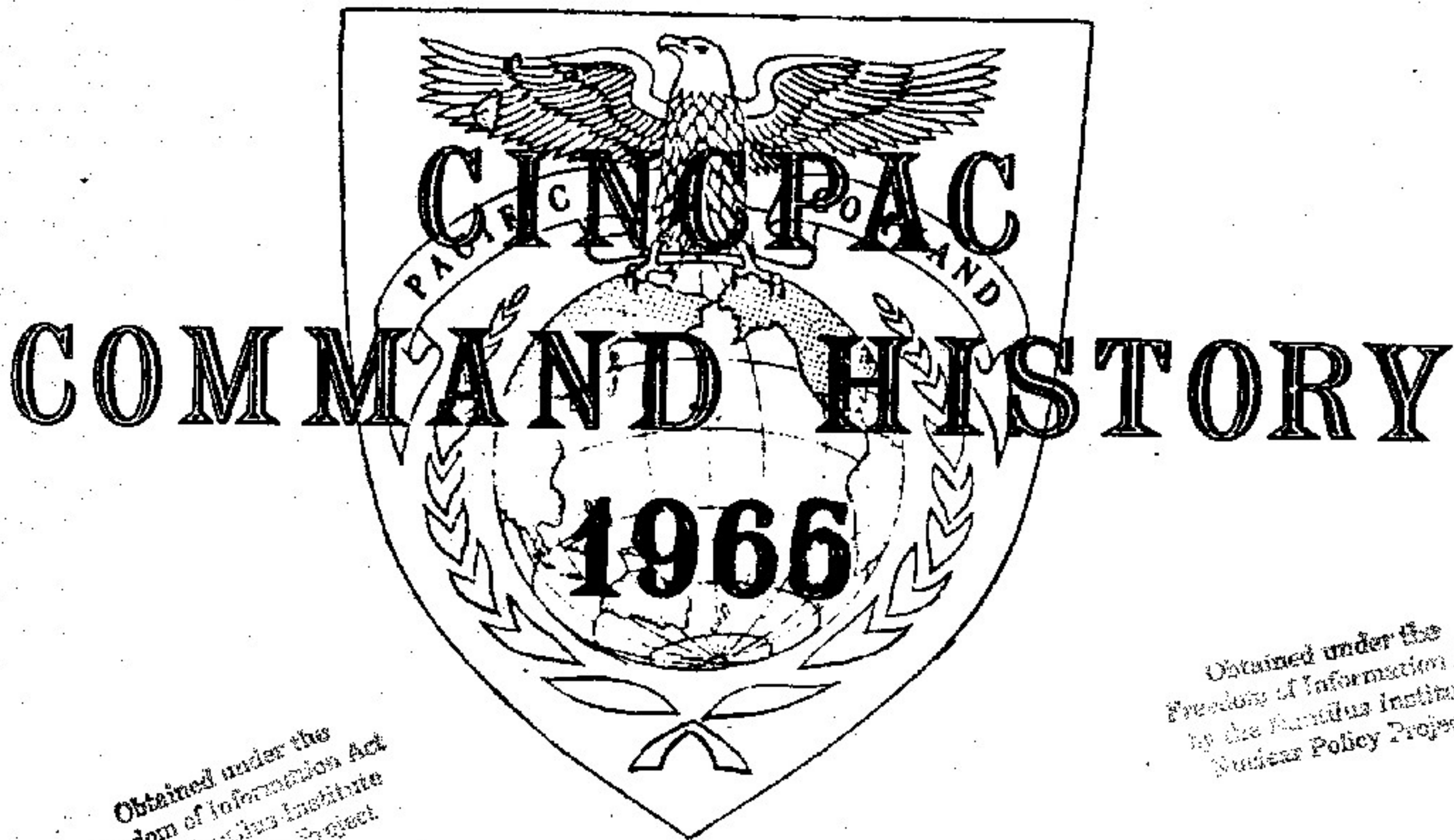


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(VOLUME I)

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ALTERNATIVE US MILITARY STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNIST CHINA

(S) In January 1966 the Chairman of the JCS directed his Special Studies Group to evaluate the military feasibility of limited-objective offensives against the China Mainland as alternatives in countering a Chinese invasion of Southeast Asia.

