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imagery analysis report

Joint Service Training Exercise, Urumqi Military Region, China (S)

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JOINT SERVICE TRAINING EXERCISE, URUMQI MILITARY REGION, CHINA (S)

INTRODUCTION

1. An extensive joint services exercise was conducted in the Urumqi Military Region (MR) in northwestern China, from 30 June through 19 September 1983. The exercise was highlighted by the projection of airborne units into areas defended solely by locally based army and air force units (Figure 1). The integration of outside airborne units with locally based forces (Figure 2) at Urumqi suggests that Chinese military strategists have determined the need for credible, quick response deployments against potential invasion forces or for support of offensive operations. (S/WN)

2. The need for the Chinese to project and integrate airborne forces with forward deployed main force units in sensitive border areas became apparent during the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese conflict. At that time, the Urumqi MR/western border area, lacking in equipment and trained personnel, was vulnerable to a potential Soviet retaliatory attack. Hence, the location of this exercise indicates that the Chinese are now preparing a more mobile, strengthened defense of their borders. (S/WN)

3. This report contains two maps, one table, and nine annotated photographs. All unit designators are drawn from Reference Document 1. (S/WN)

People's Republic of China: New Pinyin Romanization

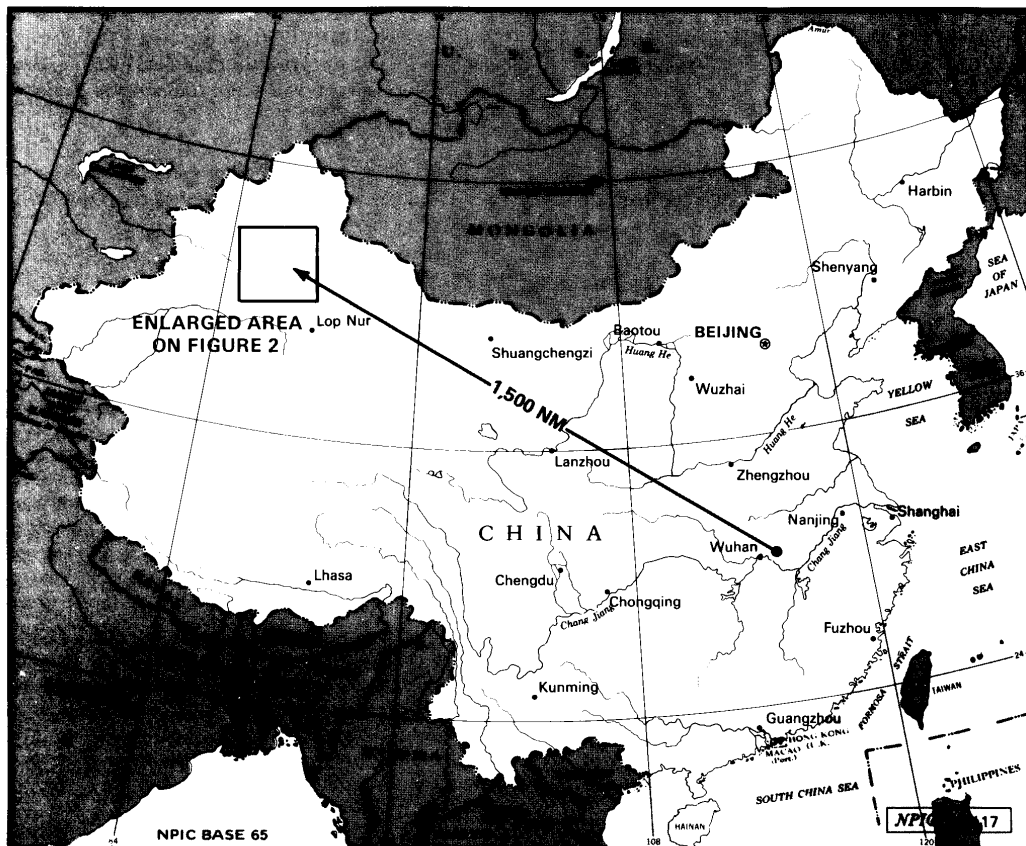


FIGURE 1. PROJECTION OF 45th AIRBORNE INFANTRY ELEMENTS FROM THEIR HOME BASE IN THE WUHAN MR TO THE EXERCISE AREA IN THE URUMQI MR

