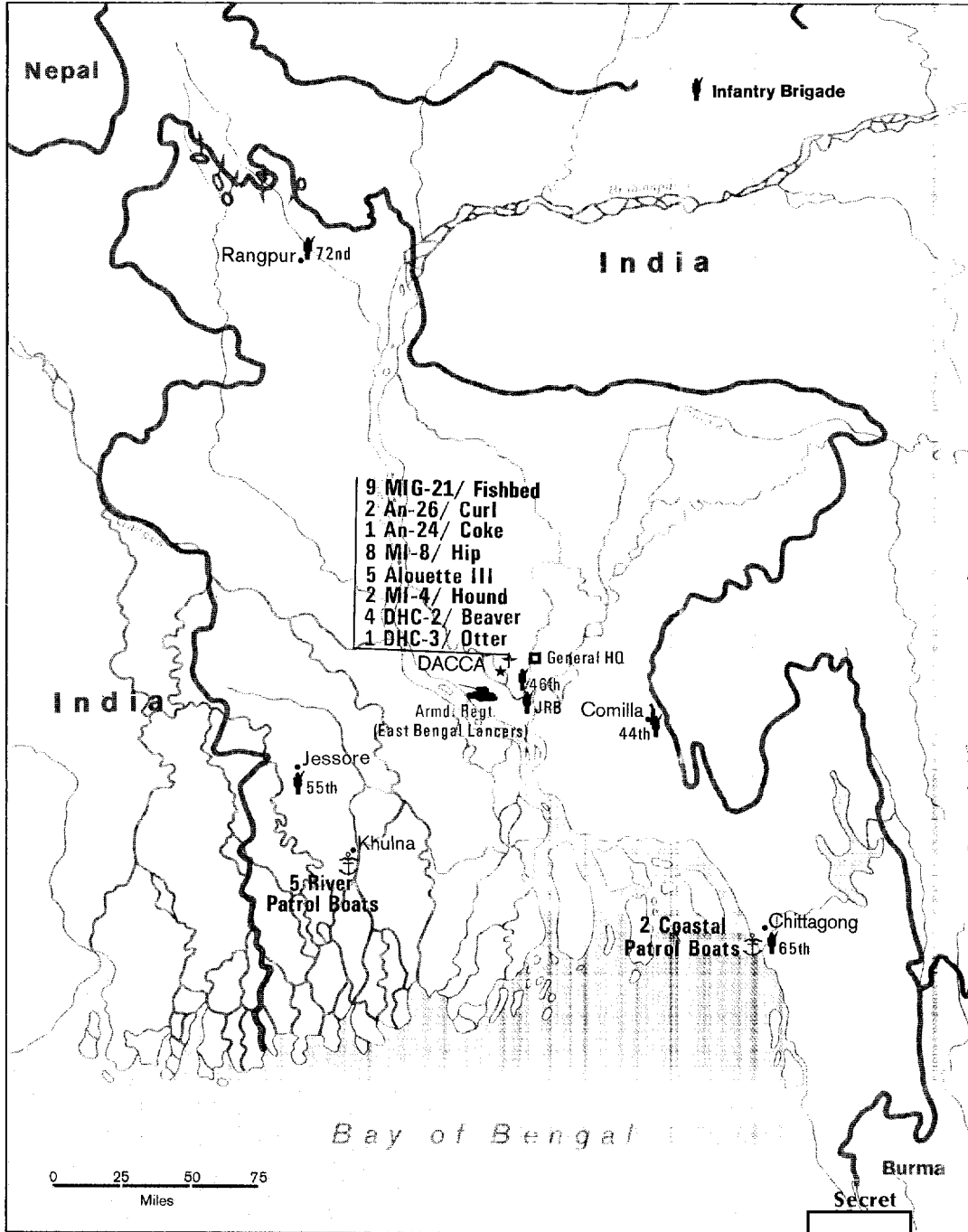
Air Force

13. The 2,000-man Bangladesh Air Force would play no significant role in an Indian intervention. It has only nine first-line tactical strike aircraft (MIG-21/FISHBEDs), and only six of these are presently operational. The Air Force also has only ten pilots qualified to fly the MIG-21, and at last report five of them were under arrest for having supported the wrong side in one of the recent coups. The Bangladesh Air Force also has modified three of its eight Soviet-built MI-8 helicopters to serve as "gunships." These helicopters could provide limited support to Bangladesh ground forces until put out of action by the Indians. All aircraft of the Bangladesh Air Force are concentrated at the vulnerable Dacca Tezgaon Airport. (See Map 4 for a complete listing of Bangladesh military aircraft.)

