

**February 19, 1952**

**Despatch No. 346 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'The Political Department of the Chinese Political Department of the Chinese Ministry of National Defense'**

**Citation:**

"Despatch No. 346 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'The Political Department of the Chinese Political Department of the Chinese Ministry of National Defense'", February 19, 1952, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Case Number F-1979-01277, US Department of State Virtual Reading Room. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/301247>

**Summary:**

The document is a US assessment of General Chiang Ching-kuo's leadership and the role of his Political Department in the Nationalist Chinese Army during the early 1950s. It highlights concerns about political officers undermining military command and consuming training resources, along with efforts by American advisors to reform the system and reduce interference. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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Enclosures  
RESTRICTED

SECRET  
SECURITY INFORMATION  
(Classification)

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Approved 793.00/2-1952  
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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AMEMBASSY, TAIPEI.

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

REF: Taipei's despatch No. 3211, January 30, 1952, "General Chiang Ching-kuo".

SUBJECT: The Political Department of the Chinese Communist Party in Taiwan Defense.

346 DEPT. OF STATE  
RECEIVED BY: [Signature] DATE: 2/18/52  
REASON(S):  

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With regard to comments made on January 26, 1952, by Lt. Col. Charles H. BARBER concerning General Chiang Ching-kuo and reported in the above-mentioned despatch, somewhat the same (as well as additional) observations are contained in a letter of February 1, 1952, from Major General William C. CHASE, Chief of MAAG, to Colonel David D. BARRETT, United States Army Attache, Taipei, on the subject, "Comments on Political Officer System in NGRC Armed Forces".

In his "Report and Recommendations" to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek from Headquarters MAAG, Formosa, dated June 15, 1951, General Chase stated, inter alia:

"There is, throughout the armed forces, a highly objectionable system of political commissars that acts to penalize initiative and undermine the authority of commanders of all echelons."

In the letter under reference, General Chase further reported that "early attempts to inquire into the activities of the Political Department were met with a hostile and seemingly anti-American attitude" and "the Generalissimo's reaction to the above-quoted paragraph on 27 June 1951 was that Political Department activity was a feature particularly demanded by the circumstances of the day and that he did not agree with my observation."

There are quoted below the remaining paragraphs of General Chase's letter (paragraphs numbered 4-12, inclusive):

"4. Throughout the summer of 1951, the activities of the Political Department were watched and observed.

a. It appeared that Political Department training was taking up to 25% of the regularly scheduled unit training time.

b. Political officers appeared to have power to report thru unofficial channels against assigned commanders thereby violating integrity of command and inhibiting initiative.

c. The orders of unit commanders required the signature of the unit Political Officer to become effective. (It must be stated that this authority was not invariably exercised according

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to the testimony of many unit commanders.)

d. Other Political Department activities included Special Services, Information and Education, Physical Training, Political Indoctrination, Psychological Warfare, Inspection, Civil Affairs, Counter Intelligence and Counter Espionage (within Armed Forces).

5. During the fall of 1951, in a series of frank discussions about the Political Department with the President and with Lt Gen Chiang Ching-kuo, Director of the Political Department, recommendations for corrective action were made as follows:

a. Reduce Political training time to 10% or less, of unit scheduled training.

b. Eliminate interference by Political Officers in the operation of command functions.

c. Accept a MAAG officer as Political Department Liaison and Advisory Officer.

6. Chinese reaction to recommendations in par 6. was:

a. Reduction by MND order, of Political training time to 10% or less of unit scheduled training time.

b. Promulgation of MND General Order Nr 108, which stated that the practice of political officers countersigning all orders of unit commanders to be no longer necessary and annulling same. This order re-affirmed the status of political officers as "Political Chiefs of Staff" in higher echelons and as assistant unit commanders in regiments and lower units.

c. Since 20 November 1951, a U S Army Lt. Col. has been assigned as Advisor to the Political Department where he has been well received and given full freedom of inspection.

7. Inspection confirms that orders listed in par 6a and b have received normal dissemination to units thru command channels.

8. On occasion of critique of Annual Reviews of NGRG Forces 23 January 1951, with Ground Force, Air, Navy, and CSF commanders, Generalissimo firmly stated that he would punish any political officer who interferes with command authority. He stated:

"I hold political officers responsible for any case of Communist spy activity within the units. They are directly responsible to me."

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"I want it clear that your activities and your lives are being watched. There is no reason to hide this. If the political officer interferes, tell me. It is imperative that I do not allow you any opportunity to corrupt or defect, but I will punish any political officer that interferes with your command, if only you will report to me."

