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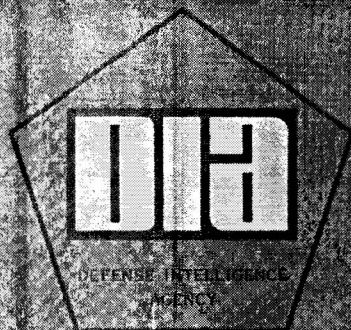
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ANALYSIS REPORT

NORTH KOREAN AIR ASSAULT FORCES (U)

JUNE 1978



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NORTH KOREAN AIR ASSAULT FORCES (U)

IAR-2-78

INFORMATION CUTOFF DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 1976

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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PREFACE

(U) This study is one of a series of [redacted]

[redacted] published by the [redacted]

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Directorate for Intelligence Research, Defense Intelligence Agency. These reports are published on a wide range of topics that have been exploited by [redacted] for the Directorate for Intelligence Research as direct support products, but are considered to be of sufficient interest for further distribution within the Intelligence Community. Information contained in these reports is derived primarily from analysis

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[redacted] Information of a later date than the cutoff date of 28 November is identified as such.

(U) Addressees are requested to forward information that will supplement or correct this report. Questions and comments should be referred in writing to the Defense Intelligence Agency (ATTN: [redacted], Washington, D. C. 20301.

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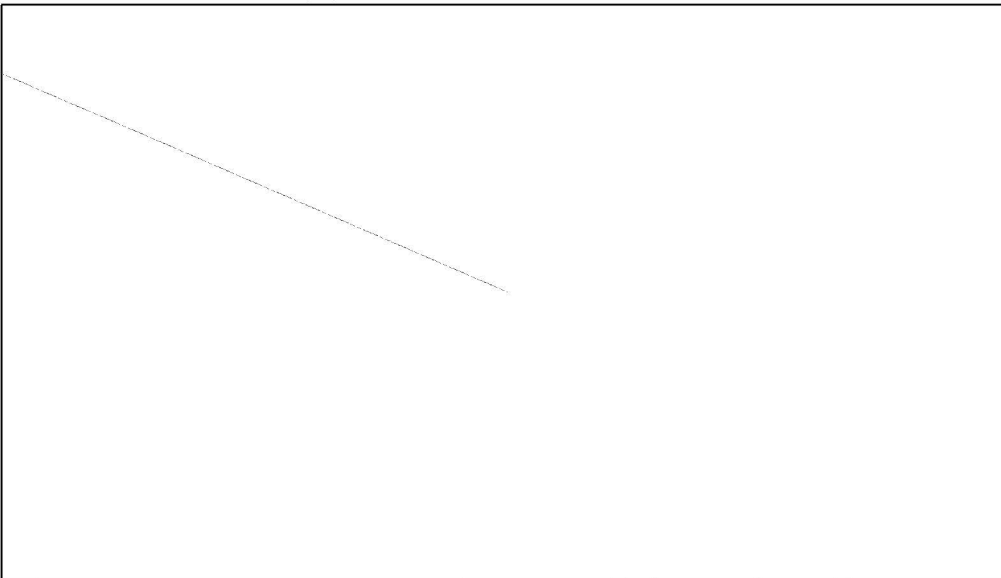
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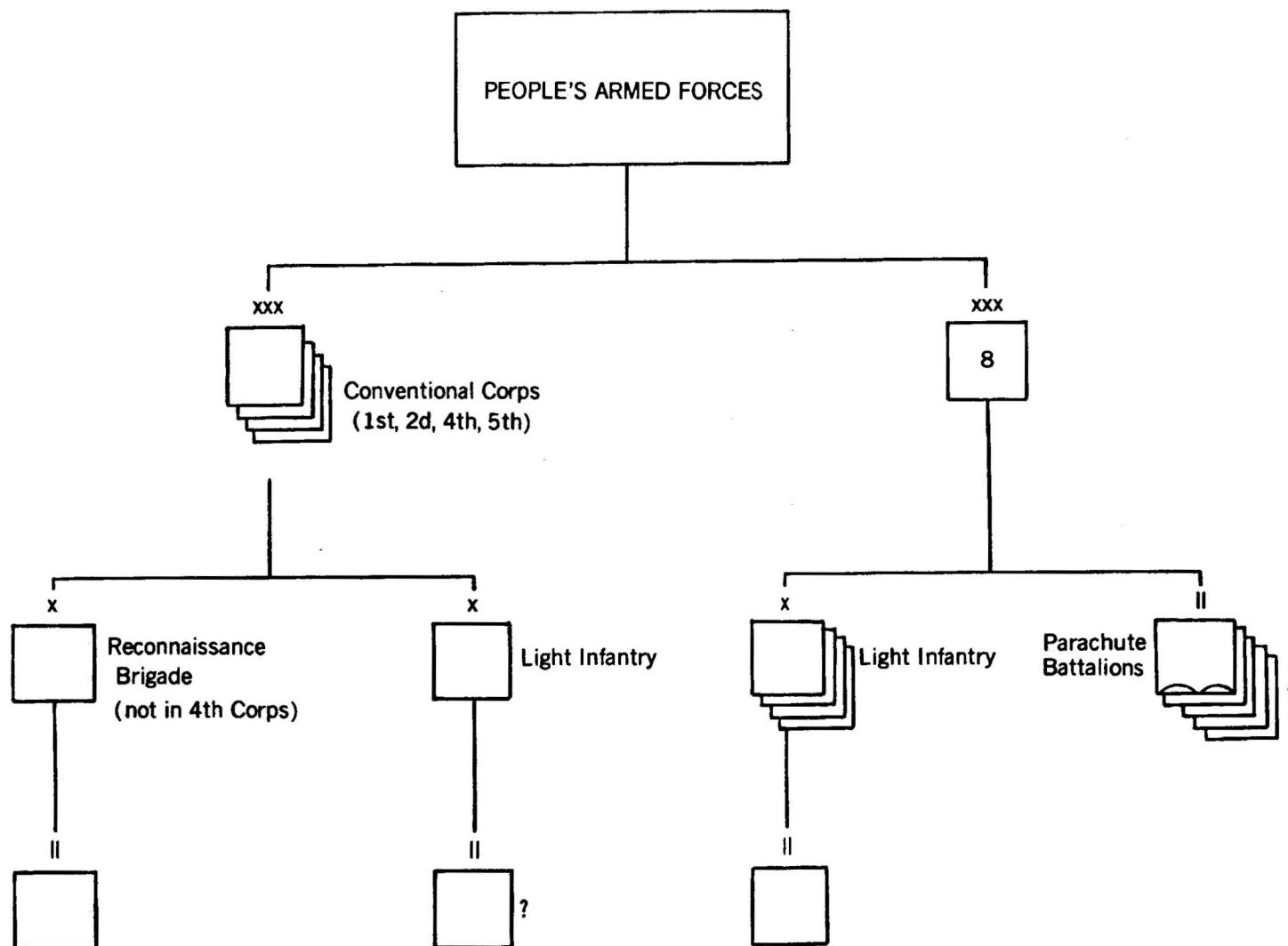
SUMMARY