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Table 1.
Installations Involved in Urumqi Joint Service Exercise
(Keyed to Figure 2)

Item No	Facility/BE No	Normal Activity	Joint Service Training-Associated Activity	
1	Uxxaktal Airfield [redacted]	1 FARMER Fighter Regiment, 37th Division; supports testing at Lop Nor testing facility	90 nm SSE of training area. The major staging airfield for CURL transports. With the exception of three dates, CURL were observed there [redacted]	25X1 25X1
2	Urumqi South Airfield [redacted]	1 FARMER Fighter Regiment, 37th Division	20 nm SSE of and closest to training area. Staging facility for small fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft. CURL observed there once on [redacted]	25X1 25X1
3	Changji Airfield [redacted]	37th Division Headquarters; 1 FAGOT/FRESCO Fighter Regiment and 1 FARMER/FRESCO Independent Squadron	35 nm WNW of training area. The staging airfield for BEAGLE light-bomber and FANTAN fighter-bomber aircraft. These aircraft were present [redacted] CURL observed there [redacted]	25X1 25X1
4	Korla Airfield [redacted]	15th Independent Transport Squadron (HOUND/COLT)	140 nm WSW of training area. Probable point of origin for small fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft participating in exercise.	25X1
5	Urumqi Combined-Arms Training Area [redacted]	Newly identified	Area where ground forces were observed conducting exercises; activity observed [redacted]	25X1 25X1
6	Urumqi SAM Site B33-21 [redacted]	1 CSA-1 Surface-to-Air Missile Battalion	25 nm NNW of training area. Three truck-mounted SLOT REST radars deployed adjacent to SAM site during exercise.	25X1
7	Urumqi SAM Site A03-21 [redacted]	1 CSA-1 Surface-to-Air Missile Battalion	25 nm NNE of training area. One SLOT REST radar deployed within facility during exercise.	25X1
8	Changji Airfield AW Radar Facility [redacted]	1 SLOT REST, 1 BAR LOCK 1 RICE CAKE, 1 KNIFE REST	Adjacent to Changi Airfield. One RYE HOUSE air surveillance radar added to this site (first observed [redacted] operational [redacted]). KNIFE REST radars deployed during exercise.	25X1 25X1
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DESCRIPTION

Air Activity

4. Evidence of this joint exercise began appearing in the Urumqi MR [redacted] when 16 CURL transport aircraft were observed at Uxxaktal Airfield (Figure 3). After the appearance of the CURL, additional exercise activity began occurring and continued to be observed [redacted]. Exercises included BEAGLE light-bomber and FANTAN fighter-bomber aircraft sorties, combined-arms training, the relocation of major elements of a People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) independent transport squadron, and increased air warning radar deployments and activity. (S/WN)

5. Although imagery of the 45th Airborne Infantry Division garrisons in the Wuhan MR (Figure 1) showed normal, low-levels of activity during the exercise period, imint of the Urumqi MR and, in particular, sigint indicated the division's participation. CURL aircraft from the PLAAF 13th Division, ob-

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FIGURE 2. LOCATION OF AND FACILITIES INVOLVED IN THE URUMQI COMBINED-ARMS TRAINING EXERCISE

served at Uxxaktal Airfield [] were reported by sigint to have transported elements of the 45th Airborne Infantry Division from its homebase in the Wuhan Military Region to Uxxaktal on that same date.² The CURL aircraft were observed at Uxxaktal Airfield for the duration of the exercise, except [] when they were at Changji Airfield and [] when they were at Urumqi Airfield South. Sigint further provided evidence of airborne involvement in the exercise. Between [] CURL and COLT aircraft were in flight profiles 15 times over the combined-arms training area, suggesting paratroop activity.³ (TSU)

6. [] unusual activity was observed at Changji Airfield, where one BEAGLE and nine FANTAN were present (Figure 4). The origin of the FANTAN could not be determined; however, the closest FANTAN unit is based at Dalachi Airfield [] in the Lanzhou MR, 850 nm east-southeast of the training area. According to sigint, the BEAGLE deployed from Xian/Lintong Airfield []. During the exercise, the BEAGLE and FANTAN aircraft were observed only at Changji Airfield. (S)

SAM and Radar Activity

7. Activity, probably associated with the joint service training exercise, was observed at two SAM sites, Urumqi SAM Site B33-21 and Urumqi SAM Site A03-21, and one air warning radar facility, Changji