(S) On 31 March, CINCPAC directed that a similar study be conducted within PACOM by an ad hoc study group, and that it be completed prior to the CJCS study so that it might contribute to that group's deliberations.¹ Following a 14 June briefing by his committee,² CINCPAC referred the study to his component commanders, whose major recommendations were included in the report that was forwarded to the JCS on 19 July.³

(TS) The CINCPAC committee's study reflected the following thoughts. The problem was to develop and evaluate alternate strategies for limited-objective offensive operations against Communist China in response to intervention in Southeast Asia by significant Chinese forces. The objectives were limited to causing the withdrawal of those forces, not the defeat or surrender of China. US Force requirements were developed within the concepts of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, and allowed for retention of US capability to fulfill force commitments elsewhere in the world.

(TS) It was assumed that the USSR would not respond with military forces and that Japan would permit the use of US bases there for logistic purposes.⁴ It was also assumed that there would be restraints, just as there were restraints in the Vietnam War. Targeting constraints and a piecemeal US buildup in Vietnam had been at least partly the result of

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1. CINCPAC Memorandum 00186-66, 31 Mar 66
 2. The committee was headed by Colonel E. J. Hanigan, Jr., USAF, of CINCPAC's Plans Division.
 3. CINCPAC ltr ser 000296, 19 Jul 66
 4. The CJCS study was keyed to an arbitrary date, 1 July 1967, for the initiation of the communist invasion. The CINCPAC study group believed that because the southwest monsoon season was normally at its height in early July, a more realistic date would be October 1967, and they planned accordingly.

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the US belief that certain other courses of action might trigger overt Chinese intervention. The study considered that China's invasion caused the transfer of those restraints, and that following such an invasion the United States would modify its war efforts to preclude possible overt military intervention by the USSR. The result would be that the United States would continue its adherence to a political strategy employing military means, and not implement a purely military, war-winning strategy.

~~(TS)~~ The group considered the containment of the Chinese offensive as a prerequisite for any course of action to be contemplated or selected. China had to be convinced it could not win and had to be impressed with the ever-increasing cost to itself of such action.

~~(TS)~~ There were two basic methods by which the Chinese could be caused to withdraw once they committed themselves: forcing them back across their border by offensive ground and air action, or punishing them to such an extent that their decision makers reevaluated their action and ordered their forces withdrawn. The group considered four courses of action:

1. A counteroffensive in Southeast Asia and Southern China. While a sustained counteroffensive would be an assured means of forcing withdrawal, it could not be initiated immediately unless forces had been prepositioned. It was not considered within US capabilities in the time frame of the study without seriously degrading US posture to meet NATO commitments.

2. An air campaign against "value" targets throughout Mainland China. This action could be conducted concurrently with containment and other offensive operations. It took advantage of US technology to threaten China proper immediately and directly and to influence China's leaders. It used minimal US Forces, demonstrated US intent clearly, presented a sense of urgency, presented the possibility of further escalation at US option, and avoided an immediate drawdown of US Forces from other commitments.

3. [REDACTED]

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It was not a sufficient overall objective but in conjunction with other actions could provide important subsidiary benefits.

4. A ground offensive on Mainland China. The disadvantages of such a course of action were so great the study group concluded that it was an undesirable possibility.