~~TS~~ This report is an (b)(1),1.4 (c) of North Korean air assault forces, which are considered elite and formidable forces with the mission of interdiction of rear area lines of communication and the seizure and destruction of key facilities. The study explores these units and includes information on unit locations, strengths, equipment, and training facilities.

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FIGURE 1. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF RANGER/COMMANDO FORCE UNITS (U)

Ground Order of Battle, North Korea (U), Mar 77 (S/NOCORN)

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NORTH KOREAN AIR ASSAULT FORCES (U)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

~~(S)~~ The North Korean Army is currently estimated to have an airborne organization of five battalions. Each of these units is believed to comprise approximately 350 jumpers for a total of 1,750 members. These parachute battalions are subordinate to the 8th Special Corps headquartered at Tokchon in the central part of the country; however, they are all considered unlocated (figure 1). The mission of North Korean airborne units most likely includes the interdiction of rear area lines of communication and the seizure or destruction of key facilities by small assault teams (as opposed to large-unit mass drops).

~~(S)~~ Historically, the airborne force seems related to the 17th Reconnaissance Brigade, which was active in the 1960s.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

The airborne forces, aside from parachute activities, seem to train and operate in small elements

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

when deployed on the ground. Parachute training and mockup devices were together on 2 May 1974 at Sinchon Barracks and Training Area West, which is also the first field deployment of an airborne unit.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

2. DISCUSSION

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

