

● PSF

War Dept.: Chennault

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Confidential* *75F Checkmate  
War*

HEADQUARTERS, 14TH U. S. AIR FORCE  
Office of the Commanding General

June 18, 1943

The President,  
The White House,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

Immediately after returning to China, I called upon the Generalissimo at Chungking and acquainted him with the plans for conducting an air offensive in China and for supporting ground troops both in China and in Burma.

He was in very good spirits as a result of the decisive defeat of the Japanese Forces south-west of Ichang. From the most reliable sources available, it appears that the Japanese employed about 100,000 troops of all services in the drive west of Ichang and that their objective was very probably the mountain stronghold of Shih-Pai. Identification was made of the following Japanese units - the whole of the 13th, 39th and 40th Divisions, the whole of the 17th Brigade, a part of the 3rd, 6th and 34th Divisions and the whole of the 14th Brigade. The Japanese suffered more than 30,000 casualties, killed, wounded and captured. Their defeat was due to the unexpectedly strong resistance of the Chinese ground forces and their losses were augmented by the action of both American and Chinese air units during the retreat. They now hold very few points south of the Yangtze River and the Chinese are continuing the campaign to drive them north of the river.

I believe that this campaign bears out my statement that the Japanese are unable to supply an offensive effort capable of penetrating more than 100 miles into the interior of China in any area where they are unable to bring up reinforcements and supplies by water. We were unable to operate against their supply lines during the early part of the campaign due to lack of aviation supplies, shortage of aircraft and unsuitable weather.

I have made a careful survey of the situation here since my return and I find that we still lack sufficient aircraft and operational units to conduct an offensive in China, while guarding our transport terminals in Yunna. I have only four fighter squadrons which must operate from Lashio, Burma to Hongkong and Hankow on the eastern front and Hanoi and Haiphong on the southern front. I have but one Squadron of Medium Bombers for operation over the same area.

The tonnage of supplies delivered by transport planes do not enable the four squadrons of heavy bombers to operate freely. These squadrons are required to bring in their own supplies from Assam.

The tonnage delivered by air transport from Assam is holding up surprisingly well when the difficulties under which they operate are considered. It is this fact which enables me to continue to support the Chinese ground armies in spite of other deficiencies.

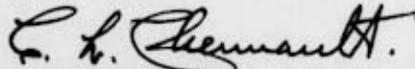
My construction program, which includes airdromes and buildings for quarters and operations, in the Forward Area has been delayed considerably. The program was prepared about April 1st, before my departure for the United States, and was in good train before I left. Unfortunately, in my absence the issuance of contrary orders interrupted the work and as a result accommodations for the forces which I proposed to send to the Forward Area will not be ready by the date originally planned. However, I believe the delay will not be longer than two to three weeks.

The effect of all these unexpected delays will be to postpone the opening of my all out offensive against Jap aircraft and shipping in China. I am most anxious to begin this campaign and endure the delays with the greatest impatience.

It is my hope that I can keep you advised of conditions here without asking for any supporting action on your part.

With very best wishes for your good health, I am,

Most sincerely yours,



C. L. CHENNAULT  
Major General, A.U.S.

T-159

*PSF Chennault folder  
War 2-43*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 15, 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR

HON. HARRY L. HOPKINS

Do you think I should reply  
to this?

F.D.R.

Letter to the President, 9-5-43, from  
Maj. Gen. C.L. Chennault, Headquarters,  
14th U.S. Air Force, giving report on  
the situation of the 14th Air Force.

*Returned 10/15/43 with penciled notation -*

*"Mr. President:*

*I think not. I will get a letter  
to him that you have heard from  
him, etc. H.L.H."*

7

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 16, 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR

HON. HARRY L. HOPKINS

To answer and let me  
have copies back for my files.

F.D.R.

*file* ~~SECRET~~ *PSF, Chennault's plan in our files War 2-44*

**HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE**  
A. P. C. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

In reply  
refer to:

April 19, 1944.

The President,  
The White House,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your kind letter of March 15, which greatly encouraged me by its assurance of interest in our problems. In accordance with your request, I believe I should make another report on the general situation here.

The picture's dominant feature is the strong probability that the Japanese will launch two offensives in China during the spring and early summer. Preparations for these offensives have recently been going forward apace. Movements of troops and equipment up the Yangtze River, for example, have never been so heavy. Since the Japanese can hardly have resources to spare for any but major strategic objectives, I personally consider the offensives virtually certain, and expect them to be both serious and determined in character.

The first will be a double drive, upwards from the enemy position at Hankow and downwards from the positions on the Yellow River, to take the Chinese-held section of the Peiping-Hankow Railroad. Its immediate objective will be to provide an alternative line of communications for the enemy holdings on the upper Yangtze, and thus guard against the 14th Air Force interdicting traffic on the River itself, which now carries all supplies for the Yangtze spearhead. Once the enemy holds the Honan plain, through which the railroad runs, he will have an easier avenue of attack on the Szechwan plain, Chengtu and Chungking.

