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Short-Term Outlook and Implications for the Sino-Indian Conflict

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SHORT-TERM OUTLOOK AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SINO- INDIAN CONFLICT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

With China's recent attacks on India's northern border, the Sino-Indian quarrel has become a serious military struggle. While fighting is likely to continue, we believe the conflict will remain essentially confined to the disputed border areas at least for the near future. The conflict is already causing a change in India's foreign and domestic attitudes favorable to the West, and the USSR's prestige in India has diminished. Nevertheless, India is unlikely to abandon nonalignment as such, and will continue to look to both East and West for assistance in its vast economic development program. Pakistan sees any military strengthening of India as a threat to its security and would react strongly against a major Western program to modernize and re-equip the Indian military establishment.

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THE ESTIMATE

I. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS

1. Ever since the first clash between Indian and Chinese forces in 1958, India has been devoting considerable efforts to strengthening its position along the entire border. Roads and trails in the Himalayas have been improved and expanded, air transport capacity increased, and growing numbers of Indian troops stationed at key locations on the border. Increasingly confident of its ability to deal with the situation, India, in the spring of 1962, set out to establish new forward posts in Ladakh behind Chinese outposts, though in Indian-claimed territory. While these provoked strong Chinese protests, Peiping's actions in the area were restrained. By mid-summer, however, Indian leaders became extremely concerned that they had overextended themselves, and Nehru openly spoke about renewed discussions with the Chinese on the border dispute. The outcry in India against this course was so strong, however, that he was in effect forced to abandon any practical steps toward negotiations.

2. Despite their concern about possible clashes in Ladakh, Indian leaders felt relatively safe in strengthening India's position in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). In the discussions on the border dispute held between India and Communist China during 1960, Peiping had made it reasonably clear that it was prepared to respect—though not recognize—the McMahon Line.¹ Indeed, China had even indicated its willingness to abandon its claims in NEFA if New Delhi would relinquish its claims in Ladakh. To strengthen its position in NEFA, India sent troops slightly north of the location of the McMahon Line as shown on all but the latest Indian maps. The Indians claimed that the true location of the line—which in general follows the Himalayan watershed—was in fact north of the position on earlier maps. They also asserted with more vigor their determination to expel the Chinese from Indian territory.

3. Peiping resisted these deployments of Indian troops, and clashes of increasing severity occurred. Commencing on 20 October, the Chinese initiated large-scale attacks against Indian positions in NEFA and occupied substantial territory. In addition, virtually all of India's advance outposts in the Ladakh region of Kashmir have been overrun. Heavy fighting resulted in total Indian casualties of about 5,000, about half of whom are killed and missing. Chinese propaganda has lashed out at Nehru and Krishna Menon in terms usually reserved for US and

¹ The McMahon Line was the result of a British, Chinese and Tibetan convention in 1914, ratified by the UK and Tibet, but not by China.

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Chinese Nationalist leaders. Despite the military reverses it has suffered, New Delhi has rejected the terms of China's cease-fire offer by demanding that Chinese troops must withdraw to their September positions before any talks are possible. The Chinese, for their part, have refused any cease-fire requiring them to evacuate the posts they have seized in Ladakh.

II. DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT

4. In the immediate border areas of dispute, Communist China had a distinct military advantage over India.² Chinese units held the initiative and were better trained and equipped with more suitable weapons. In both NEFA and Ladakh they were positioned in bases on the Tibetan and Sinkiang plateaus with only a short ascent necessary to penetrate the outer Indian positions, since Chinese roads in Tibet approach to within a few miles of their initial attack positions. Conversely, India's original approaches to the border were over much more rugged terrain relying on a rudimentary road and trail system. Supply to a large proportion of Indian forces, particularly in the NEFA area, was limited to air drop or porter carry of several days. However, as the Chinese advance and the Indians retreat, Peiping's advantage lessens. The Indians have fallen back to positions that can be supplied by jeep trails or roads while the Chinese must traverse rugged terrain and rely on trails for resupply.

