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# SPECIAL ESTIMATE

## PROBABILITY OF A COMMUNIST ASSAULT ON JAPAN IN 1951



CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in producing this estimate. The members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 13 August 1951, except for the differing opinions set forth in paragraphs 7 and 8 on page 4.

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PROBABILITY OF A COMMUNIST ASSAULT ON  
JAPAN IN 1951

THE PROBLEM

To examine Communist capabilities for an assault on  
on Japan and to estimate the probability of such an assault  
during the remainder of 1951.\*

ESTIMATE

CAPABILITIES\*\*

1. We estimate that the USSR and Communist China have  
the capability of launching an assault of the following scale  
and nature on Japan:

- ! (a) Substantial air and submarine attacks on Allied  
lines of communications, ports, and bases;
- 2 (b) An initial amphibious assault with a force of two to  
three divisions, coupled with an airborne landing of  
9,500 troops;
- 3 (c) A follow-up landing (providing the initial assault  
echelons succeed in seizing port facilities) by up to  
six divisions;

\* This estimate does not consider the opposition of US/UN  
ground, naval or air forces to a Soviet assault upon Japan.

\*\* See Annex "A" for fuller treatment of Communist capa-  
bilities.

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- γ (d) Possibly build-up to a strength of fifteen divisions in Japan by D + 30 days, and twenty-five divisions by D + 60 days, provided Communist forces succeed in establishing sufficient beachheads and adequate port facilities, and furthermore that optimum conditions prevail throughout the operation with regard to weather, shipping, and port facilities in the USSR and and in Japan.
- β 2. Sufficient Soviet ground forces are available for an assault on Japan, but the Soviets might also make use of Chinese Communist troops presently disposed in Manchuria and of Soviet-sponsored Japanese POW's. If such non-Soviet forces were employed, however, they would have to be supported by large-scale Soviet air and naval forces. /

#### INDICATIONS

3. There is no reliable evidence of a Soviet intent to undertake an early invasion of Japan. There are reports alleging Sino-Soviet plans to initiate expanded hostilities in the fall. However, these reports are of unknown reliability since the primary source would probably not have access to high-level planning. Moreover, these reports are not substantiated by other intelligence. In particular there is no recent evidence of "pre-invasion" preparations such as extensive amphibious training, assembly of water lift or the deployment of forces to staging areas. Finally, these reports may well be inspired by the Communists as part of the psychological warfare effort to support their position on the Korean cease fire and the Japanese Peace Treaty.

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PROBABILITIES

4. Available indications do not suggest that an early Soviet invasion of Japan is probable. However, these indications would not in themselves necessarily be conclusive. Since the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the long-range Soviet program to make the Soviet Far East logistically and militarily self-sufficient has apparently been accelerated. In view of the current readiness of the USSR for military operations, it is possible that there would be no indications of the preparations for the assault except the final assembly of ships for combat loading, which might be detected.
- A . 5. The Kremlin almost certainly estimates that an assault on Japan would involve not only a local war with the US, in which the US might well use atomic weapons, but also the strong probability of general war with the US, including a US strategic atomic attack on the USSR. These consequences would almost certainly result also from an assault on Japan by Chinese Communist troops and Soviet-sponsored POW's since such an assault could not be delivered without the participation of Soviet naval and air forces.
- B . 6. The USSR might take the risk of precipitating general war if it foresaw an immediate threat to its vital interests. We do not believe that the Kremlin is likely to conclude that the ~~signing of the US-UK sponsored Japanese Peace Treaty and/or Japanese rearmament alone constitutes a~~ *such a* ~~threat, to its vital interests during the remainder of 1951.~~

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7. It is the opinion of the majority of the members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee (State, Army, Air Force and the Joint Staff) that an invasion of Japan might also result from a Kremlin decision to initiate general war on the basis of global considerations. The majority concludes, therefore, that a Soviet assault on Japan in 1951 is unlikely except in the event of global war.

8. ~~The Director of Central Intelligence does not agree with the above. It is his opinion that even if the Kremlin decided to precipitate general war in 1951, it is unlikely that the Kremlin would undertake a major campaign against Japan in 1951 since the Kremlin probably estimates that such a campaign would eventually result in the loss of its Far Eastern Fleet, the loss of its invasion force, the inability further to support the Chinese Communists and the exposure of Manchuria and the Maritime Provinces -- all without producing decisive results from a global point of view. The Director of Naval Intelligence concurs in this opinion.~~

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ANNEX A

SOVIET CAPABILITIES TO INVADE JAPAN

1. Assault Capabilities. The USSR probably has the capability of launching an amphibious and airborne attack on Japan with a force up to nine divisions.\* Immediately preceding or concurrently with this attack, the USSR could launch heavy naval and air attacks on Allied lines of communications, ports, and bases. The initial amphibious assault probably could be made with a force of two to three divisions and could be coupled with an airborne landing of up to 9,500 airborne troops. After the airborne or amphibious assault echelons had seized the port facilities, the remainder of the initial lift (up to six divisions) could proceed with their landing over docks. Assuming that the USSR were successful in establishing beachheads in Japan, they could probably build up to a strength of 15 divisions in Japan by D + 30 days and 25 divisions by D + 60 days.\*\*

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\* A Soviet division totals approximately 12,000 men.