The second offensive will be an enveloping movement based on Yochow and Nanchang, to take Changsha. Its immediate objective will be to obtain command of the wealth of Hunan Province, one of the richest in China, to which Changsha is the key. Once the enemy holds Changsha, he will be in a position to move southward, either along the old Canton-Hankow railroad, or along the spur line on which are situated our main forward air bases at Hengyang, Lingling and Kweilin and Liuchow.

~~SECRET~~

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D. D. DIR. 5200.9 (9/27/88)

Date- 12-15-64

Signature- Carl I. Spaic

~~SECRET~~

I suspect the Japanese High Command is preparing these offensives in anticipation of having to abandon their holdings in South East Asia and South West Pacific in order to be better able to maintain their last line of defense of Japan proper in China. For this purpose, neutralization of our China base on their flank is obviously essential. If the two offensives merely gain their immediate objectives, such neutralization will have been brought perilously close.

I wish I could tell you I had no fear of the outcome. I expect the Chinese forces to make the strongest resistance they can, both along the Peiping-Hankow Railroad and before Changsha. We shall do our best to give them, by use of air power, a margin over the Japanese. But owing to the present concentration of our resources on the fighting in Burma, little has been done to strengthen the Chinese Armies in the interior, and for the same reason the 14th and Chinese Air Forces are still operating on a shoe string. If we were even a little stronger, I should not be worried. Since men, equipment, supplies and transportation are all still very short, I can only say to you that we shall fight hard.

I am the more concerned, since the shrewdest Chinese leaders I have consulted are convinced that any Japanese success within China will touch off violent new price rises, and probably cause political unrest, with inevitable effects on the energy of the Chinese resistance. I note a mood of discouragement among the more influential Chinese. This, I may add, has lately been considerably increased by the Russian bombing of Chinese troops on the Sinkiang-Outer Mongolian border. Such foresighted men as Dr. Soong privately regard the episode as the probable first move in a campaign to assert Russian influence in Asia - a campaign which would eventually take the form of a Russian attack on the Japanese in Manchuria, junction between the Russians and Chinese communists in North China, and ultimate establishment of a Chinese Communist state or states in North China, Manchuria and perhaps Sinkiang. If this is indeed the Russian plan, the Chungking regime can hardly defeat it, and will have difficulty in surviving it, as the Chungking leaders well know.

Forgive me for rendering a pessimistic report. I can assure you at least that I and the other men of the 14th Air Force will not relax our determination to make our shoe string stretch to cover any eventuality which may arise. If I may say so, your leadership, and the sense of what you are accomplishing elsewhere, are powerful inspirations to us.

With kindest personal regards, I am,

Most sincerely and respectfully yours,

*C. L. Chennault*

C. L. CHENNAULT  
Major General, U.S.A.  
Commanding.

**WAR DEPARTMENT  
AIR CORPS**

Major General C. L. Chennault

Commanding, 14th Air Force

**OFFICIAL BUSINESS**

The President,  
The White House,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



**OFFICER COURIER**

8-4-44

File personal  
and confidential

~~MOST SECRET AND PERSONAL~~

PSF Chennault folder  
War 2-44

HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE  
A. P. O. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

In reply  
refer to:

26 May 1944

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

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EEO Dir. 5200.9 (9/27/88)

Date- 12-15-64

Signature- Carl I. Spaier

Dear Mr. President,

The situation here in China is such that I must write you again. To put it bluntly, we are now faced with the possible loss of China as an allied base, unless drastic counter measures are promptly taken.

1. The Japanese offensive, which I anticipated in my last letter to you, opened 17 April. Crossing the Yellow River in force, the enemy rapidly over-ran Honan and north Anhwei Provinces. He then turned his strength to the West, and drove towards the famous Tungkwang pass, the gateway to Sian and Paochi, China's chief strongholds in the North. At present it appears this drive has somewhat over-extended him. He may regroup and try again. Chengtu and the Szechuan plain, the heart of Free China, will be directly threatened if the enemy gains access to Sian and Paochi. Or, more probably, he may content himself with consolidating his hold on the Honan plain and the Peiping-Hankow Railroad. This is easily within his capabilities, and will provide him with a direct line of communications between his central reserve North of the Yellow River and his positions on the Yangtze River.

2. Whatever the outcome in the North, I consider it almost certain that the Japanese offensive will develop a far more dangerous second phase when the good weather in China's central region begins in July. The enemy will then drive down from the Yangtze positions, and perhaps upward from Canton, to take the line of the Canton-Hankow Railroad and our Eastern air bases. I may add that yesterday we received indications that this second phase might not wait for the weather, but start at once.

3. In the Honan campaign, the Japanese have been using from seven to eight divisions, including one armored division and much mechanized equipment, probably leaving four divisions in their central reserve. In the Yangtze positions, from Ichang to Wuhu, the Japanese now have at least fourteen divisions,

~~MOST SECRET AND PERSONAL~~

with at least four additional divisions in the triangle, Nanking-Hangchow-Shanghai. There are two divisions in the Canton-Hankow area, which may also be rapidly reinforced from Formosa.