~~(S)~~ The primary purpose of this report is to determine the disposition, strength, tactics, training, and combat effectiveness of North Korean airborne units. To accomplish this objective, four methods were used. They are: Method 1; establish (b)(1),1.4 (c), Method 2, conduct (b)(1),1.4 (c) of all airfields to locate any deployed parachute units; Method 3, check all known ranger/commando forces (R/CF) installations to determine whether any parachute units are collocated; and Method 4, (b)(1),1.4 (c) other modes of air transport/assault.

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(b)(1),1.4
(c)

a. Method 1:

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

~~(S)~~ Since complete knowledge of North Korean airborne forces [] was nonexistent, various methods were established to resolve the problem. Essential []

(b)(3):10 USC
424,(b)(1),1.4
(c)

[] were established by conducting a detailed study of the two known existing airborne installations: Taechon Airborne Training Facility [] and Pyongyang Airborne Training Facility []

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

~~(S)~~ Based on a thorough study of the above installations, numerous [] items were noted that would likely indicate the presence of airborne training activities and, hence, organizations. An annotated sketch of a typical North Korean parachute training apparatus is shown on figure 3. Terminology used in the sketch is based on reference 34. The annotations are as follows:

1 - Free Tower - This is usually about 50 meters in height and may have a circular grassy area around the base. Circular worn spots under the arms are probably caused by numerous personnel attaching the student jumper's canopy to the large spreader ring prior to being hauled aloft with the canopy in the open position.

2 - Winch House - This is necessary to operate the cables and mechanisms that lift the student jumper to the top of the tower, where he is released for free descent.

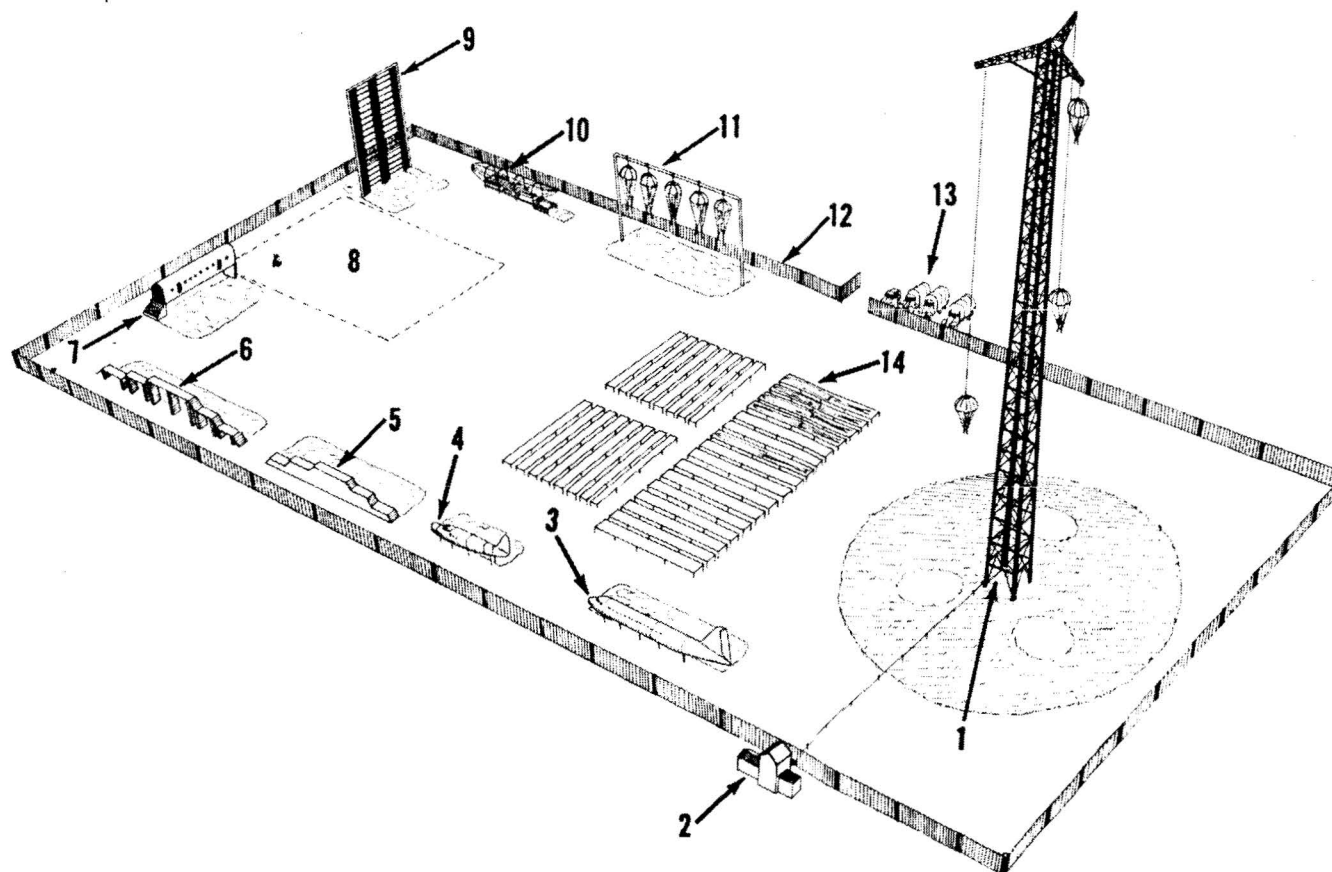
3 - Mock Door Apparatus - This is a replica of the cargo/passenger compartment of a transport aircraft and is used to train personnel for interior seating arrangement, movement within the aircraft, use of anchor line cables for static lines, executing jump commands, and door-exiting procedures. Derelict aircraft fuselages are used when available. A likeness of an Li-2/CAB is illustrated.

