

Army Aviation Corps

~~(S)~~ In January 1988 the People's Liberation Army formed the Army Aviation Corps (AAC) to expand China's anti-tank capabilities and to augment the ground force's access to airlift capability.

- o (U) In mid-1988 two AAC operational units were activated in Beijing and Shenyang Military Regions. However, these aviation regiments have yet to adopt standard tables of organization and equipment.
- o (U) The corps' major logistics and maintenance facilities are located in Chengdu. A limited number of fixed-wing aircraft were transferred from the Air Force to facilitate the transfer of logistical supplies between the aviation corps' units.

~~(S)~~ Rotary wing assets consist primarily of HIPs, HOUNDS, DAUPHINS, and S-70Cs, transferred from the Air Force. Domestically produced aircraft are either insufficient in number or fail to meet mission requirements.

- o ~~(S/NF)~~ China first acquired rotary-wing aircraft from the USSR in the mid-1950s. Despite subsequent strains in relations, purchases have continued. The recently noted presence of two HIND-D attack helicopters at Tongxian Airfield in Beijing has led to speculation that the Soviet Union may be attempting to expand its sales of aircraft to China.
- o ~~(S/NF)~~ In 1980, Beijing and Paris signed a coproduction agreement to assemble 50 SA-365N DAUPHIN 2 helicopters in China. Built for export, the Chinese closed out production after completion of the 40th unit when it was evident that the aircraft was incapable of generating hard currency for the Chinese within the export market. The DAUPHIN will probably now be transferred to the Aviation Corps to serve as an anti-tank platform.

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- o ~~(S/NF)~~ Four of eight GAZELLE helicopters ordered from France have been delivered. The 32 million USD package also includes eighty HOT II ATGMs. These platforms will serve as the primary tool by which the corps develops its antitank doctrine.
- o ~~(S/NF)~~ China's largest helicopter purchase from the United States was 24 SIKORSKY S-70Cs, which were delivered by 1985. Considered by the Chinese as the "backbone" of the Army Aviation Corps, the presence of the aircraft within the inventory has begun to address the corps' requirement for medium airlift capability. These aircraft have seen service on the borders of Vietnam, India, and the Soviet Union.
- o ~~(S/NF/NC)~~ CH-47D/CHINOOK heavy-lift helicopter testing currently is being conducted in Tibet. Purchase of the CH-47D would be a major step toward developing a heavy-lift capability. If acquired, the CH-47Ds would supplement activities now performed by SIKORSKY S-70Cs. This would also allow the Army Aviation Corps to experiment with developing doctrine and tactics which could include tactical air movement of medium artillery pieces and engineer equipment.

~~(S/NF)~~ Emphasis is being placed on the use of helicopter assets in combined arms operations. Even at this early stage, however, the AAC is plagued by logistics and maintenance problems, as evidenced by the fact that only 15 of its 24 SIKORSKY S-70Cs are operational.