4. In Honan, the Armies of General Hu Tsung-nan defend Tungkwang, Sian and Paochi, and the Armies of General Tang En-po are charged with the defense of the rest of the province. In view of the relatively limited Japanese force employed in Honan, it seems likely they will only succeed in attaining their less ambitious objective--- control of the Honan plain and the Ping-nan Railroad. But in East China South of the Yangtze, the Armies of General Hsieh Yo, in the Ninth War Area, are the only Chinese forces which can be relied on for determined resistance. General Hsieh needed all his strength to defeat the Japanese in the Changteh campaign last fall, in which only eight Japanese divisions were employed. He will now have to withstand at least twice as many divisions. It is logical to suppose he cannot do so without the most powerful assistance.

5. There is only one form of assistance we can give the Chinese, whether in Honan or in East China South of the Yangtze. We can mobilize our resources for a major air effort, and owing to problems of supply and transportation, that is all we can do. I personally am confident that a major air effort, pulverizing the enemy bases, cutting the enemy supply lines, denying him use of the China coast ports, and affording strong close support to the Chinese ground forces, will stop the Japanese offensive in China. But our resources must be mobilized. At present, the Fourteenth Air Force has neither the reserves nor the incoming supplies to do the job with any assurance of success. Since so little time remains, I shall need something very like carte blanche to draw not only on the Air Transport Command, but also, if necessary, on the XXth Bomber Command.

6. You will recall that in Washington in May, 1943, I asserted that limited air power would be enough to defeat any offensive the Japanese could launch in China, until they abandoned their more distant commitments and concentrated their effort here. Precisely that situation has now arisen. In my opinion, their over all objective is nothing less than the neutralization of China as an allied base, and the organization of East China as a Japanese base and vital link in their interior defense line. If the Japanese offensive follows the lines I expect and is not defeated, the consequences will be: A) frustration of our Pacific strategy, by depriving the proposed operations to establish a bridgehead in the Formosa-Canton area of essential land-based air support; B) neutralization or actual loss of China as an

~~MOST SECRET AND PERSONAL~~

air base against Japan, owing to political after-effects and the Japanese hold on the coast-line; and C) ultimate establishment of a Land Line of Communications between Manchuria and Southeast Asia. The Japanese could make no better preparation to hold indefinitely on an interior line, which is, of course, the problem urgently confronting their high command.

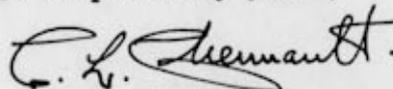
I have repeatedly warned General Stilwell of the present danger. I have suggested mobilization of all air resources to assist the Chinese in Honan, if a serious Japanese assault on Tungkwang develops. I have also presented to him a complete estimate of the situation, of which I enclose an up-to-date version for you, and have asked him for a directive to cover the second phase of the Japanese offensive. I cannot predict what action he may take. There is little enough time to act, for our air effort should begin at once if the Japanese Yangtze positions are to be adequately softened.

I am afraid the gravity of the situation I have described may come as a severe shock to you. Even the Generalissimo, misled by false intelligence, was remarkably complacent until Honan was actually over-run, and most of our own people seem to have shared his error. I do not know what you can do in the matter, and I fear it will be worse than useless simply to pass this letter to the War Department, since it is not my official business to appraise the military situation here. But the logic of Japan's position, all the intelligence I have received, and my own long experience, all confirm my opinion. Consequently I feel impelled to send you this private word.

Forgive me for adding to your many burdens. If it is not too much trouble, please remember me kindly to Mr. Hopkins, whose illness I consider a very real public misfortune.

With warm personal regards, I am,

Most respectfully yours,



C. L. CHENNAULT  
Major General, U.S.A.,  
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE  
A. P. O. 627, c/o Postmaster  
New York City, New York

26 May 1944.

ESTIMATE OF JAPANESE CAPABILITIES ON THE  
CHINA FRONT

1. YELLOW RIVER BEND:

a. At the YELLOW RIVER BEND and in the area of North China from which its reserves would be drawn there are believed to be at present:

- 11 Japanese divisions
- 1 part of a division
- 4 independent brigades
- 5 brigades (including 1 cavalry)

b. On 17th April Japanese forces were committed to a crossing of the Yellow River and an attempt to seize the Chinese-held portion of the Ping-Han Railway road bed. By 8th May these forces had driven south, establishing junction with Japanese forces moving north from Sinyang, on the northern edge of the Yangtze River Bulge. Meanwhile, Japanese troops moved west, flanking the Loyang defense line and causing evacuation of Chinese Headquarters. In three weeks the Japanese Army had gained control of the Ping-Han Railway bed, essential auxiliary transport lines, and the important cities in an area of 12,095 square miles.