5. While Peiping has announced that Chinese forces will no longer respect the "illegal McMahon Line," Communist China's ultimate intentions in the conflict are uncertain. In Ladakh, a primary Chinese intention is to protect the very important Tibet-Sinkiang road which they have built across the disputed territory. The Chinese advances have pushed the Indians out of virtually all Chinese-claimed areas up to the natural barrier of the main Karakoram Range. Further deep penetrations would involve the Chinese in supply and terrain problems almost as difficult as those that face the Indians. In NEFA, the numbers of troops in combat are far larger than in Ladakh. The Chinese have taken the important area around Towang and made advances in the Walong area, on two of the key approaches to the Assam plains. The Chinese may aim to occupy further areas of NEFA in order to strengthen their military position and perhaps to use as a bargaining counter for use in any future negotiations.

6. While still desirous of limiting the conflict, the Indians are heavily committed to reversing the tide of battle and eventually ousting the Chinese from Indian-claimed territory. Present Indian strategy is to hold the Chinese advance through the winter while preparing for a counteroffensive in the spring. To this end the Indians are building

² See Military Annex.

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up their forces along the entire frontier. However, strains are becoming increasingly evident on the transport net serving northeastern India, and there will continue to be supply problems at the front. If the Chinese advance continues, India's civilian leaders may feel compelled to reverse their decision against carrying out air attacks on Chinese positions and supply lines. However, New Delhi will be reluctant to do so because of the danger of further escalation and because of fear that the Chinese would bomb Indian cities in retaliation.

III. THE OUTLOOK

7. In an attempt to portray a "reasonable" attitude, the Chinese have called for an end to the current conflict and have proposed that both sides withdraw 20 kilometers from the line of control as of 7 November 1959. As this would represent an Indian concession to the extensive Chinese claims in Ladakh, it is unlikely that the two sides will reach agreement in the near future. Unless a political settlement is reached, fighting will almost certainly continue in both Ladakh and NEFA as both sides jockey for position. While the Indians probably will try to regain some of their lost territory, they are unlikely to make much progress in the face of superior Chinese manpower and position. In particular, the Chinese are almost certainly determined to hold the Towang area, in view of its political as well as its strategic importance. If the Chinese renew their attacks before or during the winter they will make some gains, but we believe the conflict will remain confined to the areas of present fighting.

8. The conflict may involve much larger numbers of troops next spring. The Indians will probably not attempt to advance beyond their own territorial claims. However, more powerful Chinese attacks are possible, especially in the event of a strong Indian effort to recover lost territory, and fighting could well spread further in NEFA and perhaps even to new areas of Ladakh. Any major expansion of the conflict might involve the territories of Bhutan and perhaps even of Sikkim.

9. The principal limiting factor is logistics. Especially if the Chinese should attempt to move beyond their present territorial claims in NEFA, it seems unlikely that their transport system could support a force capable of withstanding the Indian counterattacks which could be brought against it. It would require massive and lengthy preparations, including major road-building in both Tibet and NEFA, stockpiling of supplies, etc., for the Chinese to initiate a serious invasion of India. Hence, whatever may be the long-run Chinese aspirations to dominate India, we believe it unlikely that Peiping will undertake an expansion of the present conflict beyond NEFA or attempt further significant advances in Ladakh.

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IV. THE INDIAN POSITION

10. The Sino-Indian conflict has had a dramatic effect on Indian attitudes. The setbacks at the hands of Peiping, combined with Moscow's stand, have prompted Prime Minister Nehru publicly to admit that India has been "living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation" . . . and has been "out of touch with reality." In making the decision to request military aid from the West, the Indian Government discarded a precept which had long been one of the cornerstones of its nonalignment policy. While this does not mean the abandonment of nonalignment as such, it evidences a change favorable to the West in India's posture. In particular, it will strengthen the awareness in India of the part that a strong US position in Asia plays in the containment of Communist China.