4 - Mock Door Apparatus - This is probably a likeness of an An-2/COLT.

5 - Parachute Landing Fall (PLF) Platform - This is used to provide height for the student jumper, thereby giving him a shock effect upon making contact with the ground. The PLF is considered the method of proper military parachute landing to reduce injury and is practiced not only by new students but also by trained parachutists as a refresher. A solid construction-type platform is illustrated.

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FIGURE 3. ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF TYPICAL NORTH KOREAN AIRBORNE TRAINING APPARATUS (U)

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- 6 - PLF Platform - Framed construction type.
- 7 - Mock Door Apparatus - General purpose.
- 8 - Cleared Area - An undetermined type of training area which may be noted by tonal differences in the soil.
- 9 - Scaling Wall.
- 10 - Mock Door Apparatus - See-through type.
- 11 - Suspended Harness Apparatus - This is used to teach methods for the parachutist to control his descent to the ground (sometimes referred to as a "harness rack").
- 12 - Fence - The parachute training area may be enclosed by a fence.

13 - Vehicles - These may be [] in the area, especially when parachute canopies are evident. Presumably the jumpers and their nonpacked parachutes are trucked from the drop zone.

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

14 - Parachute Rack - According to reference 3, tables for preparing parachutist equipment have been [] in the Soviet Union. Roughly similar rectangular dark objects have been [] in North Korea but it cannot be determined whether they are racks as illustrated or a type of mat. (For the sake of simplicity, they will be referred to as "racks" in this report.) Parachute canopies [] on the racks as depicted in the sketch. Based on the [] nearby trucks, the chutes are presumably being aired, inspected, and repacked after actual jumps.

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(b)(3):10 USC
424,(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(8) (1) The Pyongyang Airborne Training Facility is located on the southern outskirts of Pyongyang and is approximately 2 kilometers southwest of Pyongyang East Airfield (also named MIRIM, []) (figure 5). Recently COLTs, CREEKS, MAXs, and sailplanes occupied the airfield. HOUNDS and HIP-Cs have been previously [] there and CREEKS and MAXs are still home-based there. The school itself consists of two areas: an administration/barracks area and a parachutist training area. Noteworthy training apparatus in the latter area []