c. Chinese authorities have not supplied this Headquarters a composite picture of their own strength. However, not less than thirty-four different divisions have been mentioned in dispatches from the Bend; some of these forces being crack Chinese front line troops. In the initial stages of the campaign, the Chinese forces offered substantial resistance to the advancing Japanese only at Szeshui. Everywhere else Japanese columns moved virtually at will. In the defense of the Honan plain itself, the Chinese have shown slight evidence of plan, or of capability to hamper Japanese movement. At present, however, there are indications that the Chinese have been able to take advantage of Japanese over-extension in their drive westward towards the Tungkwan pass. The new development suggests the possibility that the Chinese will be capable of holding the enemy in the mountains of Western Honan.

d. Two notable factors are present in this campaign which, since the Pacific War, Chinese have not had to take account of:

- (1) The participation of Japanese divisions drawn from Manchuria.
- (2) The extensive use of small and medium tanks, armored vehicles, and motorized artillery.

e. Present character and deployment of Japanese forces indicates two directions and purposes of impending movement.

(1) Japanese forces appear ready and able to cross the Yellow River south and west of Yuncheng. A Japanese flanking drive from the north combined with a frontal mechanized attack due west along the Lung-Hai Railway with Sian as the objective would accomplish two objectives:

(a) Penetration and possible demoralization of China's western and northern defenses. (This area is the "hinge" between Communist and Kuomintang China.)

(b) Precipitation of political crisis at Chungking and throughout the whole Kuomintang government structure.

(2) Consolidation of defense positions along the east and west of the Ping-Han Railroad bed accompanied by rapid preparation for reconstruction of the railway having the following possible consequences:

(a) Acceleration of all troop movements and supply movements north and south from Manchuria and North China to the Yangtze River and vice versa;

(b) Relief of the risks and the burden of transport now carried by Yangtze River shipping.

f. The design implicit in current Japanese operations between the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers appears to have long term defensive and offensive purposes. Only incidentally do these operations accomplish any positive immediate advantage, (e.g., Honan wheat).

g. The defensive motive probably is denial both to the Chinese Air Force and to the Fourteenth Air Force of advanced air bases in the central northwest and conversion from friendly to hostile and alerted territory that area over which American VLR bombers might plan to fly.

h. The offensive motives probably are, first, development of a continuous and secure line of supply and communications to the Yangtze River Bulge where the major ground campaign against currently important forward bases of the Fourteenth Air Force would be based; and, second, concurrent denial of the entire East China coastal area to Allied forces.

## 2. YANGTZE RIVER BULGE.

a. The base for a Japanese Yangtze offensive campaign south against Fourteenth Air Force forward bases would be the whole of the YANGTZE RIVER BULGE. This area is bounded by Ichang on the west, Sinyang on the north, Yochow-Kiukiang-Manchang on the south, and Wuhu on the east. Within this area there is believed to be the following Japanese unit strength:

14 divisions  
5 parts of divisions  
2 brigades.

b. During the past six weeks shipping along the Yangtze River has been very heavy; movement of large bodies of troops moving west along the shores of the Yangtze River has been persistent, and there have been continuous reports of accumulating military stores and supplies. Considerable building of railways, roads, and installations in the area has been indicated in photos and ground reports.

c. This activity has been taking place along the main artery of Japanese communications. Orientation has been neither to the south nor, despite the Ping-Han drive from Sinyang, noticeably to the north. The Hankow-Wuchang

area has been the center of this accumulation and the focal point of troop movements. There have, nevertheless, been significant reports of activity in the Kingshan-Yincheng area (which might be related to any drive on Sian), in the Shasi area, in the Hwajung-Shihshow area, and in the Yochow-Yangsin-Tayeh area. In this latter region the extent and character of activity has not been dissimilar to those preliminaries preceding the Changteh campaign during November-December, 1943.

d. Japanese ground forces available for operations in the Yangtze River Bulge area probably are twice as large as those employed in the Changteh campaign during November-December, 1943. Even before railway reconstruction is completed, opening of the Ping-Han Railroad bed enables the Japanese to transfer to the Yangtze front motorized and mechanized equipment which they have employed with conspicuous effectiveness on the Yellow River front.

e. Chinese forces in the Ninth War Area are not equipped to resist mobile armour and artillery. The Human terrain, on the other hand, is not well adapted to the best use of tanks and mobile artillery.

### 3. LOWER YANGTZE VALLEY.

a. In the Shanghai-Kinwha (Hangchow)-Nanking triangle Japanese strength has increased. The withdrawal of the 22nd Division from Chekiang has been recently reported. However, other units have come in. The following units have been identified:

13th Army  
4 divisions  
2 brigades

b. It is reported that the Japanese now operate the Hanchow-Kinwha Railway. This railway is regular gauge as far as Chuki; narrow gauge, further south.

