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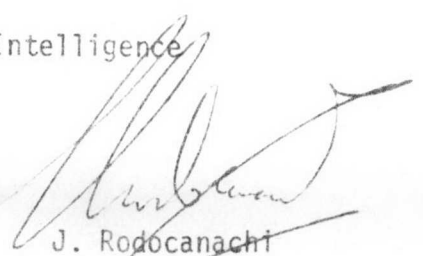
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IAC Special Assessment 7/82  
Approved: 03 March 1982

CHINA: Reduction in Nuclear Weapons Production and Nuclear Testing

Summary and Conclusions

1. Following the withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1960, China completed its nuclear weapons facilities unaided by the mid 1960s. The facilities included: a uranium enrichment plant, a plutonium production complex, a research and development centre and a weapons fabrication plant. Construction of a plant at Wujiachuan for fabrication of fissile components for nuclear weapons greatly increased its capacity for producing such weapons beginning in 1971. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This temporary closure reduces China's capacity to produce nuclear weapons and may also be related to the recent low rate of nuclear testing. Test preparations are now concentrated at two underground test areas, which may be an indication that China is considering stopping atmospheric nuclear tests. If they do stop testing in the atmosphere, it will be significant for Canada which in the past has received radioactive fallout from such tests.

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Date d'approbation: le 3 mars 1982CHINE: réduction de la fabrication d'armes nucléaires et  
des essais nucléairesRésumé et conclusions

1. Après l'interruption de l'aide soviétique en 1960, la Chine a terminé seule, vers le milieu des années 60, l'aménagement de ses installations nucléaires, dont une usine d'enrichissement d'uranium, un complexe de production de plutonium, un centre de recherche et de développement et une usine de fabrication d'armes. La construction à Wujiachuan d'une usine de fabrication d'éléments fissiles d'armes nucléaires a considérablement accru dès 1971 sa capacité de production de telles armes.

Cette fermeture temporaire diminue très certainement la capacité qu'a la Chine de produire des armes nucléaires; elle explique peut-être aussi le faible taux d'essais nucléaires dernièrement. Les préparatifs d'essais sont actuellement concentrés dans deux zones d'essais souterrains, ce qui peut que la Chine envisage de mettre fin aux essais nucléaires dans l'atmosphère. Une telle décision serait importante pour le Canada qui dans le passé s'est trouvé dans le champ des retombées de ces essais.

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DISCUSSION

2. During the initial stages of its nuclear weapons program in the late 1950s, China benefitted from Soviet assistance. After withdrawal of all Soviet technicians by 1960, China proceeded on its own and succeeded in putting its nuclear facilities into operation. The uranium enrichment plant at Lanchou began operating in 1963 and produced the highly enriched uranium for China's first nuclear test on 16 October 1964. In the mid-1960s, additional facilities probably were completed, including a plutonium production complex at Yumen (consisting of a special purpose reactor and a reprocessing plant), a research and development facility for nuclear weapons at Pao-Tou, and a nuclear weapons fabrication plant near Koko Nor.

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3. In order to increase its capacity for manufacturing nuclear weapons, a facility for fabricating fissile components was constructed at Wujiachuan (see map) and began operating about 1971. China has since expanded its capacity to produce fissile material with a second uranium enrichment plant at Jinkouhe and a second plutonium production complex at Kuang-Yuan - both in central China, more distant from the Soviet Union than the earlier plants.

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5. Although the older facilities built in the 1960s may still be operating, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Chinese appear to have used the pause in production of fissile components to make significant improvements [REDACTED]

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6. The problems [REDACTED] may be related to the low rate of nuclear testing in China. For example, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

An alternative explanation for the reduction in nuclear testing is that the Chinese may feel no urgent need to test new types of weapons as they have already successfully tested weapon designs which are adequate to meet their present requirements. The test on 16 October 1980 is the only successful one since 1978. (A test attempt in 1979 was unsuccessful). [REDACTED]