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

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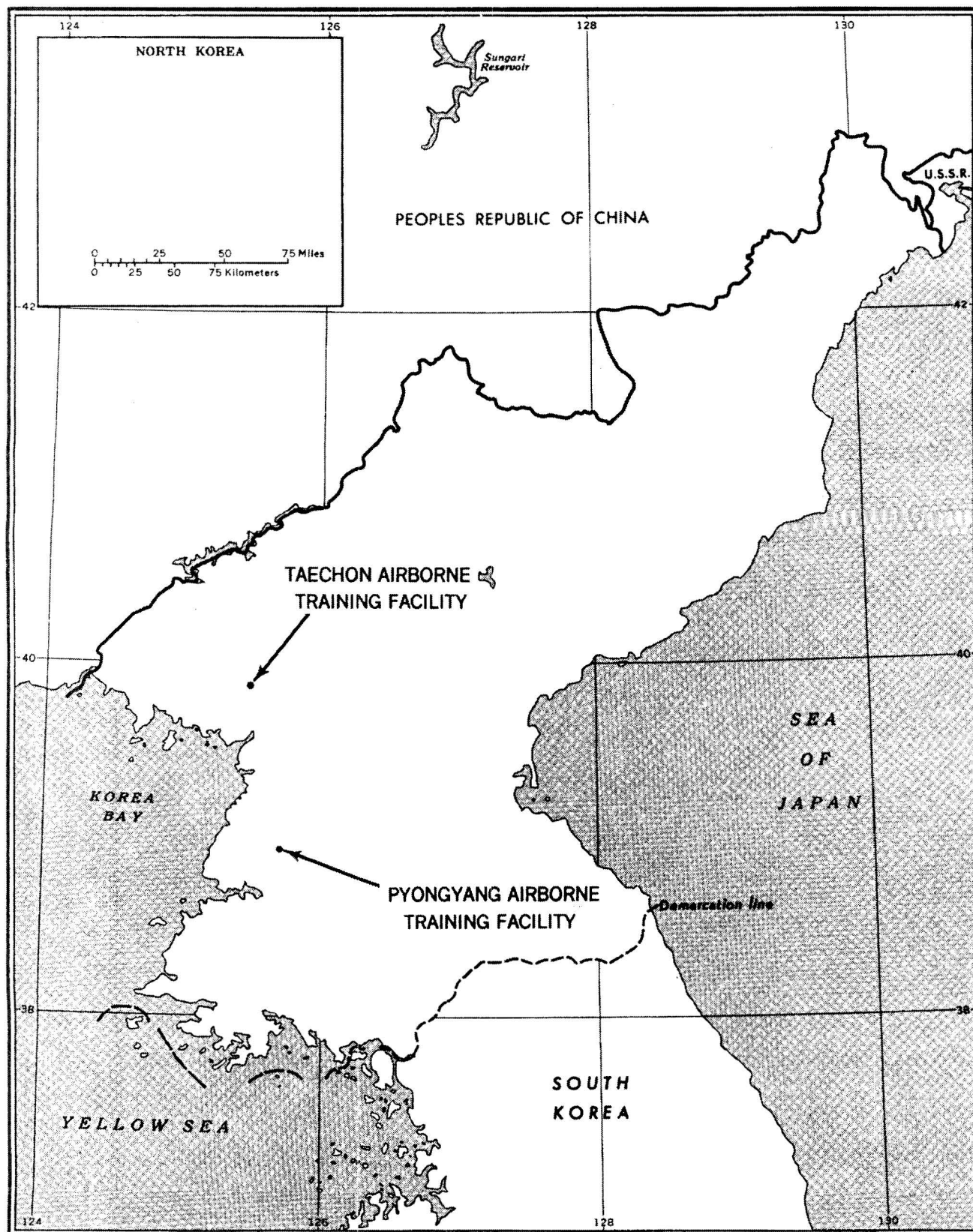


FIGURE 4. TWO KNOWN NORTH KOREAN AIRBORNE TRAINING FACILITIES (U)

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(S) This training post was essentially complete and operational by at least December 1967 (and possibly since 1959 according to reference 37). However, construction of motor pools, barracks, and auditoriums, along with general improvement of buildings and grounds, continued until early 1973. Estimated troop capacity is 694. It could not be clearly determined (b)(1),1.4 (c) when actual parachute training was first (b)(1),1.4 (c) but parachutes and attendant training were (b)(1),1.4 (c) on 17 October 1969. Between that date and 22 June 1975, parachute training was (b)(1),1.4 (c) four times. Each time an average of 19 racks and 6 canopies (b)(1),1.4 (c) but none (b)(1),1.4 (c) since then. Generally speaking, airborne training activity has been diminishing since late 1973. Between May and November 1974 the mockup aircraft was removed. Since that time only eight probable canopies have been noted (on 22 June 1975).

