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Junk Power: Whenever the Defense Intelligence Agency assesses the strength of the Chinese Navy, a factor that may strike most Americans as a bit bizarre is included: the number of Chinese junks.

One secret DIA study, for example, estimates the number of junks available at 400,000, "probably a quarter" of them motorized. "It is estimated that the individual junk will be loaded with an average of an infantry platoon [40 men] each" for an amphibious operation, the study says.

This means that 400,000 junks could, under favorable conditions, transport a total of 16 million lightly armed troops for, say, an invasion of Taiwan. The secret official estimate, however, is that an armed invasion of Taiwan from the mainland is unlikely.