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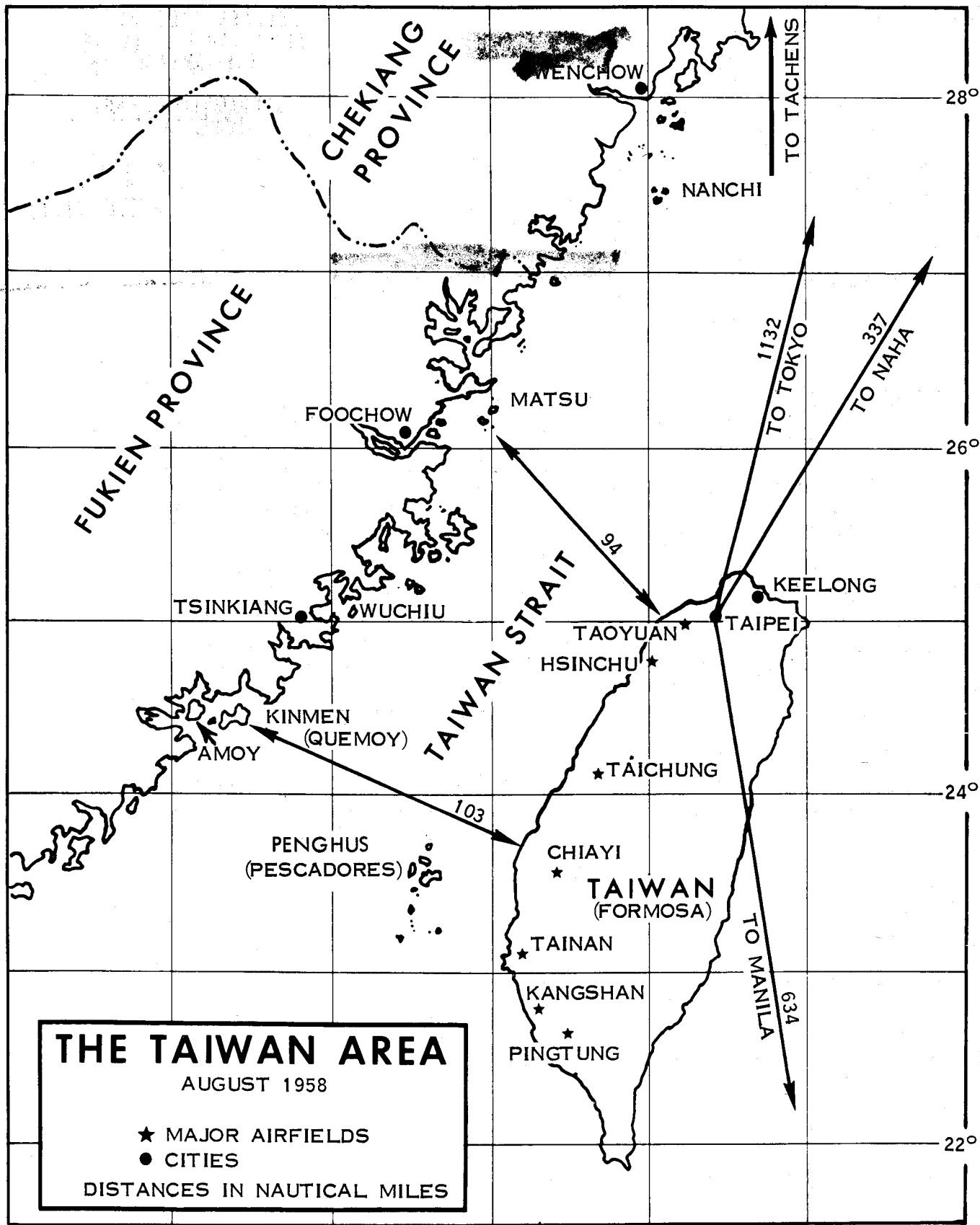
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AIR OPERATIONS IN THE TAIWAN CRISIS OF 1958

(U)

By

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November 1962

USAF Historical Division Liaison Office



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## FOREWORD

Air Operations in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958 is one of a series of studies on air operations in international incidents, prepared by the USAF Historical Division Liaison Office at the request of the Directorate of Plans, Headquarters USAF. This historical narrative, by Jacob Van Staaveren, is based on primary source materials available in 1960--messages and correspondence--and on histories from many levels of the Air Force, including units, commands, and the Air Staff. Originally prepared in a very few copies, the study has been in great demand by the Air Staff, major commands, and Department of Defense agencies and is now being published for wider dissemination.