(b)(3):10 USC
424,(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(S) (2) The Taechon Airborne Training Facility is located about 105 km north of the jump school at Pyongyang and about 4.2 km southeast of Taechon Airfield (b)(1),1.4 (c), which is occupied by (b)(1),1.4 (c). The installation consists of five areas as (b)(1),1.4 (c). The auditorium indicated at (b)(1),1.4 (c) has been completed. The two-lane obstacle course (b)(1),1.4 (c) is identical to the one (b)(1),1.4 (c) at 8th Special Corps Headquarters (b)(1),1.4 (c). (b)(1),1.4 (c) mockup artillery pieces; the particular significance of these at this facility is obscure. Presumably, they are used for training the paratroopers in their ground combat (ranger/commando) role; however, whether this indicates the presence of an operational unit or the presence of military school training aids cannot be determined.

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(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(3):10 USC
424

(S) This installation was first (b)(1),1.4 (c) under construction on 9 January 1971. At that time, both of the 50-meter free towers, one mock door apparatus (Li-2/CAB type), and a PLF platform were present but all appeared unused; only the foundation for one barracks and the messhall had begun. About 10 months later (16 Nov 71) both the barracks and the messhall appeared to be complete. Jump training had already begun, as evidenced by the worn areas beneath the free tower arms. Since that time, parachute training, ground combat training, and further construction has progressed regularly at this post. Generally speaking, since May 1974 parachutes (presumably indicating recent parachute jumping and attendant

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

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(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

repacking)

[redacted] An average of 106 racks and 32 parachutes were counted each time. The highest count was [redacted] on 10 September 1976, when 223 racks and 112 canopies were present. Additional canopies are [redacted]

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

[redacted] Mockups [redacted] include field artillery, missiles, and a dummy runway.

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

~~(S)~~ (3) It should be noted that possibly significant and subtle differences [redacted] between these two facilities. First, the Pyongyang school, although the oldest, is located near an airfield that has exhibited a low level of activity for the last few years. No ground training activities (such as small arms ranges, infantry combat ranges, etc.) have ever been conclusively associated with it. The presence of mockups has been limited. In the last few years, overall [redacted] activity (except for vehicles in motor pools) seems to have diminished. Clear evidence of actual parachute training has not been [redacted] since June 1975.

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

~~(S)~~ (4) On the other hand, the Taechon facility, which is located near an active COLT airfield, has clearly been engaged in housing and training airborne personnel almost since its construction. Numerous ground training facilities (mockups, ranges, etc.) are also in the immediate area. The post houses about 1,440 troops, primarily in 2 large barracks, but it is not clear whether they are all students, whether they constitute an operational unit, or whether there is a mixture of both. Furthermore, there is a large administrative/staff population on the post in the large administration-type buildings [redacted]. The exact functions of these buildings and personnel cannot be clearly determined. The buildings seem too large to be simply offices for the administrators of a jump school. No communications antennas have ever been [redacted] in the area; however, none may be needed. Overall, the level of parachute activity seems to have increased in the last few years. It is therefore tenuously concluded that the main North Korean parachute assault force training and organization is centered at Taechon and that it very likely was moved there in the early 1970s. The Pyongyang facility is still in operation; however, it may be used for training aircrews, civilian skydrivers, or low-level military training.

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424,(b)(1),1.4
(c)

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(b)(1),1.4
(c)

b. Method 2: Airfield

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

~~(S)~~ With the information developed in Method 1,

The results are shown in appendix 1.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

A direct relationship between parachute units and airfields could not be established. Many of the parachute units were located near jet fighter bases while some others were farther away, one being 44 km from the nearest airfield. Most of the identified units/installations were in the west-central portion of the country. Some parachute units were located near transport airfields while a few were near highway strips. Also, during this phase of the study, likely drop zone training areas with negative results. Parachutes were in several locations, all of which were considered transient in nature and not an indicator of an actual parachute unit.

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

c. Method 3: R/CF

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

d. Method 4: for Other Modes of Air Assault

~~(S)~~ of various airfields was conducted to ascertain what alternative modes of air assault were available other than the standard transport aircraft that have been confirmed.

