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The President

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION
for
TAIWAN STRAITS DISCUSSION



1. The recent joint State-Defense study, "U. S. and Allied Capabilities for Limited Military Operations to 1 July 1961," includes as Appendix C an analysis of hypothetical limited military operations in defense of Quemoy and Matsu.

The Study states that the U. S. decision to oppose by force an attempt to take the offshore islands must be made at the earliest possible moment and must include decision on the use of nuclear weapons. The "nuclear attack, selective and meticulously controlled" would be extended to "whatever targets on mainland China may be required for the successful prosecution of the defense in the briefest time possible." Targets would be in general those within a radius of 500 miles from the scene of action, plus those targets, wherever located, which are being used to stage attacks, including the Shanghai-Hangchow-Nanking and Canton complexes.

The Study concludes: (1) The U. S. must reckon with the possibility that the magnitude of the U. S. attack would have persuaded the Chinese Communists that the U. S. aim was to destroy their regime, despite U. S. announcement of more limited aims. (2) In this circumstance, the Chinese Communists might well decide to broaden the conflict and seek expanded Soviet support. Chinese Communist air attacks might then extend to all U. S. forces and bases within the range of its air force. (3) Should the USSR conclude that the Chinese Communist regime was in grave danger, it might use its own nuclear weapons, either by providing the weapons to the Chinese Communists or by introducing its own nuclear armed units under Chinese Communist cover. (4) The risk of the conflict growing into general war would then be very great.

2. Special Estimate (SNIE 100-7-58) "Sino-Soviet and Free World Reactions to U. S. Use of Nuclear Weapons in Limited Wars in the Far East", concluded:

(1) We believe that if the U. S. used nuclear weapons in meeting Communist Bloc local aggression in the Far East, there would be a grave risk that the Communists would

retaliate in kind. Any Far East Communist state would be unlikely to launch a local aggression without having received assurances of Soviet support.

(2) If U. S. nuclear attacks were confined to the immediate Quemoy and Matsu areas, the Communists might attempt to win without using nuclear weapons, or seek to break off the action.

(3) However, even if the U. S. nuclear response were so limited, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Communists would respond in kind, possibly including nuclear attacks against U. S. bases in the area selected to minimize the additional risk of general war.