11. Within India, the pro-Western elements in the Congress Party have been strengthened, and moderate pro-Westernism is likely for some time at least to be an asset for an Indian politician. The influence on policy of the generally pro-Western Indian military will probably grow. Krishna Menon is probably finished as a major political force in Indian affairs, although he probably will continue to have some influence with Nehru. The moderate nationalist majority of the Communist Party of India has adopted a position that is in conflict not only with Peiping but with Moscow's position as well. The majority support of the Nehru government's position has infuriated the extremists in the party, and a formal party split could well result.

12. The Indian effort to gear up for the difficult and costly task of expelling the Chinese is also likely to have adverse effects on India's economic development effort. Despite Nehru's brave words about India's determination to carry out the ambitious Third Five-Year Plan, the necessity of financing the war effort will force some cutbacks. If the Indians continue their heavy emphasis on long-range investment projects, the whole economy is likely to falter. However, giving priority to imports of raw materials and spare parts in order to utilize presently available excess industrial capacity would probably limit the adverse consequences to the economy. An increase of the Indian Army from 550,000 to 800,000 men—as has been suggested—would require extensive external military aid. In addition, it would also seriously hamper the economic development effort, even assuming economic assistance from both the Soviet Bloc and the West at presently projected levels.

V. THE PAKISTANI REACTION

13. Pakistan's reaction to the West's support of India has been a bitter one. The Pakistanis regard Western willingness—eagerness, in their eyes—to supply military equipment to India as seriously detrimental to Pakistan's interests. They also see it as negating the ad-

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vantage of their alliance with the US. They are convinced that India will not negotiate "realistically" on Kashmir under normal conditions, and they believe that India's present difficult position offers what may be the only real hope to secure an acceptable settlement there. Additionally, Pakistan sees any military strengthening of India as a threat to its security. Pakistan has become increasingly concerned about India's intransigent attitude toward its neighbors during the past year or so—particularly since the Goa episode. In these circumstances, Pakistan has been unwilling to give India any public assurances. India for its part, despite the Chinese threat, has failed to redeploy substantial numbers of its own troops from the Pakistan border.

14. The eventual Pakistani reaction will depend on the magnitude and type of the aid the West extends to India. A modest program of infantry weapons and transport aircraft, for example, would probably engender chiefly widespread grumbling. On the other hand, a massive program to re-equip the Indian military establishment with modern weapons, unless balanced by comparable aid to Pakistan and accompanied by Western pressure on India to achieve a Kashmir settlement, would impose grave strains on US-Pakistan relations. For example, Ayub would be unwilling to agree to any expansion of special US facilities in Pakistan, and might demand the elimination of some of them.

VI. THE SOVIET PROBLEM

15. The expansion of the Sino-Indian conflict has presented the USSR with a troublesome choice. One of the basic tenets of post-Stalin foreign policy has been friendship with the neutral nations. India played a key role in this policy, as demonstrated by Moscow's previous willingness to incur Chinese wrath by remaining publicly neutral in the Sino-Indian dispute and even supplying military transport aircraft for use against China. Whether by design or not, Peiping's enlargement of the fighting, especially coming at the time of US-Soviet confrontation over Cuba, has forced Moscow, for the time being at least, reluctantly to support "fraternal China" over "friendly India." The immediate Soviet objective is probably the achievement of the earliest possible resolution of the conflict.

16. India's reaction to the Soviet stance has been one of acute disillusionment—particularly on the part of the more pro-Soviet elements. As a result, Soviet influence in India has diminished sharply and any future attempt by Moscow to rebuild its position will be dogged by the Indian memory of Soviet support of China in India's hour of need. Nevertheless, India's leaders will continue to wish to maintain their posture of nonalignment. They will continue to hope for Soviet Bloc economic aid and for support on such questions as Kashmir.

ANNEX A—MILITARY

Current Military Situation

1. Along India's northern border lies China's Tibet Military Region with a total troop strength of about 103,000. These forces are organized into 3 infantry divisions, 9 independent infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, 1 cavalry regiment, and 5 border defense regiments.