(b)(1),1.4
(c)

~~(S)~~ (1) Gliders

(b)(1),(b)(3):10 USC 424,1.4 (c)

1.4 (c) (b)(1),1.4
(c)

They have been there intermittently since 23 March 1973. The low number of sailplanes in North Korea would seemingly reflect a minimal military threat--it any at all. Although the sailplane is highly weather dependent, it might be useful as a type of

(Continued p. 24)

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

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reconnaissance vehicle due to its minimal radar signature. The capability for the North Koreans to mount a gliderborne combat troop assault was not confirmed (b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

(b)(1),1.4 (c) ~~(S)~~ (3) Helicopters - The North Korean fleet has grown in the last few years to a total of 67 ships, including 54 Mi-4/HOUNDS and 13 Mi-8/HIPs (b)(1),1.4 (c) No relationship between the helicopter force and any support to ground forces movement was evident. However, on 10 September 1976, 3 HIP-C helicopters were (b)(1),1.4 (c) at a ground forces artillery-related installation, Su Ri Barracks Area, which is west of Kangdong Airfield (b)(1),1.4 (c), a known HIP-C operating base. Figure 19 shows three HIP-Cs and an additional empty landing pad located 350 meters east of the barracks area and artillery pieces. (Field artillery pieces have been (b)(1),1.4 (c) in this facility since 1969.) This is the only time this activity (b)(1),1.4 (c) (b)(1),1.4 (c) but it is important for several reasons. The presence of helicopters may not be directly related to the adjacent ground forces;

(b)(3):10 USC
424

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

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3. Conclusions

(S) It is apparent that North Korea's parachute units do have distinctive (b)(1),1.4 (c) The parachute force has shown a marked growth and vigor since 1970 and seems to be disposed mostly in "battalion" - size units of about 350 jumpers each, not 800 as previously estimated. They are generally located in the west-central section of the country (figure 20). A comprehensive analysis will be difficult because of their apparent high mobility and lack of a readily discernible training cycle.

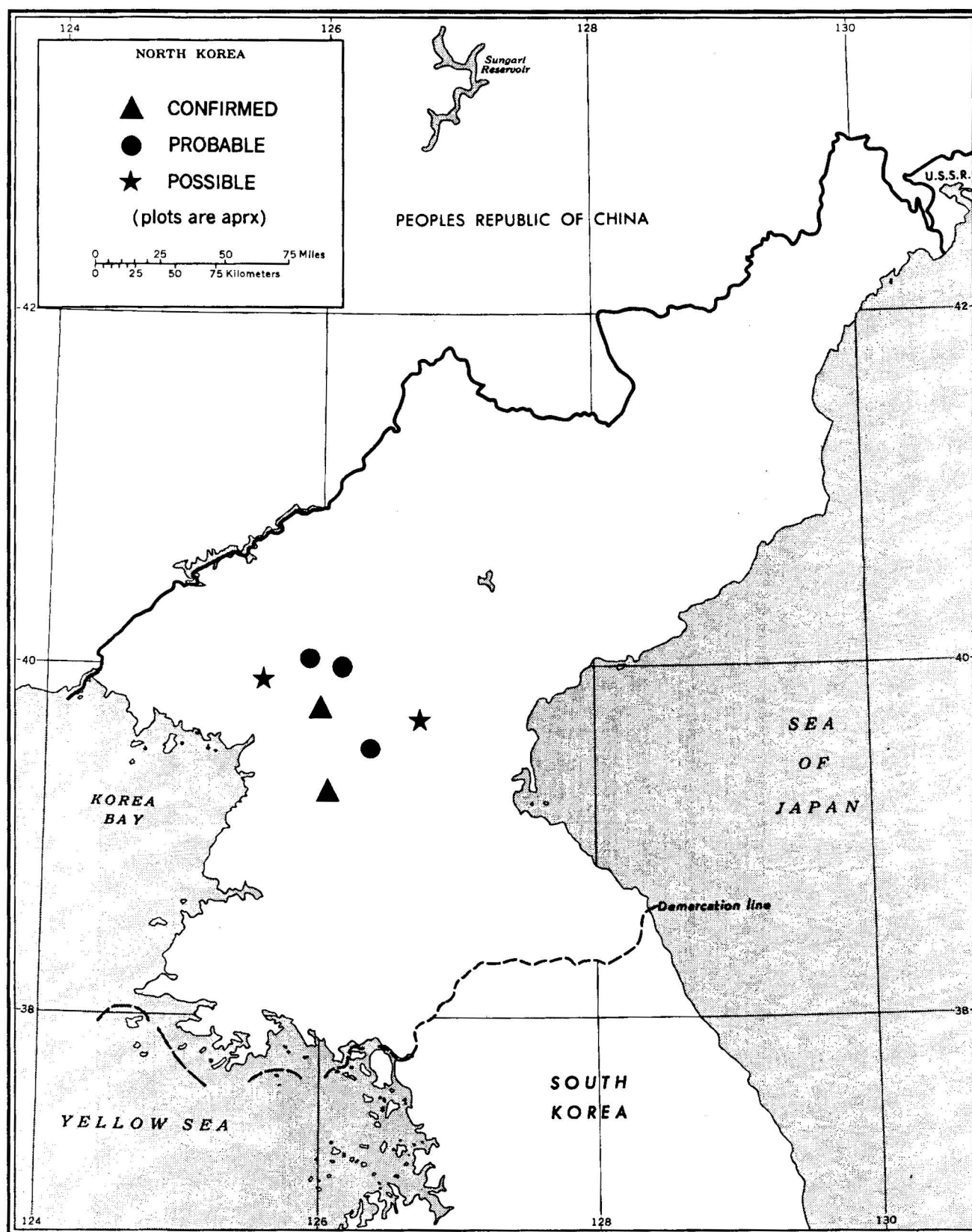
(S) With the growth of the parachute battalions, it is possible that the center for airborne operations (including basic and intermediate parachute training, air transport coordination and planning, and related ground combat training) has been shifted from Pyongyang to Taechon. It is also possible, but by no means conclusive, that an intermediate headquarters of some type is located at Taechon.