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AW Radar Facility. Of the two SAM sites, the greater amount of activity was observed at Urumqi SAM Site B33-21. [redacted] three SLOT REST radars and associated support equipment were deployed in a field adjacent to the north side of the site (Figure 5). This equipment was present throughout the exercise, an indication that SAM training was part of the overall exercise activity. At Urumqi SAM Site A03-21, one SLOT REST radar was deployed within the site during the exercise. (S/WN)

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8. The addition of the SLOT REST radar gave these sites added target acquisition capabilities. The SAM sites may have been included for two possible reasons. First, the battalions may have been taking advantage of the additional flight activity to practice the acquisition of dissimilar types of aircraft. Secondly, these battalions may have been responsible for the acquisition, tracking, and simulated destruction of aggressor aircraft attempting to preempt ground force activity. (S/WN)

9. At Changji AW Radar Facility, in addition to the BAR LOCK, RICE CAKE, and truck-mounted SLOT REST radars normally present, a RYE HOUSE air surveillance radar was added. First observed [redacted] it was deployed and appeared to be operational [redacted] Additional air warning radar activity was observed 0.5 nm east of this radar site, where four truck-mounted KNIFE REST radars were deployed. In order to support this increased radar activity, July sigint indicated that additional radar operators from the 41st Radar Regiment, headquartered in Hetian, Urumqi MR, would be needed to participate in a mid-September exercise.⁵ (TSU)

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Peak Training

10. A peak level of training was observed [redacted] when ground forces and air units were involved in the exercise. On that date, major elements of a tank regiment, elements of an infantry company, and one field-artillery battalion were at Urumqi Combined-Arms Training Area (Figures 7 and 8). Training activity, in progress in a portion of the training area, consisted of one tank company advancing in line formation behind major elements of an infantry company during an assault of a defensive position (Figure 9). [redacted] major elements of a transport squadron, probably from Korla Airfield, had arrived at Urumqi Airfield South. Eleven COLT and 17 HOUND aircraft, in addition to the normal complement of FARMER, were observed at the airfield. Air activity, consisting of five FARMER in flight, was observed between this airfield and the combined-arms training area (Figure 10). Because of its close proximity to the training area and the presence of the transport squadron, Urumqi Airfield South was the major staging area for associated air operations. In past training exercises, both COLT and HOUND have been used for airborne troop drops. No special rigging is necessary for airborne paratroops to use these aircraft. (S/WN)

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11. A second airfield exhibiting activity [redacted] was Changji Airfield. On that date, flight operations had just begun or concluded (one FANTAN was moving on the parking apron). This airfield was the staging facility for bomber and ground-attack aircraft. Bomb craters were observed at various points in the exercise area, indicating participation of ground-attack and bomber aircraft. (S/WN)

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12. Probable airborne-associated activity was also observed at Urumqi South Airfield [redacted] when 15 CURL were present in addition to the independent transport squadron and fighter regiment (Figure 11). This was the first observation of CURL there. In addition to the CURL, a bivouac was identified south of the airfield. A company-size infantry unit, probably airborne soldiers, was marching to the bivouac from the aircraft parking aprons (Figure 12). (S/WN)

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Termination of the Exercise

13. Imagery indicated that the joint service exercise and associated activity had ended [redacted] when the CURL aircraft departed Uxxaktal Airfield. [redacted], a corresponding increase in the number of CURL aircraft was observed at Danyang Airfield, home base for these aircraft in