### 4. HONGKONG- CANTON.

a. No change in Japanese strength has been reported in the Canton-Hongkong area. The latest estimate indicated some 40,000 troops.

b. Though it is unlikely that Japanese strength in this area exceeds two divisions of regular troops, Japanese ground capabilities in central Kwangtung must be assessed in terms of possible employment of Japanese garrisons in southern Kwangtung - on the Liuchow Peninsula. Japanese strength on the peninsula is, at present, less than a division, but the strategic location of the Liuchow Peninsula makes possible reinforcement from Hainan with minimum expenditure of ten-days of shipping.

### 5. SALWEEN.

a. On the Salween front Chinese forces crossed the river on 11th May. Chinese forces amounted to:

4 divisions  
4 parts of divisions.

b. Japanese forces defending the area (depleted by withdrawals of units of the 56th Division to the Moguang Valley), were probably not more than:

4 battalions.

g. Chinese forces have displayed sluggish offensive powers.

#### 6. AIR CAPABILITIES.

a. In the presence of the recent accumulation of troops and supplies on the Central China fronts, there has been a surprising decline in Japanese aircraft visible in photo cover.

b. Except in the very short term this decline is insignificant. The Japanese Air Force is, by character and organization, extremely mobile. Flights or larger units move freely and frequently within the whole Central and North China area, finding admirable airdrome facilities wherever they may be ordered to stage or be based. While the main movement undoubtedly is south and southwest, Japanese aircraft on Formosan airfields can and do quickly enter the China Theatre. Photo cover has shown over 500 aircraft on these fields.

c. In considering Japanese capabilities it is revealing to note the "capacity" which the Japanese have developed for handling major air operations. These are indicated below:

- (1) In the Yellow River area including Yuncheng-Taiyuan-Hsuchow-Chengchow:

Total known airfields - 31.  
Total first class airdromes - 7.  
Number of revetments at largest airdrome (Yuncheng) - 60.

- (2) In the Yangtze River Bulge west of Wuhu:

Total known airfields - 38.  
Total first class airdromes - 9.  
Number of revetments at largest airdrome (Hankow) - 249.

- (3) In the Lower Yangtze area including Wuhu-Nanking-Shanghai-Kinwha (Hangchow):

Total known airfields - 26.  
Total first class airdromes - 6.  
Number of revetments at largest airdrome (Shanghai area) - 154.

- (4) In the Hongkong-Canton area:

Total known airfields - 14.  
Total first class airdromes - 5.  
Number of revetments at largest airdrome (Tien Ho) - 84.

To summarize:

1. Enemy:

The enemy can probably take any lines of communication or areas in Central and East China he desires and is willing to concentrate sufficient strength.

An enemy drive from Tungting Lake Area to the south, connecting with Jap held territory in Canton or Liuchow Peninsula would effectively reduce Allied Air capabilities and prevent

- a. Sea Sweeps.
- b. Missions vs Formosa.
- c. Support of amphibious landing on China coast.
- d. Greatly reduce photo recon work.
- e. Render much more difficult any long range air attack on Japan proper.
- f. Reduce our air action over Yangtze River and allow the enemy to use this important line of supply to Central China.

2. Friendly Situation:

Chinese ground troops, with exception of IX War Area in Hunan, are not considered capable of effective resistance, should Japan utilize the apparent power she is accumulating.

3. Plans open to Enemy:

- a. Continue Honan Campaign to West.
- b. Push south from Yochow to Canton.

Plan "a" would result in political repercussions adverse to Allied continued operations.

Plan "b." would successfully cut off 14th A.F. advance bases as well as produce political repercussions.

4. Enemy Air Capabilities:

a. With reduced commitment to defend Pacific Areas, the Japanese can concentrate their entire Air Force if necessary in China and Japan, thus far exceeding any exhibition of power thus far demonstrated in attacking 14th A. F. bases.

Their air dromes are so located that extreme mobility of action is possible and they have heretofore exhibited capacity to utilize this mobility.

5. Our action:

The area south of Yangtze River must be held at all costs as the ultimate defeat of Japan will largely depend upon the use of seaports and air bases in Eastern China.

All possible Air Support must be available to Chinese Ground Forces.

Air strength must be available to effect full attrition upon enemy supply bases and lines of communications.

Sea sweeps must be continued and use of China ports denied the enemy.

River sweeps must be conducted so as to refuse supplies to Central China enemy bases.

*file* → ~~SECRET~~  
HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE  
A. P. O. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

*Chennault folder*  
2-44  
*PSF*  
*War*

In reply  
refer to:

27 June, 1944.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

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DOD DIR. 5200.9 (9/27/58)

Date- 7-29-70

Signature- *gvd* -

The President,  
The White House,  
WASHINGTON, D. C

Dear Mr. President:

Since launching their campaign south of the Yangtze River on May 26-27, the Japanese have captured the important city of Changsha and are now attacking Hengyang. The latter city is the junction of the north-south railway from Canton to Hankow and the south-west railway to Kweilin, Liuchow and Tushan. Japanese advance columns have by-passed Hengyang and are entering the valley which leads to Kweilin and Liuchow. The capture of Kweilin will complete the conquest of East China - for all practical purposes - and will deny our air units the use of bases east of Yunnan and Szechwan provinces. Under the circumstances, I feel that I should render you another short report.