Naval Forces

14. The 1,000-man Bangladesh Navy has only five river patrol boats and two coastal patrol boats, based at Khulna and Chittagong respectively. It has no capability on the

Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Order of Battle



568072 11-75 CIA

Map 4

25X1

SECRET

open seas and would be totally unable to deny India control of Bangladesh maritime approach lanes and coastal waters.

The Probable Indian Plan of Attack

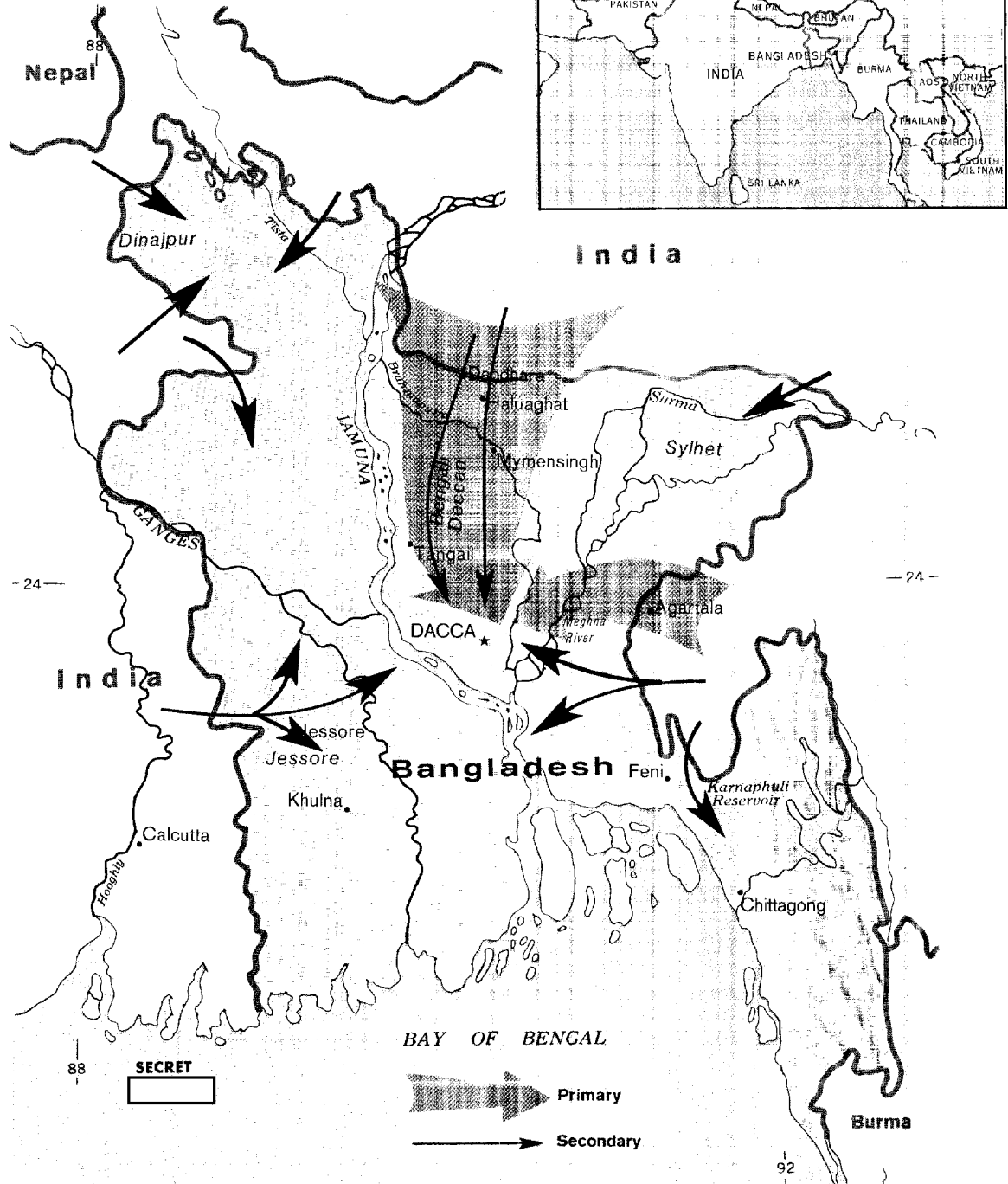
15. Once a decision to do so had been taken, India could commence full-scale military operations against Bangladesh within three days with forces immediately available. Indian territory virtually surrounds Bangladesh on all sides (except the sea to the south), and in theory Indian armed forces could attack Bangladesh from any direction. Bangladesh is compartmented into north-south corridors by the flow of its major rivers, however, and east-west movement is difficult. Therefore the principal land avenue of approach to the capital region of Dacca for an Indian force would probably be from the north -- from Daodhara to Tangail to Dacca (see Map 5).