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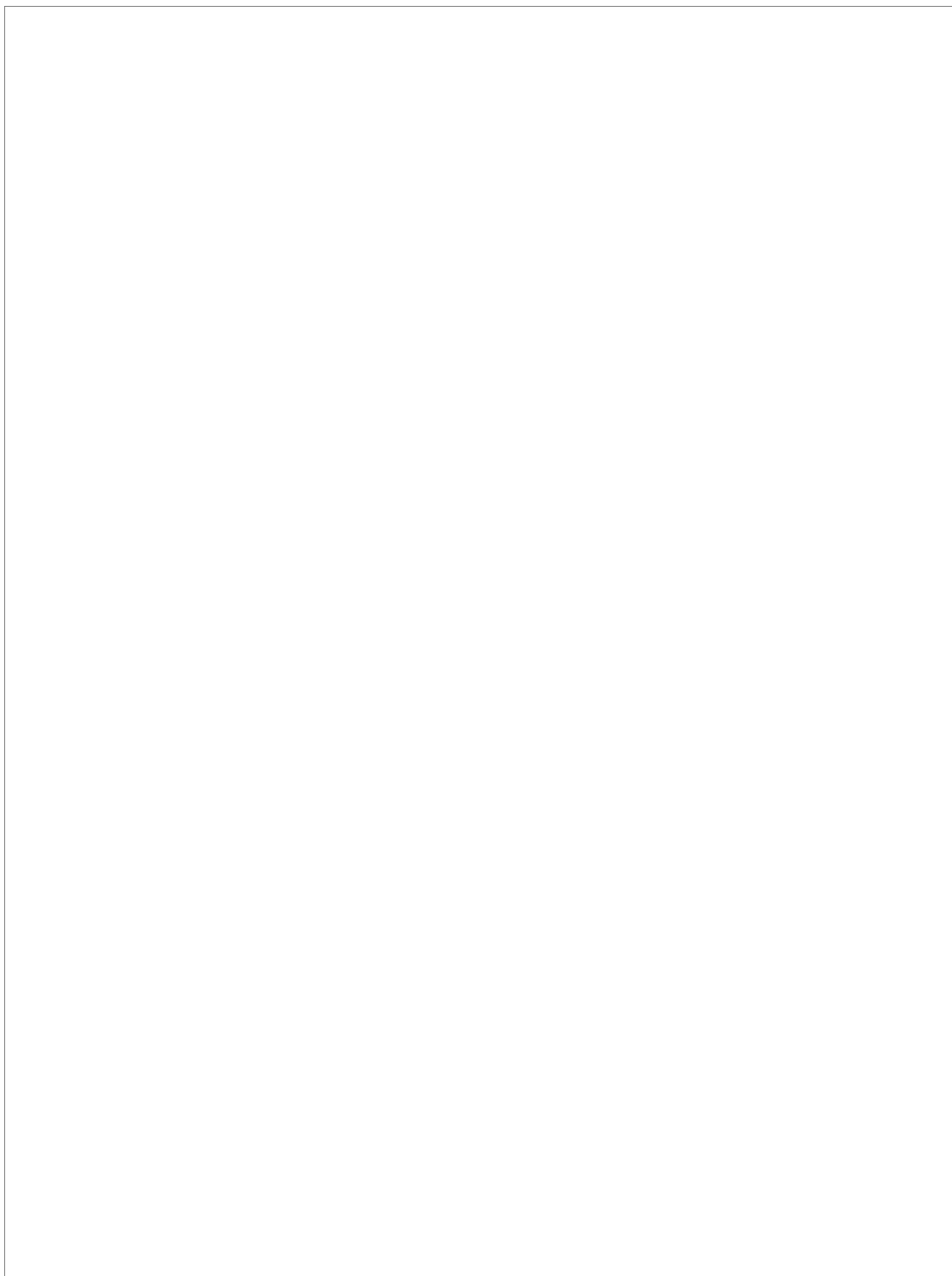
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the Wuhan MR. This activity confirmed earlier sigint reports which had indicated the conclusion of the exercise.⁶ In addition, imagery of the combined-arms training area indicated that the ground force portion of the exercise had concluded and all ground force equipment had departed [redacted]. The tank regiment from Hejing Army Barracks AL 2 [redacted] involved in the training, began returning to garrison [redacted] the remainder of the tank regiment was in garrison. (S [redacted])