The defense of Taiwan has been and will continue to be a source of major concern to the United States and especially to the U.S. armed services. It is likely that there may be more military crises involving Taiwan and its related islands. The crisis in 1958 provided a test of American military planning concepts that should prove of value for future planning. Occurring in the Pacific almost simultaneously with the Lebanon crisis of July-August 1958, it created certain planning, operational, and logistic problems that had not been anticipated.

JOSEPH W. ANGELL, JR.  
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## I. THE TAIWAN CRISIS OF 1954-55


Lying about 100 miles off the mainland of China is the island of Taiwan, also known to the Western world as Formosa. Its 13,429 square miles roughly equal the combined area of the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Taiwan is 243 miles long and from 60 to 80 miles wide. With the U.S.-held island of Okinawa 350 miles to the northeast and the Philippine Islands 225 miles to the southeast, Taiwan is one of the most important military bastions in the western Pacific. About 25 miles from the island, in the Taiwan Strait, are the Penghus, a cluster of islets also called the Pescadores. Historically an appendage of Taiwan, they too are important because of their strategic position.

The people of Taiwan are primarily of Chinese stock, derived mostly from Fukien and Kwangtung provinces, although some come from the south China plateau. About 2 percent are aborigines. During the twentieth century the population of Taiwan expanded rapidly, from about 3.6 million in 1920 to about 10 million in 1956. The latter figure included some 2 million refugees who fled from the mainland in 1946-49. About 480,000 Japanese were repatriated to Japan in 1945.

China ceded Taiwan and the Penghus to Japan at the end of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, but 50 years later these territories were again in Chinese hands. In the Cairo Declaration of November 1943, the United States together with the United Kingdom and the Republic of China called for the return to China of all territories taken from that country by








the Japanese. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 the United States and the United Kingdom, with the concurrence of China and the subsequent adherence of the Soviet Union, signed a declaration stipulating that the terms of the Cairo Declaration be carried out. With the defeat of Japan, China assumed administrative control over Taiwan and the Penghus. In September 1951, as a last formality, Japan and 26 other nations (not including the Soviet Union) signed a treaty of peace wherein Japan renounced all title and claim to these islands.

At the end of World War II the civil war that had been smoldering since the late 1920's broke out anew between the Chinese Nationalist government under President Chiang Kai-shek and Chinese Communist forces entrenched in north China. By March 1948 the Communists controlled Manchuria; by year's end they had seized virtually all of the country north of the Yangtze River. Defeat followed defeat until the Nationalists were driven off the mainland of China. They fled to Taiwan, the Penghus, and a number of offshore islands, primarily the Kinmen (Quemoy), Matsu, and Tachen groups.\* In December 1949, Taipei became the provisional capital of the remnants of the Republic of China. Meanwhile, in Peiping on 1 October 1949, the Chinese Communists established a new People's Republic of China, a regime recognized by the Soviet Union two days later.

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\*The Kinmen group consists of Big and Little Kinmen plus four other islands, all within 10 miles of Fukien Province. Big Kinmen, about 13 miles long and 8 miles across at its widest point, lies only five miles from Fukien Province and Communist-held Amoy Island. The Matsu group consists of seven islands also about 10 miles from Fukien Province. They lie just outside the Min River estuary at the northern entrance to the Taiwan Strait and are about 155 nautical miles northeast of the Kinmens. The Tachen group consists of 2 main islands, Shang and Hsia, about 10 miles from Chekiang Province, plus 23 smaller islands. The Tachens lie about 250 nautical miles north of Taiwan.



U.S. Policy toward Taiwan, 1949-54

During the immediate postwar period a United States mission, headed by Gen. George C. Marshall, made an unsuccessful attempt to mediate the Chinese civil war. After the Nationalists lost mainland China, the U.S. State Department attributed the defeat to internal political, economic, and military weaknesses that had been beyond the power of the United States to remedy save through outright intervention. Although sympathetic to the Nationalists, the United States initially avoided a policy that would risk involvement in the Chinese civil war. President Truman stated on 5 January 1950 that the U.S. Government would provide no military aid for Chinese forces and desired no special rights, privileges, or military bases on Taiwan.<sup>1</sup>

The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 ended this policy and led to the military neutralization of Taiwan. Observing that its loss to the Communists would threaten the security of the Pacific area and U.S. forces serving in that area, President Truman directed the U.S. Seventh Fleet to prevent an attack on Taiwan. At the same time the fleet was ordered to prevent any sea or air operations by the Nationalist government against the mainland. In July the JCS affirmed the strategic value of the island to the United States. Their recommendations resulted in renewal of military assistance to the Nationalists in February 1951 and the establishment of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Taipei in November 1952.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1953, shortly after assuming office, President Eisenhower altered U.S. policy toward Taiwan when he declared that the U.S.