Ladakh

2. By deploying one infantry regiment, a cavalry regiment, and border defense forces against elements of one Indian brigade, the Chinese succeeded in reducing Indian Army outposts and securing uncontested control of all their claimed Ladakh territory. Although the Indians have evacuated additional outposts and fighting continues in the Chushul area, Chinese forces generally have remained within the confines of Chinese territorial claims. It is roughly estimated that 7,000 Chinese initially opposed a like number of Indian troops. Reinforcements have now brought the numbers to about 10,000 on each side.

Sikkim-Bhutan Area

3. Following reports that the Chinese were effecting a military buildup in the Chumbi Valley between Sikkim and Bhutan, the Indian Army positioned two infantry divisions in Sikkim and adjacent India. The Chinese reinforcement possibly involved at least one regiment of the infantry division based at Shigatse, south central Tibet.

North East Frontier Agency

4. In the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) the Chinese launched three separate offensives employing a total of approximately six infantry regiments. In the Towang area up to three infantry regiments with supporting artillery assaulted Indian defenses manned by an infantry brigade. The attack penetrated approximately 11 miles inside the border to a point five miles east to Towang. At present one Indian infantry division is deployed in defensive positions in the Se La Pass area.

5. In the Longju-Asafila area, one regiment overran platoon-size Indian border posts. This attack has progressed only a short distance inside the NEFA and has been blocked by possibly one Indian brigade.

6. In the extreme eastern part of the NEFA—the Rima area—two Chinese infantry regiments crossed the border and advanced 15 miles

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to threaten Walong. This Communist advance has been checked by an Indian infantry brigade in the vicinity of the town. In the NEFA area, Indian Army strength numbers some 35,000 with about 15,000 troops committed to forward area defense against more than 20,000 Chinese forces.

Reinforcement Capabilities

7. Excluding border defense regiments, which probably have been held back along the Sino-Nepal-Indian border and assigned primarily security and secondarily reserve "infantry" roles, uncommitted and immediately available Chinese forces in central and eastern Tibet consist of the equivalent of two infantry divisions, three infantry regiments, and elements of an artillery regiment.

8. Indian Army brigade and division reinforcements have been moved into Ladakh, northern Uttar Pradesh, and the NEFA; other units have been alerted for possible movement. As far as can be determined Indian forces facing the Pakistani border have not been weakened.

9. It is estimated that the Indians could reinforce the single infantry division presently committed in Ladakh with possibly two additional infantry divisions. The two infantry divisions defending in the NEFA could be reinforced by an additional three divisions. These reinforcements would require the decision to redeploy units now positioned along the Indo-Pakistani borders, and would virtually deplete India's strategic reserve force.

10. Meanwhile, a total of 10 infantry and 2 artillery divisions, located in the Sinkiang, Lanchou, Chengtu, and Kunming Military Regions, are available for possible movement into Tibet. Although reinforcements for the northern Ladakh area could move on either the north-west rail-highway route through Sinkiang or the motor road across Tibet via Lhasa, it is believed that logistic considerations would force the utilization of the Sinkiang route. Deployments into Tibet can be truck transported into Lhasa from Lanchou in northwest China and along the east-west highway from Yaan in western Szechwan Province. It is estimated that the interregional transfer of 4 infantry divisions—2 divisions from northwest China and 2 divisions from southwest China—would require approximately 24 to 30 days to close in the Lhasa area. The redeployment of 1 infantry division either from Lhasa to the Towang area or from Changtu in eastern Tibet to the Rima area would require 5 days; from Lhasa westward 1 division would require about 17 days to reach Ladakh.

11. Assuming that cargo requirements would pre-empt civil air transport aircraft, military troop carriers operating at maximum range (550 nautical miles—n.m.) could provide an initial lift capacity (80 percent

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aircraft availability) of about 2,000 troops. If civil aviation were pressed into service, this lift capacity could be increased to 3,000 troops. It should be noted that when transport aircraft occupy western China airfields, their forward utilization will effect a corresponding reduction in airbase facilities available to combat aircraft.