First, I wish to say for record that I consider the loss of East China has been totally unnecessary. Despite my repeated warnings to the authorities here, we were denied supplies with which to defend East China until the Japanese offensive was already well started and the defense had become impossible. If we had been enabled to operate intensively against enemy bases and lines of communication from the moment when I first discerned the danger, East China would now be safe - for the Japanese are as unable to fight without supplies as we are. As matters stand, we have traded the entire strategically important area of China for a segment of North Burma. It seems to me a poor bargain.

Second, and more important, I wish to review for you the situation which will confront us when East China is gone.

The chief military effect of the loss of East China will be to deprive us of our forward air bases. This will prevent us from launching a really effective anti-shipping campaign, and make it impossible for us to carry out our assignments of neutralizing Formosa and covering a Naval landing next spring.

The political effects cannot be exactly predicted, but they will certainly be grave, and may be disastrous. The Generalissimo's prestige has already declined very seriously, owing to the inflation, the popular resentment against certain members of his entourage, and the recent military reverses. The morale of the Armies and people is already impaired. In short, the Chungking regime has been weakened and will inevitably be shaken to its foundation by the great new shock now in store.

With East China in enemy hands, Free China will be reduced to a hinterland, separated from the coastal provinces by difficult mountain ranges. Even if the new supply route through Burma is eventually opened, the losses of the Chinese Armies and the impairment of the national morale will absolutely forbid an offensive on any orthodox pattern. Assuming, however, that the political situation permits us to use our remaining airfields, there is one type of military effort which will still be open to us. The Fourteenth Air Force may be intensively employed to disrupt Japanese communications, denying the enemy the use of his newly won rail systems and striking at shipping both on the Chinese inland waterways and in the ports and coastal waters still within our range. At the same time, we may assist the Chinese to organize guerrilla warfare more aggressively, greater in scale, better planned and better supplied than any they have yet attempted. In view of the immensely extended position of the Japanese, I believe we can do them enormous damage and perhaps even roll them back and reoccupy some forward airfields in time to give aid to the Navy.

To make such an effort possible, however, our forces in China will need leadership of most unusual quality, combining the utmost political astuteness with the maximum of military imagination and readiness to experiment and improvise. Political astuteness is essential, since the progressive demoralization of people and government must be halted by political means, and the Generalissimo will need American encouragement and support to take the requisite steps. It is also heeded because success of the effort will depend on close coordination of Chinese and American activities, which can hardly be obtained in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and contempt. I need not explain the need for military imagination. Frankly, I fear that unless American leadership of this quality is promptly provided, the process of demoralization will continue until the Chungking regime has been rendered impotent or has actually disintegrated.

If this report is far from encouraging, the setback here is at any rate more than counter-balanced by the magnificent progress being made elsewhere. Forgive me for troubling you, when you must have so many other pressing duties. I should not do so if the time of final crisis here did not seem to be approaching.

With warm personal regards, I am,

Most respectfully yours,

*C. L. Chennault*  
C. L. CHENNAULT  
Major General, USA  
Commanding.

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DOD DIR. 5200.9 (9/27/58)

Date- 7-29-70

Signature- *JWR*

HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE  
A. P. O. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

*file  
Personal*

In reply  
refer to:

27 June, 1944

Dear Gracey,

The worst that the General feared and foresaw has now, unhappily, been permitted to occur. The General feels he should make another report to the President, which I therefore enclose. He is pretty well past caring what happens, but I hope that you can again arrange to have this report, like its predecessors, treated as being for the President's eyes alone. For I judge it will infuriate without educating the rather ineducable War Department, and while every word the General says is true, the purpose of the letter is merely to bring the President personally up to date, and not to become the subject of official action. That must be taken through ordinary channels.

I know, and the General also knows, that the President has done his best in this area against pretty heavy odds. It is only too bad that he does not possess the absolute power which his enemies credit him with, for then I think we should have ~~be~~ avoided the present disaster. And that, unluckily, is not too strong a word.

I have been much cheered by reports that the President is entirely well again. I hope that you also are in your usual brisk and charming health. Give him my regards if you have time, and tell him we look to him to keep the U.S. out of the hands of the Sons of Bitches United Chowder and Marching Society which the Republican Party appears to have become. I know he will do so, and I know he will also somehow save us from the idiocy of the Congressional constructionists.

*Yours, as ever,  
Joe Alaps.*

*For myself I am well, and while naturally heart-broken to see the great show the General had built up and I had fought so largely destroyed by the obstinate short-sightedness of other men, I am personally cheerful. Curiously enough, I am more placid now the worst has happened, than when there was still time to prevent it and no one took action.*

Dear Grace,

Chennault folder 2-44

file PSF

filed 7-25-44

One word in the utmost haste, for the plane leaves immediately.