16. The area which extends north from Dacca to India's Meghalaya State is relatively high ground and is known as the Bengali Deccan. Though the distance to Dacca from the Indian border in the north is somewhat greater than from the border in the east, maneuver and supply along the northern corridor are far easier. Furthermore, the Brahmaputra (Jamuna) River provides protection to the right flank of a column advancing from Daodhara in the north. This route is supported by a main trunk road with roughly a 3,000 short-ton-per-day carrying capacity -- enough to keep an Indian force of four to five divisions in supplies.

17. Within the main axis of advance from the north, a secondary route of advance exists slightly to the east, from Haluaghat to Mymensingh and south along the Mymensingh to Dacca railroad. The highway network along this route is more primitive than along the Daodhara-Tangail-Dacca route, but is still usable. Despite the substantial ground gains made elsewhere in the 1971 war, Indian commanders within a week after the start of that war had decided that the most efficient ways to approach Dacca were these two routes.

18. The avenue of approach from the east which is shown on Map 5 -- from Agartala to Dacca -- would probably also be used by Indian forces. It is unlikely that the main thrust would come from this direction, however, since the Meghna River poses a major obstacle which obstructs movement.

Likely Indian Avenues of Approach



Map 5

SECRET

19. Indian plans almost certainly would also call for smaller scale operations in other areas of Bangladesh; specifically in the Dinajpur, Sylhet and Jessore Districts, and in the southeast around the town of Feni. These operations would be designed to fix in place any Bangladesh forces in those areas.

20. Finally, whatever its precise tactics, India would probably seek to use overwhelming force to end the hostilities as quickly as possible. New Delhi would be concerned that the longer the duration of the fighting, the harsher would be the international reaction and the more likely it would be that nations opposed to intervention would impose economic and political sanctions. India would therefore be likely to make full use of its most modern military capabilities -- including airborne and helicopter assaults -- to gain all its objectives rapidly.

The Weather Factor

21. Bangladesh is a region of broad, shallow river valleys and extensive deltas, the largest being formed by the Ganges and Brahmaputra (Jamuna) Rivers. No part of the delta region is more than 500 feet (152 meters) above sea level. The climate is warm and humid throughout the year. Rainfall of up to 100 inches (254 centimeters) occurs during the southwest monsoon (May to October), and flooding rivers inundate much of the Bangladesh land surface until early December. Thus from May until December high water in canals and rivers, road and railway washouts, and flooded rice paddies would prevent off-road dispersal of motor vehicles and in general make movement more difficult. The most favorable conditions for military operations therefore occur in the period December through April.*

* Even during this period of the year, the supply of military forces on Bangladesh roadways would be difficult. There are still many water obstacles in the dry season and most roadways are not interconnected, serving chiefly as feeders to rail and waterway transport systems. In addition, most roads in Bangladesh are single lane, and built on raised embankments or dikes which make them vulnerable to interdiction. The few bridges in the country must be considered key tactical objectives by both opposing forces, and an attacker must be prepared for the possibility that he will have to provide his own bridging and ferrying equipment.