12. Parachute-trained troops from China's three airborne divisions could be employed in battalion-size operations against bridges, airfields, or key terrain features, but only at lower elevations.

13. It is believed that altitude restrictions limit the use of airborne troop carriers to the southern route west of the Chengtu and Kunming airbase complexes into the NEFA and from southern Sinkiang into Ladakh.

Air Operations

14. The Chinese Communists are not likely to introduce air in support of their current ground operations unless Indian forces, augmented by substantial Western military aid, pose a major threat to their positions. If introduced, the Chinese will use tactical air primarily in support of ground forces with strikes probably restricted to Indian positions in the Ladakh, the NEFA, and upper Brahmaputra River valley areas of India.

15. Those Chinese airfields with runways of 6,000 feet or more within range of the disputed areas are in two groups. The first group contains 3 airfields in the region north of Nepal, Bhutan, and the NEFA. They are Tingri Dzong with a 12,000 foot temporary runway at 15,000 feet altitude, Lhasa with a 13,000 foot permanent runway at 14,000 feet altitude, and Nagchhu Dzong with a 12,000 foot temporary runway at 15,000 feet altitude. The other group contains two airfields in the region north of Jammu and Kashmir. These are Puli with a 10,000 foot natural surfaced runway at 10,000 feet altitude and Soche with an 8,000 foot natural surfaced runway at 4,400 feet altitude. On the basis of 45 jet day fighters per airfield, 225 aircraft could be accommodated.

16. A total of 400 combined MIG-15 and MIG-17 jet day fighter interceptors, however, could be deployed to all of the Chinese air bases closest to the threatened areas of India to provide air cover to tactical strikes as well as air defense. Approximately 100 IL-28 jet light bombers and 120 TU-2 piston attack bombers could also be deployed to adjacent air bases for use in close support missions.

17. For tactical strikes, the TU-2 would be the most dependable aircraft. Carrying a normal 3,300 pound bomb load, these aircraft could operate from even those bases at altitudes up to 15,000 feet. The combat radius of the TU-2 in such strikes would be approximately 400 n.m. The slower speeds of this aircraft, including takeoff speed, would

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enhance its viability; first, in terms of minimizing the hazards from dust, rocks, and other debris because of the inferior surfacing of Chinese runways north of India; secondly, due to the reduced danger of tire blowouts in comparison with jet operations from airfields at 10,000-15,000 feet altitudes; and thirdly, because of the increased maneuverability in flying at minimum altitudes between mountain peaks where weather permits.

18. Logistics, and particularly POL, however, would be the most serious limiting factor on such operations. Available POL storage facilities would limit combat operations to not more than 10 days and in view of the remoteness of the area and the lack of transportation facilities, resupply would be very difficult. Therefore, the key to sustained air operations in support of Chinese Communist ground operations in the Indian border area would be the extent of logistic support which could be provided, particularly POL.

19. The Indian Air Force is roughly one-quarter the size of the Chinese Communist Air Forces. It has operating advantages, however, which partially compensate for its inferior numerical strength. There are an adequate number of forward airfields available, and logistic and operating conditions would be more favorable than at the few, more isolated, extremely high elevation Chinese airfields previously cited. The Indians are likely to initiate air operations against the Chinese only if future Red advances prove significant. In this event, Indian strikes probably would be restricted to Chinese positions and supply lines in Indian claimed territory in the hope that Chinese retaliation could be contained. If the Chinese were able to resolve their extremely difficult logistics problems, they could overpower the Indians in a sustained effort involving large segments of both air forces. However, such operations are not expected. So few aircraft probably would be employed during a given period that the Indians, especially if they were to receive substantial outside assistance, could hold their own for a much longer time than a comparison of overall strength would indicate.

TACTICAL AIR ORDER OF BATTLE (in selected categories)

	India	Communist China ^a
Fighter (jet)	315	2,000
Attack Bomber/Fighter Bomber	260 (jet)	120 (piston)
Light Bomber (jet)	60 ^b	330
Medium Bomber (piston)		10

^a Includes naval aircraft.

^b Plus 20 piston.