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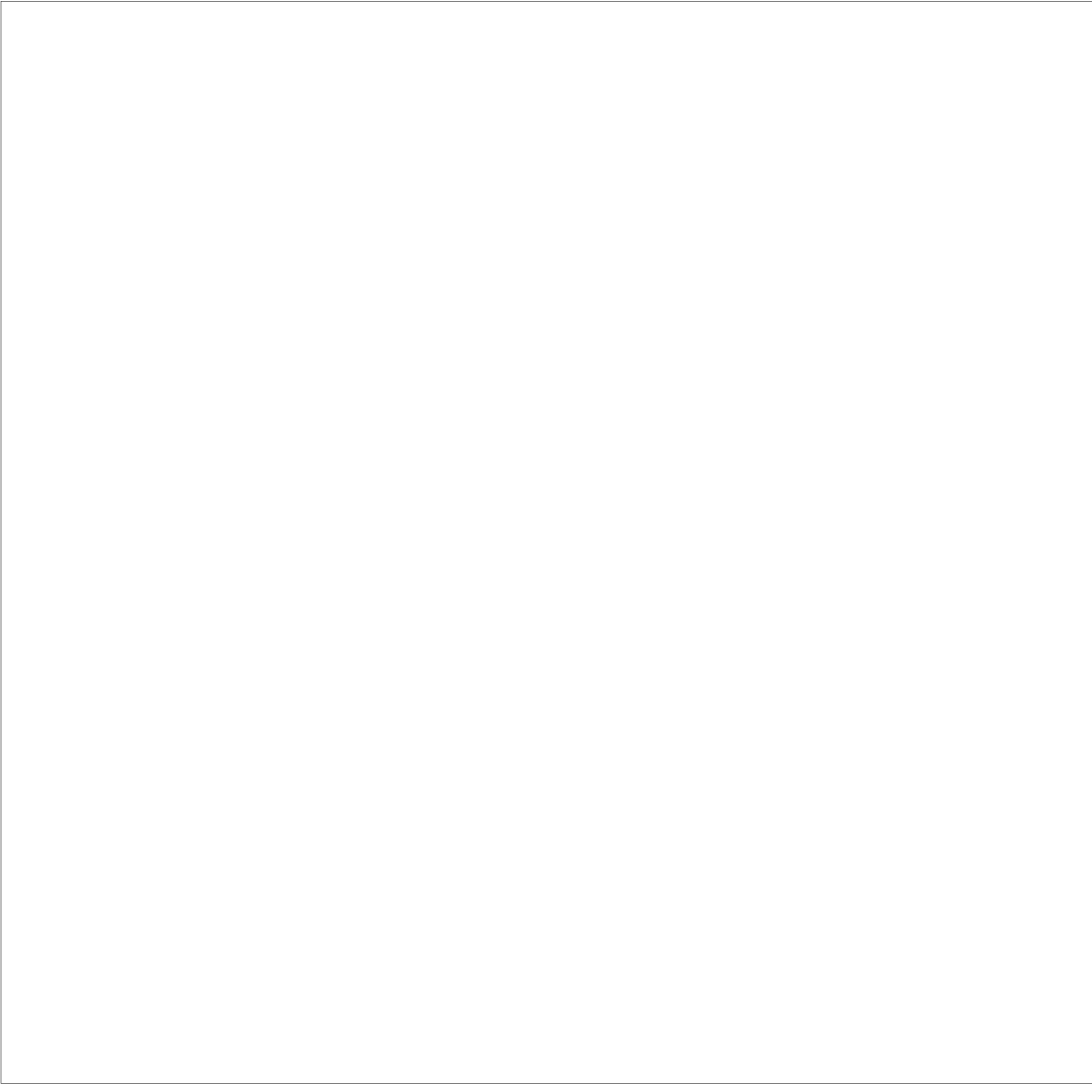
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Imagery Analyst's Comments

14. This joint service exercise in the Urumqi MR has significant implications for Chinese military doctrine. First, the use of airborne units in their furthestmost deployment from home base indicates that the Chinese can move limited numbers of troops to a critical area in a relatively short time. Furthermore, an effective logistical system was established to keep the aircraft operational and fresh flight crews available. Also, the integration of the forward deployed and locally based units provided an opportunity for joint training scenarios that might be duplicated in wartime. Overall, this training exercise demonstrates a blueprint for operations which could be expanded and enhanced over the next several years. Previously, the lack of modern transport aircraft had hampered the Chinese in deploying elements of their airborne army with speed or in sufficient numbers to be effective. This situation is now changing. COKE and CUB transport aircraft are in series production: COKE at Xian Airframe Plant Yan-Liang 172 [redacted] [redacted] and CUB at Wuqusi Aircraft Assembly and Maintenance Base [redacted] In summary, the Chinese have now demonstrated a capability to deploy airborne units to forward positions, to support them in the field, and to integrate them successfully with local forces.²⁻⁶ (S [redacted])

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REFERENCES



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MAPS

- 1. DMA. Operational Navigational Chart, Series ONC, Sheet F-7, 4th ed, scale 1:1,000,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)




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