I have had a long struggle to persuade General Chennault to write to the President at all, for he is terribly discouraged by the situation, and has felt that the President would merely refer his letter to the War Department, which would cause a commotion without doing good. If the letter is referred to the War Department, I am sadly sure his prediction will prove correct.

But I have argued with him on the other hand that:

a. He considers the security of China as imminently threatened by the Japanese offensive here. He is the best foreign judge of the military situation in China, with experience no one else can match. All the evidence seems to confirm his judgment.

b. The President has asked him to report direct from time to time. It is almost sure that the President is not receiving adequate warning of the seriousness of the situation here.

c. Therefore, I have said, it is the General's duty to report the danger personally to the President, so that the President may make inquiries, request independent checks or official estimates, etc., if he so desires.

Will you explain this background of the ~~Franklin~~ letter to the President? As for myself, I do not see how the thing can be licked, for there are so many rather rigid minds out here that obtaining prompt action to meet an emergency, particularly an emergency which is not generally understood, is all but impossible. I am polishing my hiking boots to go to Lhasa, for by God this threat here is no joke.

With all my love.

The above also applies to the JTC ~~Alb~~ p. estimate of the situation enclosed in the letter to Mr. Pres. Although official, its being known to be in his hands would make the same difficulty as the letter. Give him best luck from me. He will jump as this is.

*PSF Chennault folder 2-44  
War  
file  
personal*

**HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE  
A. P. O. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK**

In reply  
refer to:

21 September, 1944

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Some months have passed since my last report to you. At such a time as this, I have hesitated to trouble you with the problems of China; but the situation is now so grave that I feel impelled to write you again.

As I predicted in my last letter, the policy of concentrating our major military investment in Burma has now resulted in the loss of most of East China. I can honestly say that my men in the East have worked miracles with the force at their disposal. With an average of 30 operational aircraft, they have materially delayed the advance of eight to nine Japanese divisions. That advance, I am sure, would have been halted, if we had been enabled to initiate our effort before the Japanese offensive gained momentum, or if supplies had been made available for an air effort on a larger scale, or if the courageous Chinese Armies in the East had been given even a few tons of equipment. As matters stand, however, I fear that the fall of Liuchow, our last great East China base, is only a matter of time. The fall of Liuchow will create a politico-military situation which may be outlined as follows:

1. We shall no longer control any area from which we can strike effectively at vital points in the Japanese military structure, or offer effective support to our Navy's operations.
2. China's military power, never great, will be reduced almost to the vanishing point. Of the seven main groupings of troops in China, the four in East China will be either dispersed or cut off. There will remain only the Armies under General Chen Cheng based on Sian and Hanchung; the depleted Armies of the Sixth War Area, which stand between Chungking and the Japanese in the Yangtze Valley; and the Armies now fighting on the Salween. Greatly increased supply tonnages will be available, both by air and, eventually, by road. But in my opinion these supplies will come too late. No tonnage of supplies will be enough to create an offensive striking force from the remnants of China's military power, at any rate within eighteen months to two years time.
3. Of course the Chungking regime's loss of military power will have far-reaching political repercussions. Very widespread po-

political discontent is already evident in the area of Free China controlled by Chungking. What is even more important, Chungking's loss of strength constitutes an equivalent gain for the regime at Yen-an. Yen-an will not only benefit by the change in the balance of power within China, but also by the penetration of East China by the Communist guerrillas based around Hankow, Shanghai and Canton.

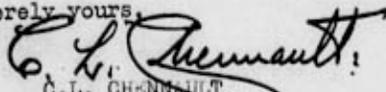
I can imagine no more disquieting situation, unless it is your policy to withdraw American support from Chungking and leave an open field to Yen-an. At the worst, the Russians may choose to support Yen-an, involving us in a contest in which, as the supporters of Chungking, we shall find ourselves at a decided disadvantage. Even if we refuse to become involved in such a contest, there is obviously grave danger of civil war in China. Furthermore, if there is civil war in China, the Yen-an regime has an excellent chance of emerging victorious, with or without Russian aid. In my opinion, it is too much to expect the Russians to resist the temptation to aid Yen-an in such a conjunction. I know that at Yen-an, and I suspect that at Moscow, ties between the two are now denied; but I cannot altogether forget the suggestive fact that the Yen-an leaders took the rigid Communist Party line at the time of the Russo-German pact. I need not point out the extent to which the establishment of a government in China, closely tied to Moscow, would upset the balance of power in the Pacific, or what this might mean to us in the future.

There is only one way out now, as I see it. That is for us to sponsor thorough political reconstruction at Chungking, followed by true unification between Chungking and Yen-an. Only in that way can we insure a strong, united and above all, independent China, such as our interests in the Pacific require. I would warn you most solemnly, however, that attaining this objective will be immensely difficult. It will have to be given absolute priority over all other objectives, either military or political. It will have to be done through the Chinese themselves. It can only be done by the persuasion and pressure of American representatives whom the Chinese leaders respect and trust, and it cannot be done by any attempt to reduce the Chinese to a condition of military or political tutelage. All our energy must go into the main effort, to obtain reconstruction at Chungking and unification between Chungking and Yen-an. We cannot reach these goals by any roundabout road.