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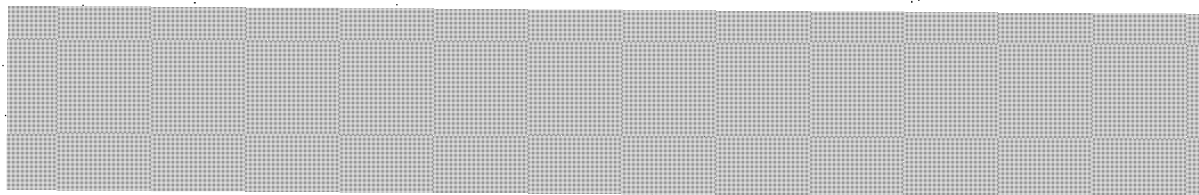
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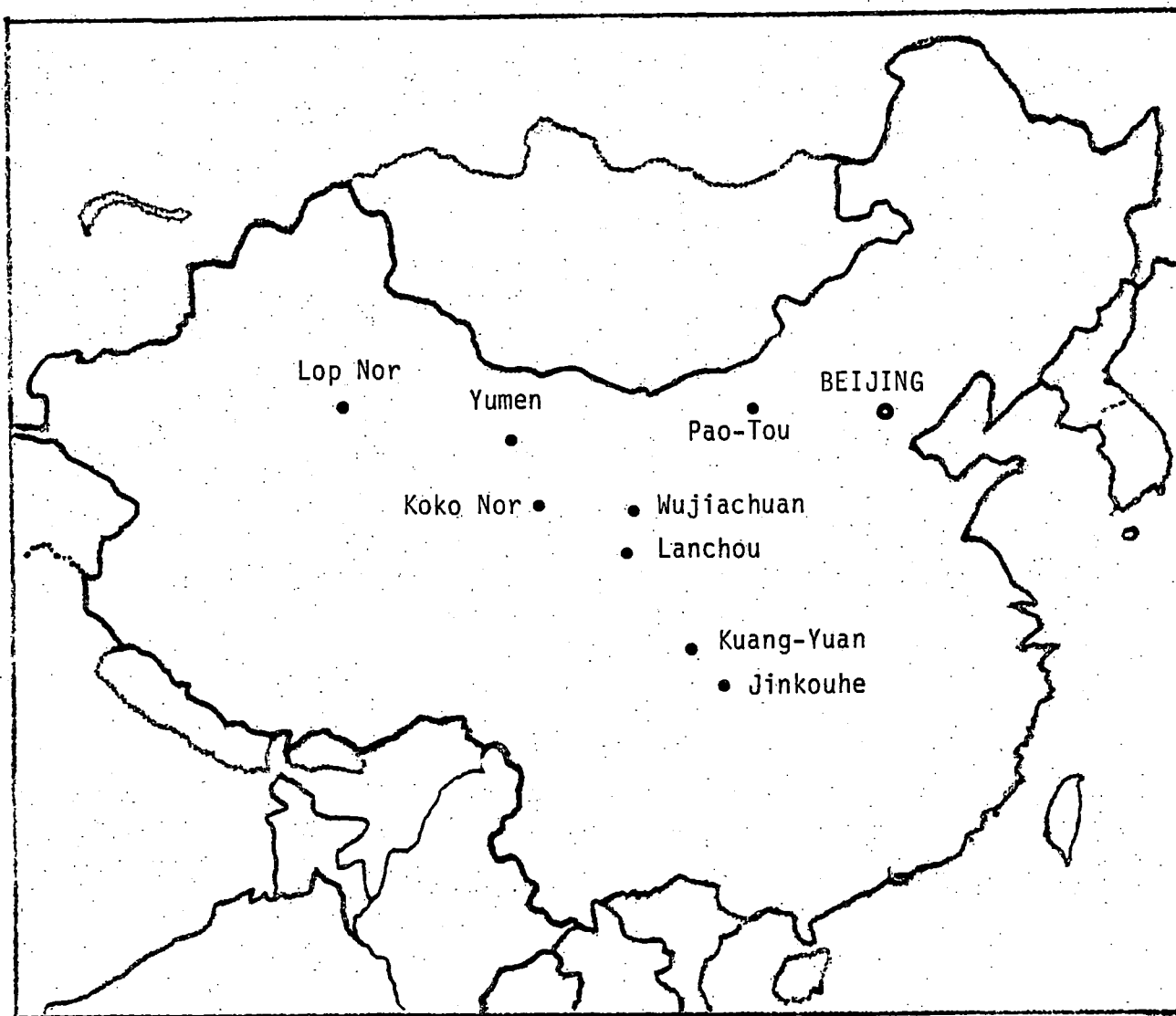
the Chinese are contemplating stopping atmospheric nuclear tests. Such a possibility is of interest to Canada, which in the past has received radioactive fallout from Chinese atmospheric nuclear tests. (The Radiation Protection Bureau/Health and Welfare Canada maintains a number of stations which can be activated at short notice to collect samples and measure fallout in Canada.) China has been the last of the original five nuclear powers still testing in the atmosphere. Most potential new nuclear powers have signed and ratified the Partial Test Ban Treaty, which ban atmospheric tests.

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CHINA: MAJOR NUCLEAR FACILITIES

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