Logistics

20. Regional supply bases in southern Sinkiang and in central Tibet are supplied from general depots located at Lanchou and Chengtu. A

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small air transport effort supplements overland haulage. Lhasa bases receive their supplies by truck over two main supply routes, which are sufficient to satisfy the combat needs of up to 10 infantry divisions (standard) at Lhasa. However, variable capacities of roads radiating from Lhasa affect tonnages that can be delivered to the border areas.

21. Chinese combat units in Ladakh are logistically supported from both the Sinkiang and Lhasa bases. The two supply routes leading into the Ladakh area are probably capable of handling the combat requirements of from 4½ infantry divisions (standard) to 6½ infantry divisions (light). Heavier fighting would reduce this capability to 1½ or 2 divisions. Supplies diverted from the Lhasa-Ladakh supply route support one infantry division in the Chumbi valley.

22. Supplies of all classes can be truck transported up to the Bum La and Longju areas along the northern NEFA border. Here the Chinese can deliver the combat requirements of 2 infantry divisions (standard) or 3 infantry divisions (light). From the border southward into the Towang area Chinese logistic capabilities, stretched across rugged, mountainous terrain devoid of an adequate road system, are reduced considerably and their forces in the area are estimated to be operating on minimum supply requirements. By expanding the existing trail system into jeep tracks and later to roads of three-ton capacity the area's logistical capability could be increased proportionably.

23. In the Rima area of the NEFA present road capacities are capable of handling the tonnage requirements for 1 standard or 1½ lightly-equipped infantry divisions. Forward of the border, however, road capacities reduce this capability to 20-mile advance by one infantry regiment.

24. Thus, it appears that the current Chinese offensives in the NEFA have approached estimated logistical support limits. Deeper penetrations, heavier fighting, or the introduction of additional ground forces, would not only require the Chinese to initiate an extensive road building program to increase tonnage capacities, but also force them to resort to aerial resupply operations to supplement their overland efforts.

25. Indian approaches into the areas of conflict also traverse especially difficult terrain, utilizing a road and trail system which is rudimentary despite recent Indian improvements. Many of the Indian forces, particularly in the NEFA, can be supplied only by portage or airdrops. In addition, Indian supply routes suffer from the fact that rain and snowfall are much heavier than on the Chinese-held plateaus. This logistical disadvantage, however, has been lessened somewhat by the shortening of supply lines occasioned by Indian withdrawals. While improvements in India's air transport capacity have received high priority, recovery rates for airdrops to units in Ladakh and the NEFA during the recent campaigns have not exceeded 20 percent.

