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DIA INTELLIGENCE APPRAISAL

Communist China's Capability to Support Pakistan WHITE HOUSE
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Introduction

Communist China has recently reemphasized its support of Pakistan in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. Peking has condemned India in Foreign Ministry and news media statements and in UN debates, and has issued low-key threats that it would stand by its ally. The Chinese have also upbraided the Soviets for supporting India in the conflict at the UN. Early in the Security Council debate, Peking introduced a resolution calling for a cease-fire, a mutual force withdrawal, and the creation of conditions conducive to a peace settlement. Chinese political moves and propaganda statements have thus far had little impact on India. Peking could, however, exercise its options to provide more concrete support to Pakistan -- by supplying limited amounts of arms and equipment or by undertaking limited military operations along portions of the Sino-Indian border.

Material Support

In early November, the Chinese reportedly agreed to provide Pakistan long-range artillery, MiG-21s, naval equipment, small arms and ammunition, and missiles. Deliveries were to begin in early December, but there is no information that this has occurred. Weapons and equipment would be available from existing Chinese inventories as well as current production.

China's capability to provide timely and extensive military assistance is constrained by delivery distances and difficult lines of communication. Supply by sea would be time-consuming and require lead time for the delivery of goods to ports and the assembly of appropriately configured ships from the merchant fleet. Assuming the use of ports in South China, steaming time to Karachi, which is 4,400 miles from Canton, would be about 12 days. There is no evidence thus far indicating that the Chinese have initiated a sealift in support of Pakistan. Seaborne deliveries would be subject to some risk of Indian interception.

Chinese overland transport to the northern Kashmir (Pakistan) border would be limited to approximately 350 short tons per day if supplies were shipped through the Urunchi railhead. Urunchi, however, is more than 1,000 miles from the border, a distance

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that would have to be traversed on a single, unimproved road. In the unlikely event that excess supplies had been stockpiled in Kashgar in far western Sinkiang, China could truck about 800-1,000 tons per day to the border. Movement across the border into Pakistan at this time of year, however, poses a major logistics problem. The Khunjerab Pass, the only practical entry point, will soon be virtually impassable to truck traffic due to heavy snow cover. (Encl 1)

In West China, there are only two airfields (Hotien and Wensu) suitable for staging sustained air supply operations to West Pakistan; altitudes and runway lengths of other airfields in this area severely limit their use by Chinese transports. Medium transport aircraft available for short-haul operations to Pakistan would total less than 40, and in an all-out effort, could airlift some 2,300 tons per day. None of China's transports, including the AN-12/CUBs, can carry tanks or armored personnel carriers. (Encl 1)

Military Options

A buildup of forces would be necessary before the Chinese could launch a multi-division campaign against India. There are no indications that such a buildup is underway or planned.

 There are no tactical aircraft deployed near the Indian border at this time, but airfields in southwest Sinkiang and Tibet are capable of supporting operations of up to 350 tactical aircraft.

Present Chinese troop dispositions are a threat to India, particularly the northeast where existing Chinese military strength ties down a sizable number of Indian troops. Chinese probes in this area would carry little risk of escalation into a major conflict and could relieve some Indian pressure on the Pakistanis.

Conclusions

For the immediate future, Peking will continue to support Pakistan through political, diplomatic, and propaganda means.

In addition, China could initiate airlift and sealift resupply operations. Airlift would be restricted by aircraft capacities and airfield inadequacies. Sealift resupply would be limited only by the current availability of ships, travel time involved, and the risk of Indian naval interception.

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China could also initiate probes and harassing attacks in the high mountain areas to continue to tie down significant numbers of Indian troops in the east. In any event, Chinese action against India would probably be small scale in order to avoid provoking Soviet retaliatory moves.

Approved by:

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