I venture to express my thoughts to you with the utmost frankness, since the loss of East China means that I no longer have anything to lose or gain, and because I am at least able to form a judgment on the basis of long and close acquaintance with the Generalissimo and his subordinates. You will take this, I am sure, as a purely personal letter, written solely because you once said you would be pleased to hear my views on vital Chinese problems.

With warmest regards and all my good wishes for success at home and abroad, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

  
C. L. CHENNAULT,  
Major General, U.S.A.

PSF Chennault folder  
War 2-44

October 2, 1944.

My dear Chennault:

I have not written you recently because of the number of troubles here, which you doubtless have some inkling of -- troubles in China, I mean. I hope I am going to be able to straighten it out.

In the meantime, as you know, I sent the former Secretary of War and Donald Nelson to talk with the Generalissimo. Nelson has come back two days ago with a more optimistic report on the economic matters than I had expected. However, on military matters things are not so good, though apparently the old supply line over the Hump is working out better than you and I thought.

I will let you know if anything happens. In the meantime, keep up the spirit because it is going to work out all right.

Always sincerely yours,

Major General C. L. Chennault,  
Headquarters Fourteenth Air Force,  
A.P.O. 627,  
c/o Postmaster,  
New York City, N. Y.

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**HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE**  
A. P. O. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

In reply  
refer to:

12 July, 1944

Dear Gracey:

Enclosed is another letter from the General, very short, but fortunately necessary to true up, so to speak, after his previous very pessimistic report. Even he could not believe our fellows would do such a job on the half shoe string they had to work on. It is, indeed, almost miraculous, and I only hope the miracle is big enough to end the danger in East China.

I have no news worth mentioning. Bob writes me that his ears are still bad, and that he may have to leave the Army. I only hope that he does not become involved in other pursuits, so that he and I may some day be together again, covering another Roosevelt administration. My one desire, these days, is to roll up my sleeves, sit down to a typewriter, and say what I think of some people back home for the widest possible publication. And I want to do it with Bob if I can, not only because he is the best partner anyone ever had, but also because he will keep me out of jail.

Take good care of yourself. Give my warmest regards, and very best wishes to the President. He is our only hope.

As ever,

Joe Alsop -

Miss Grace Tully,  
Secretary to the President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D. C.

HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH AIR FORCE  
A. P. O. 627, C/O POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

In reply  
refer to:

14 July, 1944

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

My last report was so pessimistic that I feel obliged to send you another. In six weeks of fighting, with less than 150 aircraft and inadequate supplies, my men in East China have destroyed a good part of the transport and crippled the supply of eight Japanese divisions and two brigades, incidentally killing or disabling more than 15,000 Japanese troops. With their supply crippled, the attacking Japanese have lost momentum at Hengyang. General Hsuen Yo has rallied his armies, organized a determined defense of Hengyang, and fallen upon the flanks of the enemy. The Japanese time-table has thus been seriously upset, and owing to the achievement of my men in the East, which I can only describe as a near-miracle, we have a definite chance to save East China.

The danger is still very great, however. In the Hengyang area, the Japanese have suffered only a reverse, and not the real defeat we might have inflicted upon them with greater means at our disposal. The Generalissimo has just ordered a greatly intensified counter-attack by his armies, to begin tomorrow. This may perhaps turn the reverse into a defeat, but at the very moment when our air support of the Chinese should also be intensified, our own road supply line eastwards has broken down. I have been pleading for more than a year to have this supply line strengthened in order to guard against just such an emergency as the present one, but the necessary measures were first so long delayed, and then taken so half-heartedly, as to be almost fruitless. Thus the outcome in the Hengyang area is still uncertain. At the same time, the five Japanese divisions in the Canton area are now also on the move, requiring me to divide the air effort in the East. It would be a disheartening outlook, if so much more had not already been accomplished than could be reasonably expected.

Although the Japanese have not yet been decisively defeated, I consider that the accomplishment to date in the Hengyang fighting affords clear proof of my theories of the China war. A force of 150 aircraft can cripple the supply and

halt the progress of nine enemy divisions, incidentally inflicting the astonishing total of over ten per cent of actual casualties on the enemy, because of the extreme vulnerability of the Japanese supply lines and routes of advance. If East China is saved, I hope this lesson will be learned and applied in the planning of our future effort in this theater. For the difference between the Japanese spearhead at Hengyang, and their great, permanent spearhead in the Yangtze Valley, is a difference of scale only. And whenever we are given the stuff to do the job, I am confident we can drive the enemy from the Yangtze Valley as we could already have driven them from Hengyang with a little more fuel and a few more aircraft.

with warm personal regards, I am,

Most respectfully yours,



C. L. CHENNAULT,  
Major General, U.S.A.,  
Commanding