Seventh Fleet would cease to shield Communist China from the Nationalists.<sup>3</sup> However, the "unleashed" military forces of the Chiang government did not attack the mainland, and the action had no major impact on the Korean War.

The cessation of hostilities in Korea in July 1953 eased tension in the Far East only temporarily. The Chinese Communists renewed their assistance to the Indochinese revolutionaries who were fighting French rule. French defeats led to the establishment of a Communist government in North Vietnam. This prompted the United States to enter into new military defense arrangements. It took the lead in concluding a seven-nation Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, signed in Manila in September 1954. Then, on 2 December, it signed a bilateral mutual defense treaty with the Chinese Nationalist government, assuring the defense of Taiwan and the Penghus and such "other territories" as might be determined by mutual consent--an allusion to the small, offshore islands.<sup>4</sup>

In an exchange of notes between the two governments on 10 December 1954, the United States recognized that the Nationalists possessed the inherent right of self-defense not only for Taiwan and the Penghus but also for "other territory" under their control (i.e., the offshore islands). On their part the Nationalists accepted a limitation on their freedom of action. The use of force in this area by either the Nationalist government or the United States would be a joint decision except in an emergency when the Nationalists clearly might have to defend themselves.<sup>5</sup> The notes reflected U.S. fear that conflict with the Communists might arise from unilateral action by the Nationalists who fervently wished to repossess the mainland.

By this time the status of the Nationalist-held offshore islands had become an increasingly acute problem for the United States. The Communists made unsuccessful attempts to invade the Tachens in May and August 1954, Big Kinmen in September, and Wuchiu Island, about 60 miles northeast of Big Kinmen, in November. In addition, the Communists on the mainland engaged in periodic artillery duels with the Nationalists on the Kinmens and Tachens. Against this background of tension, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, on 1 December 1954, publicly discussed the U.S. commitment to defend the "other territories" referred to in the mutual defense treaty. Explaining that the status of the offshore islands was not affected by the treaty, he said that their defense by the United States would depend on the nature of the specific islands under attack and whether this attack was deemed part of the defense of Taiwan. On this matter the President would probably make the final decision.<sup>6</sup>

#### U.S. Air Operations during the 1954-55 Crisis

Meanwhile, Chinese Communist forays against the offshore islands and limited air action by both the Nationalist and Communist air forces spurred U.S. military preparations in the area. On 4 September 1954 the JCS warned the Commander-in-Chief Far East (CINCFE), Gen. John E. Hull, in Tokyo, and the Commander-in-Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), Adm. Felix B. Stump, in Hawaii, that it might be necessary to implement the latter's Ops Plan 51-53.\* This plan called for augmentation of CINCPAC's air and naval units and for U.S. participation with Nationalist forces,

\*The JCS had transferred responsibility for the defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and the Philippines from CINCFE to CINCPAC on 15 March 1952.

if authorized, in the defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and some of the offshore islands. In approving the plan the JCS had directed the establishment of a USAF component of the Pacific Command, and, on 1 July 1954, the Air Force had formed the Pacific Air Force primarily for this purpose. Its commander was subordinate to the commander of the Far East Air Forces (FEAF)—a major command of CINCFE—in matters pertaining solely to the Air Force and subordinate to CINCPAC in matters relating to the defense of Taiwan, the Penghus, and the Philippines.

In November, JCS directed the Air Force to designate a fighter wing within FEAF for dispatch to Taiwan on short notice. For FEAF, the possibility of deploying a wing posed manifold logistical, maintenance, communication, and fuel problems. FEAF was also mindful of CINCFE's concern lest the transfer of too many military units to Taiwan jeopardize the defense of other areas (Korea, Japan, and Okinawa). It was finally determined that a show of force, if necessary, could be made from Taiwan by rotating squadrons of FEAF's 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing (F-86's) from Japan to the island as part of a training and familiarization program. The State and Defense Departments concurred in the rotation plan on 22 January 1955 during another period of rising tension in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>7</sup>

On 17 January, Ichiang, a small island northwest of the Tachens, had fallen to Communist forces. On 24 January, President Eisenhower asked Congress for a resolution to authorize him to employ the armed forces promptly and effectively to assure the security of Taiwan and the Penghus. The President's request was approved by overwhelming

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majorities in the House and Senate late in January. The resolution passed by the Congress read as follows:<sup>8</sup>


Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That the President of the United States be and he hereby is authorized to employ the Armed forces of the United States as he deems necessary for the specific purpose of securing and protecting Formosa and the Pescadores against armed attack, this authority to include the securing and protection of such related positions and territories of that area now in friendly hands and the taking of such other measures as he judges to be required or appropriate in assuring the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores.