SECRET

Variables in the Situation

22. While India's overwhelming superiority leaves the outcome of military intervention beyond doubt, two important variables would affect the speed and ease with which India could achieve a victory:

-- The quality of leadership and planning in the opposing armed forces and their respective capabilities to provide logistic support to combat operations.

-- In all these areas India has a clear edge.

- Its officers at all levels of command are well trained and experienced, and have a high degree of confidence in their abilities as a result of their victory over Pakistan in 1971.

- Indian planning for the 1971 war in what is now the territory of Bangladesh proved superb. Indian Lt. General J.F.R. Jacob, generally credited with "masterminding" the 1971 conflict, is currently General Officer Commanding the Indian Eastern Command and would probably be responsible for the planning and conduct of any intervention in the near future.*

- Indian logistics are also adequate. Excellent road and rail networks approach the Bangladesh border from all sides in eastern India. India also has sufficient bridging equipment and helicopter and air transport support to overcome the numerous water obstacles in Bangladesh.

- Indian armed forces are supplied well enough so that they could conduct operations for up to 30 days without drawing on their strategic reserve of war materiel.

-- The Bangladesh armed forces on the other hand are seriously deficient in the quality of their leadership, planning, and logistic support capability.

* In many -- though not all -- ways, a future intervention in Bangladesh would be patterned after the successful operations of 1971. For a detailed discussion of those operations, see the DIA Report, "The 1971 Indo-Pakistani Conflict -- A Study in Escalation," September 1972, DI-646-44-72, SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM, BACKGROUND USE ONLY.

SECRET

- The officer corps at all levels is generally young and inexperienced in conventional warfare (although a number of officers are experienced guerrilla fighters).
 - Most senior officers were promoted from relatively junior positions following the 1971 war, and many junior officers are former non-commissioned officers. Few have experience in military planning.
 - In logistics, Bangladesh is short of transport equipment and most other supplies and materiel for sustained warfare.
 - Because of these shortages, the Bangladesh armed forces could conduct major operations only in areas near their present bases.
 - Present levels of supplies (and India's capability to isolate Bangladesh by land and sea) would prevent Bangladesh from conducting sustained conventional operations for more than 14 days.
- The second major variable affecting the duration of the conflict would be the will of the Bangladesh armed forces to fight.
- Contrary to the situation in 1971, most Bengalees now would see the Indians as conquerors rather than liberators, and that perception would enhance their will and determination to defend their homeland. It might also bring about greater unity within Bangladesh.
 - Even after a victory by Indian conventional forces, some Bangladesh units led by officers with guerrilla experience might continue to conduct behind-the-lines operations against Indian forces occupying Bangladesh or any government that the Indians might choose to install.
- The recent turmoil in the Bangladesh armed forces, however, raises serious doubts as to whether they have the necessary discipline, leadership, or esprit de corps to conduct a sustained defense against a vastly superior Indian force.
- It is not possible to judge which of these factors would be the stronger in the actual event of intervention.

SECRET

Conclusion

23. Even if the Bangladesh armed forces achieved a far greater level of discipline and unity of purpose than they now possess, all the considerations discussed above lead us to conclude that India could establish total control over the government of Bangladesh and its urban and administrative centers in a maximum of two weeks, and probably much sooner. Some guerrilla operations against the Indians might continue for a time, but the Indians would have essentially conquered Bangladesh. In doing so, they would have employed part or all of the ground forces identified in paragraph 1 of this memorandum, and the air and naval forces described in paragraphs 6 through 9. But they would not have had to use any forces now contributing to Indian defenses along the Sino-Tibetan or Pakistani borders.

SECRET

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/02/07 : CIA-RDP80M01066A000800180004-3

Approved For Release 2007/02/07 : CIA-RDP80M01066A000800180004-3