\*\* It is the view of the Director of Naval Intelligence that this sentence should be stated as follows:

Assuming that the USSR were successful in establishing beachheads in Japan, they could possibly build up to a strength of 15 divisions in Japan by D + 30 days and 25 divisions by D + 60 days, provided Communist forces succeed in establishing sufficient beachheads and adequate port facilities, and furthermore that optimum conditions prevail throughout the operation with regard to weather, shipping, and port facilities in the USSR and in Japan.

2. Logistic Support. Approximately one-half of the total one million gross registered tons of shipping which the Soviets have in Far Eastern waters could be mustered to carry 8 fully equipped divisions and would be adequate to maintain a flow of supplies. Stockpiles, except for POL, are believed to exist in the USSR east of Lake Baikal sufficient to supply Soviet campaigns in the Far East for one year. Information is not sufficient to determine how long stockpiles of aviation gasoline might last. Existing stockpiles of aviation gas could be supplemented by shipments from the western USSR which would entail a drastic reduction in the transportation of other logistic requirements to the Soviet Far East.

3. Naval Support. The total Soviet Far Eastern Fleet consists of 2 cruisers, 36 destroyers, 220 patrol craft, 85 submarines and approximately 100 amphibious type craft. USSR submarines pose a substantial threat, at least initially; however, submarine operations in the Far East are especially vulnerable from the standpoint of limited bases for operations, and the necessity for transiting mineable straits to reach the Pacific Ocean or the Yellow Sea. Two of these four straits are closed by ice in winter. Little is known of the condition of the approximately 100 amphibious type craft which are now over five years old. The Soviet Far Eastern Fleet could receive limited reinforcements via the northern sea route during the six to eight weeks this route is open during the summer. However, such movement probably would be detected.

4. Air Support.

(a) Soviet

(i) The Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces have an estimated Table of Organization and Equipment strength



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of 5,300 combat aircraft, primarily of World War II types. (Actual strength is estimated to be about 85 percent of this authorized strength, but it is believed that all units could be brought up to full strength within a relatively short period of time.) A large proportion of this force would have to be redeployed to bring it within operational range of Japan. However, a minimum of 2,000 combat aircraft could be employed in the initial effort in Japan, and this force could be materially augmented, if required, over a period of time. Under conditions of sustained combat, it is estimated that not more than 50 percent of the combat aircraft assigned could be kept operational. This percentage might be somewhat higher for transport aircraft. Composition of the attacking air force is problematical, but it probably would include a large proportion of light bombers and long range fighters, as well as mine and torpedo squadrons, and possibly small numbers of medium bombers.

(ii) Sortie capabilities, at least in the early stages of the attack, would approximate 1,000 per day. In calculating sortie capabilities, it is considered that maximum rates per month will be 15 per assigned light bomber and fighter aircraft, especially since the operations will involve longer ranges than were required of Soviet units in World War II. Sortie rates may be less than 15 per month for units stationed on the China coast, North Korea, or the Maritime province. Extremely short range operations could be undertaken only from bases in southern areas of Sakhalin. A high level of combat attrition would result in even lower sortie capabilities than have been indicated.

(b) Chinese Communist. The Chinese Communists have approximately 1,100 aircraft, including about 100 aircraft of the North Korean Air Force and approximately 500 aircraft

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(400 of which are jet fighters) of undetermined subordination. The bulk of these could be used in an assault on Japan. Kyushu and the southwestern tip of Honshu could be attacked by a large proportion of the enemy aircraft operating out of Shanghai, Tsingtao, and Antung.

5. "Volunteer" Forces. In addition to regular Soviet forces, the Communist ground forces used for an assault on Japan could be composed of Chinese Communist troops presently disposed in Manchuria and/or Japanese ex-prisoners of war not repatriated to Japan by the Soviets. Although the existence of a Japanese force has not been confirmed, it is estimated that 50,000 to 75,000 Japanese personnel capable of military service are held in Communist-controlled territory. However, we do not believe that the Soviets would estimate that by employing such "volunteer" forces they could successfully disclaim Soviet overt participation in an assault on Japan, particularly in view of the fact that such forces would have to be supported by large-scale Soviet air and naval forces.

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