(TS) The CINCPAC committee's study concluded with the following recommendations. The group recommended containment of the offensive through rapid deployment of forces supported by an extensive air interdiction campaign against the enemy in both Southeast Asia and Southern China as a first priority task. Simultaneously, immediate initiation of an air campaign against "value" targets was recommended as an effective means of illustrating to China's leaders the cost of their action. Concurrently, CONUS forces and resources for a sustained counteroffensive had to be mobilized. Seizure of Hainan Island could make important contributions and should be considered. The group recommended improving lines of communication in Thailand and improving PACOM air, sea, and amphibious lift capabilities.¹ Consideration should be given to the feasibility of maintaining a corps-sized Army force in a high state of readiness for deployment to the PACOM for contingency purposes. These latter efforts would not only enhance ability to meet overt invasion successfully, but contribute additional deterrent to any possible Chinese adventures in Southeast Asia.

(TS) On 17 November at Camp Smith, members of the CJCS Special Studies Group briefed CINCPAC and his component commanders and their staffs on that group's report on alternative strategies against China. The situation the CJCS study described was an overt Chinese invasion on 15 November 1967 at five points from Western Thailand

1. Logistic limitations were one of the primary constraints in all of the strategies developed.

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across to the Vietnam Demilitarized Zone that involved 19 Chinese and North Vietnamese divisions. US Force deployments were based on a Defense Department approved schedule. Soviet intervention was ruled out, and while strategies were developed using conventional weapons, consideration was given to the effects on force requirements if nuclear weapons were used.¹

(76) The CJCS group developed three alternative strategies and explained their rationale with each:

1. Offensive air and naval operations against China while conducting a defensive holding operation in Southeast Asia. This, they concluded, would make aggression prohibitive to the Chinese in view of their short and long range national objectives. This strategy could be executed within programmed active forces plus Air National Guard tactical units.

2. An air and naval campaign against China with an invasion of Mainland South China together with a defensive holding operation in Southeast Asia. This would achieve the shock effect of attacking China on its own territory, but it would require forces much greater than programmed active forces.

3. An air and naval campaign against Mainland South China and an invasion of North Vietnam together with a defensive holding operation in Southeast Asia. This strategy provided a means of achieving campaign objectives during a single dry season and early reunification of Vietnam. It could be executed mostly within programmed active forces, with some additional amphibious shipping and Air National Guard tactical units.

(78) Each of the three non-nuclear strategies, the study concluded, would cause withdrawal of Chinese forces from Southeast Asia.

1. Both of these concepts had also been in the CINCPAC study.

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(TS) After the briefing, CINCPAC sent his preliminary views of the study to the JCS,^{1,2} and these were incorporated in the JCS comments forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 7 December.³ The JCS expressed many reservations about the study. Among them were problems caused by shortages, resulting from the Vietnam conflict, that would restrict the availability of materiel to support the proposed strategies. They considered the estimated time phasing of the various strategies optimistic in view of production lead times required; decisions to begin production of some items would have to be made from six months to a year before the items were needed. The JCS stated that the relative military feasibility and acceptability of the strategies required further careful assessment, particularly in relation to the study assumptions, but they considered that the study contained valuable material for consideration in the continuing review and development of alternatives to counter a possible Chinese invasion in Southeast Asia.

(TS) On 31 December,⁴ CINCPAC elaborated and expanded on his preliminary comments, pointing out that three broad areas of the study warranted close scrutiny:

1. The postulated situation that existed at the time of overt intervention. Features of the postulated situation that were questioned were: (a) the low intensity insurgency threat in South Vietnam; (b) the ineffective deployment of Chinese communist forces against the proposed lodgement in South China; and (c) the ease with which the Chinese communist air threat was eliminated. In the CINCPAC view, these features collectively impinged so materially on force requirements

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1. CINCPAC 190435Z Nov 66
 2. Once again, the CINCPAC staff cited logistic problems for all alternatives. All strategies depended on accelerated procurement from an expanded US industrial base, and there were other deficiencies that would have to be anticipated well in advance of instituting any strategic response. CINCPAC's Logistics Division again suggested improvements to Thailand's LOC to support US Forces. (J4/Memo/000103-66, 2 Dec 66)
 3. JCSM 744-66, 7 Dec 66
 4. CINCPAC ltr 3010 ser 000554, 31 Dec 66