(S) (b)(1),1.4 (c) it is apparent that North Korea's current helicopter force could become involved in battlefield fire support, tube artillery transport, and assault operations. Considering the number and type of gliders and balloons (b)(1),1.4 (c) their military significance--if any--seems minimal.

(S) A relationship between the parachute units and airfields (those near transport fields, etc.) could not be established. Further complicating the problem is the fact that parachute units may be garrisoned in facilities that house other units--most likely ranger/commando units. The extent to which the individual ranger/commando troops are parachute-trained could not be determined.

(S) The primary parachutist carrier would be the An-2/COLT. Since the North Koreans have a fleet of approximately 243 COLTs and 24 other transports which could carry 3,000-4,000 jumpers, these aircraft would be able to carry all airborne forces into combat in one lift (b)(1),1.4 (c)

(S) It is evident that the overall North Korea air assault organization remains largely unknown. Nonetheless, it is well dispersed and has high training standards. These factors, coupled with relatively austere living conditions, presumably reflect a well-motivated elite organization. It can pose a potent threat on a future battlefield.

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Appendix A

NORTH KOREAN AIRBORNE ASSAULT FORCES

(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)	*Troop Capacity	Corps Area	(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)	Type of Airfield	Remarks	Assessment
	1,440	3		Transport	May be operation unit and school	Poss bn-size unit
	395	3		Fighter	Active unit	Confirmed bn-size unit
	435	7		Transport	---	Poss bn-size unit
	350	7		Fighter	---	Prob bn-size unit
	326	3		Fighter	---	Confirmed bn-size unit
	570	3		Highway	---	Prob bn-size unit
	242	3		Highway	Installation may incl another unit	Prob bn-size unit

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(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)	300	3	(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)	Highway	Detected after ICOD. Not incl in totals	Poss bn-size unit
	3,758					
	694	3		Transport trainer	School: complete function not known	Not a unit
	240	4		Fighter?	Activity only	Not a unit
	300	4		Fighter	Activity only	Not a unit
	N/A	7		Fighter	Activity only	Not a unit
	N/A	4		Fighter	Activity only	Not a unit

*Note: The troop capacities for these installations were calculated by using an arbitrary figure of 3.71 square meters per man (40 square feet of floorspace). Barracks measurements were not machine derived. This same method was used in reference 40.

**This installation evaluated as an airborne installation after ICOD of this report. If included, total would be 4,058. Recipients should note changes on page 58 of reference 40.

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