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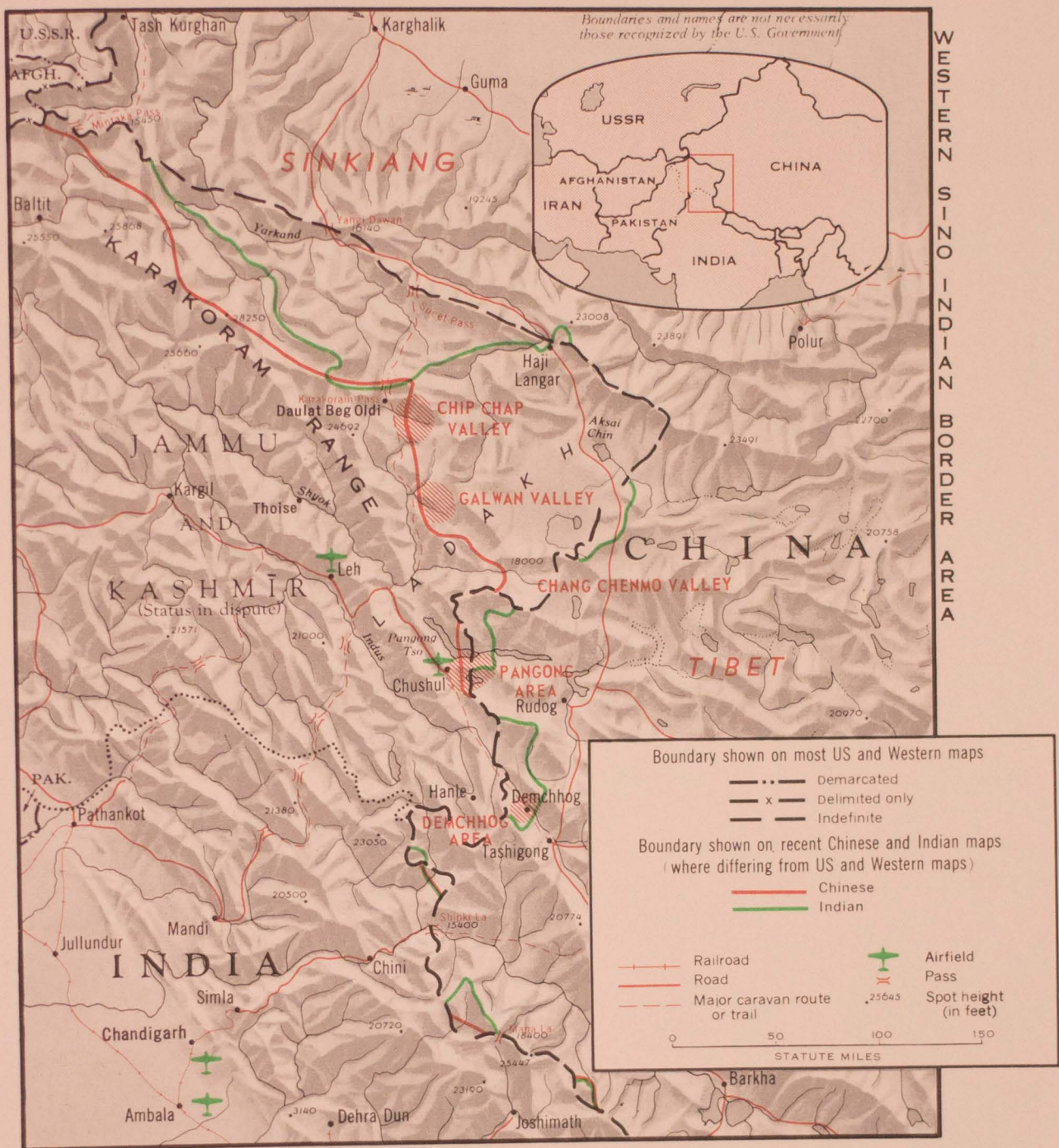
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The Military Outlook

26. The current Indian Army buildup in Ladakh and the NEFA will continue. However, a general Indian offensive against Chinese-held positions will require a much greater concentration of forces equipped with more automatic and heavy support weapons. If units presently facing the Pakistani borders were released for action in the threatened areas, the Indian Army could muster sufficient forces to press forward and possibly force Chinese withdrawals. This buildup, requiring several months to complete, could reach its zenith upon the advent of the next favorable period for military operations—after the spring thaws (March) and before the arrival of the monsoon (July). At the same time, the Chinese will continue to improve their military posture. Roads will be built, supply points restocked, and defensive positions strengthened. Chinese Communist Army reinforcements of up to four infantry divisions with supporting artillery and possibly some tanks could be introduced into the Tibet Military Region without overtaxing logistic support capabilities. Reinforcements could be held in staging areas for rapid deployment to the frontier areas. This would maintain troop flexibility and prevent undue strain on forward supply routes.

27. By early next summer when the Indian Army could be prepared to launch its offensive, the Chinese Communists could have sufficient forces in place to resist and successfully hold or to counterattack at will. If the Chinese decide to remain on the defensive, the border dispute could develop into a prolonged stalemate, with expenditures in both men and materiel economically costly to both sides. If the Chinese should elect to counterattack, it is believed that they could penetrate deeper into Ladakh or NEFA, but it would require massive and lengthy preparations, including major road-building in both Tibet and NEFA, stockpiling of supplies, etc., for the Chinese to initiate a serious invasion of India.

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