This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, and shall so report to the Congress.

Also on 24 January, JCS, with State and Defense approval, ordered the entire 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing to Taiwan. The change in plans resulted from a sudden U.S. decision to evacuate about 40,000 Chinese Nationalist soldiers and civilians from the Tachen Islands, which were considered indefensible. Ships and amphibious elements of CINCPAC's naval forces joined the U.S. Seventh Fleet in assisting the evacuation. Following preliminary air deployments on 26 January, three squadrons of the 18th Wing flew from Japan and the Philippines to bases at Chiayi, Tainan, and Taoyuan on Taiwan. Transports of the Fifth Air Force's 315th Air Division lifted personnel, supplies, and equipment.<sup>9</sup>

To direct air operations from Taiwan, the Fifth Air Force established Headquarters, Air Task Force Fifth (Provisional) at Taipei. Its mission was to cover the Navy's evacuation of the islands, protect the carrier Princeton, and, in coordination with the Chinese Nationalist Air Force (CNAF), provide for air defense, search, and rescue in an area south and west of a line 27°N 125°E to 28°N 121°E.<sup>10</sup>






On 3 February the 18th Wing had on hand 65 combat-ready aircraft and 78 combat-ready pilots. For a brief period it flew training and familiarization missions. During the evacuation of the Tachens, which began on 9 February and continued until the 13th, the 18th flew 206 sorties, 184 of them over the Tachen and Nanchi islands\* in direct support missions. The CNAF, jointly responsible with the U.S. Navy for antisubmarine patrol south of 27°N, flew P4Y aircraft at 1,000 feet and maintained top cover with their F-47's and F-84's. All forces were cautioned to remain at least three miles from the Chinese mainland. In accordance with JCS instructions, operational control of the 18th Wing passed from CINCFE (FEAF) to CINCPAC (Pacific Air Force).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, what had been initially planned as a show of force through a training exercise became a tactical operation. After the successful completion of the evacuation without Communist opposition, the Taiwan Strait crisis began to wane. By the end of February the 18th's aircraft returned to their home stations, ending CINCPAC's control over the wing. The United States continued to display its air strength on Taiwan, however. CINCPAC's squadron rotation plan was put into effect by JCS directive. The first unit to rotate, the 69th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, temporarily stationed at Clark AB, flew to Chiayi AB in February 1955. Other fighter-bomber or fighter-interceptor squadrons followed, initially at about two-week intervals and after 1 July 1955 for longer periods.<sup>12</sup> In January 1958 units again began to deploy more frequently for shorter periods.

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\*On 24 February the Nationalists also voluntarily abandoned the Nanchi group, midway between Taiwan and the Tachens and 25 miles from the China coast.



The Tachen evacuation focused attention on the ability of U.S. and Chinese Nationalist forces to defend Taiwan, the Penghus, and the off-shore islands and to conduct joint air operations from Taiwan. The operational problems were formidable. The major deficiency was communications, for U.S. forces had to rely on inadequate and unreliable Nationalist on- and off-island telephone, teletype, radio, and radar systems. The Joint Operations Center (JOC), a Chinese agency, was almost inoperable, and the use of Chinese installers, operators, and maintenance men created a language barrier that compounded communication difficulties. An important logistical deficiency was the severe shortage of F-86 drop tanks—sufficient for only two days of sustained operations. An intricate U.S. command structure on Taiwan complicated both logistical support and liaison with the Nationalists. There was also an urgent need for closer U.S. and Nationalist defense planning. And the CNAF needed more and better aircraft.<sup>13</sup>

To rectify some of the deficiencies, plans were prepared for improved communication and radar systems and air-base facilities. A U.S. section of the Chinese JOC was established in June 1955. Meanwhile, U.S. and Chinese Nationalist representatives held a series of defense coordination conferences in March and April.\* As a result of the latter conference, Admiral Stump established a Formosa Liaison Center in May as an integral part of the Formosa Defense Command, permitting more intimate U.S. and Chinese working relationships in planning, opera-

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\*Previous defense coordination conferences had been held in May and December 1953 and October 1954.



tions, and training. The CNAF was also strengthened by the acquisition of F-86F fighter-interceptors. Contrary to U.S. military advice, the Nationalists bolstered the defenses of the Quemoy group with an additional division of troops from Taiwan.<sup>14</sup>

#### Interval between Crises

Nearly three and a half years elapsed before Chinese Communist pressure against the offshore islands created a new crisis in August 1958. During this interval the United States and the Nationalists made numerous changes in their defenses in the area. The U.S. Air Force offset a decrease of units and personnel by introducing more modern aircraft, capable of carrying a variety of nuclear weapons, and by stationing a Matador missile squadron on Taiwan in February 1958. The expansion of the CNAF also helped to offset the decrease in USAF's numerical strength. By the middle of 1958, Pacific Air Forces\* possessed 879 aircraft, including 129 bombers and 401 fighters. The CNAF had nearly 500 jet aircraft, largely F-84's and F-86's. As it grew, air facilities on Taiwan improved, but many inadequacies remained. The communication net was especially weak, since U.S. plans for major expansion of the net had been rejected as too costly.<sup>15</sup>

The period also witnessed the development of a new role for the Tactical Air Command (TAC). In 1955, Headquarters USAF directed TAC to develop a mobile Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) with an atomic capability, to be used in small localized wars. Earmarked for CASF under TAC's plan Blue Blade (subsequently renamed Double Trouble) were fighter, fighter-bomber, reconnaissance, troop carrier, refueling, communication,

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\*FEAF was redesignated Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) on 1 July 1957. The Pacific Air Force was dissolved at this time.

and supply units. Assigned to the Nineteenth Air Force for specific operations, CASF units made practice deployments, including one in November 1957 to the Far East under the code name Mobile Zebra. A PACAF-TAC agreement signed in May 1958 set forth the conditions under which TAC forces would deploy to the Pacific.<sup>16</sup>

The U.S. command structure in the Pacific also underwent change. The U.S. Navy emerged as the executive agent for the entire area on 1 July 1957 when the Far East Command with headquarters in Tokyo was disestablished and its responsibilities were transferred to the Pacific Command in Hawaii. In the realignment of subordinate commands, FEAF was redesignated the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), also with headquarters in Hawaii. PACAF was the principal USAF command in the entire Pacific area.<sup>17</sup>

At JCS direction, service commanders sought ways to further streamline arrangements on Taiwan. Here three separate headquarters existed: Taiwan Defense Command (TDC), Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), and Air Task Force (ATF) 13 (P). The Air Force and the Army wanted to eliminate TDC and consolidate all military activities on Taiwan under a Chief, MAAG, who would be an Army lieutenant general, but Admiral Stump considered such an arrangement impractical and politically infeasible at the time. He cautioned against a change that might imply a decline in U.S. interest in Taiwan. Early in 1958, with JCS approval, TDC and MAAG were combined into a single headquarters under a vice admiral. The commander of ATF 13 also served as chief of Air Force Section MAAG. This centralization of command provided one rather than three

points of contact between U.S. and Chinese military authorities and also permitted reduction of the U.S. headquarters staff and facilities on Taiwan.<sup>18</sup>

Admiral Stump had major responsibility for overall operational planning. On 16 May 1958 he published Ops Plan 25-58 to guide his major subordinate commanders in updating their respective operational plans.\* These subordinates were Gen. Laurence S. Kuter, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF); Vice Adm. Herbert C. Hopwood, Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT); and Gen. Isaac D. White, Commander-in-Chief Army Pacific (CINCARPAC).<sup>19</sup>

Between 1955 and 1958 the United States made no basic changes in its Taiwan policies. This country would insure the military security of Taiwan and the Penghus (the defense of the offshore islands a matter of Presidential discretion), and it would support the Nationalist government as a free alternative to the Chinese Communist government. Maintaining Nationalist morale was deemed essential. However, frustrations on Taiwan mounted as Nationalists saw their hopes of recapturing mainland China fade, their position in the international community decline, and their national existence continue to be dependent on the United States. The determination of the Nationalists to hold the Kinmen and Matsu islands, now defended by more than 100,000 of their 450,000 regular ground troops, troubled U.S. policy planners. On the eve of a new Taiwan crisis, the nature of U.S. reaction to a Chinese Communist attack or an air and sea blockade of the offshore islands was still under discussion by the National Security Council.<sup>20</sup>

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\*For command channels in May 1958, see chart following p 32.