9. It is believed that the activities of the Political Department, minus the "Gestapo" functions and operated on a staff basis, are effective in creating and maintaining morale. Both General HO Ying-chin and Premier CHEN Cheng have advised the Generalissimo to eliminate the undesirable features of the political officer system. It should be noted that in the Chinese Air Force where loyalty and competence are outstanding qualities of the unit commanders, there is close cooperation between political officers and commanders. The political officers' principal responsibility in the Air Force is troop welfare and morale.

10. As of 30 January 1952, General Chiang Ching-kuo has made a decision as follows:

a. He will recommend that the "Technical Channel" of the Political Department be eliminated by MND order. This proposal will be submitted to General Chou-Chih-jou for his approval.

b. Two new courses of three months duration each will be added to the political training program of all units.

(1) Discipline (Obedience and Proper Conduct).

(2) Integrity of Command (U S Armed Forces doctrine will be the basis of the effort to create an understanding of the unit commander's responsibilities and a proper respect for his authority. Simultaneously an effort will be made to develop initiative of unit commanders in all echelons by giving them more responsibility.)

11. In general, the bad (Gestapo) features of the system of political officers have been and are still being substantially corrected. It is not believed necessary or desirable to make an issue of this matter now. We are making good progress and getting fine cooperation.

12. MAAG will continue to observe and report on this interesting and controversial feature in the NGRC command system."

With respect to Barber's remark that during the past two months when he has been working closely with the Political Department, he had encountered no concrete examples of political officers' interference with the military command. (despatch under reference) on

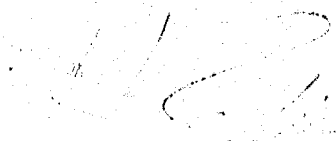
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February 5, 1952, he brought to the Embassy's attention the case of a Regimental Commander, Lt. Col. CHAO Han-yu of the 46th Regiment, 16th Division, 75th Army, who was allegedly removed at the instance of a political officer.

Barber has referred to the Embassy the following pertinent documents on this case: (1) "Report of Personnel Incident Involving Removal of Regimental Commander" (Enclosure No. 1); (2) Letter from Brig. Gen. John P. WILLEY to General SUN Li-jen (Enclosure No. 2); and (3) Letter from General Sun to Brig. Gen. Willey (Enclosure No. 3). Concerning these documents, Barber observed that "this is the only incident of its kind among many alluded to which has been brought out into the open", pointed out that the initiative came from General Chiang Ching-kuo and noted that General Sun, in his reply, avoided reference to the circumstances described in the basic report (Enclosure No. 1).

The Office of the United States Army Attache, Taipei, under date of February 2, 1952, submitted to the Department of Defense a report entitled "Translation General Order No. 108, dated 3 November 1951". The report enclosed a translation of Ministry of National Defense General Order No. 108, "Revised Principle for Nationalist Armed Forces Political Work", which set forth the main principles, organization structure, basic missions, division of authority and relationships between military and political officers at all levels, and limits and content of political work.

In view of interest previously expressed in General Chiang Ching-kuo and in the activities of his political officers in the Chinese Army, it is thought that the Department may wish to obtain a copy of this report from the Defense Department.

  
K. L. Rankin

  
Enclosures:

1. "Report of Personnel Incident Involving Removal of Regimental Commander".
2. Letter from Gen. Willey to Gen. Sun.
3. Letter from Gen. Sun to Gen. Willey.

HEADQUARTERS  
MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP, FORMOSA  
APO: 93  
Office of the Political Department Advisor

4 January 1952

319.1

SUBJECT: Report of personnel Incident Involving Removal of Regimental Commander.

TO : Major General William C. Chase  
Chief, MAAG - Formosa  
Taipei, Taiwan.

1. On at least two occasions, MAAG personnel meeting with Lt. Gen. CHIANG Ching-kuo, Director of the Political Department, MND, have referred to an incident in which a Political Department Officer was alleged to have been responsible for the removal of a Regimental Commander. On both occasions, Gen. Chiang requested details concerning the incident, which were not furnished him. Accordingly, Gen. Chiang has caused a thorough search of the personnel records to be made in order to identify the incident. One incident which might seem to be the case in point has been discovered.

2. On Double Ten Day, 1950, at Hsin Ying near Chia Yi, Col. Chao Han-yu, commander of the 46th Regiment, 16th Division, was involved in an assault upon his regiment Chief Political Officer, Tuan Ch'eng-chao. According to the report furnished by the Political Department, MND, the case developed as follows:

a. A stage show for the soldiers and schoolteachers in the area had been planned for the evening. At 1900, because of a drizzling rain, Chao notified his OD to cancel the stage performance. However, in a very short time, the rain stopped, the stars came out, and another Political Officer, FENG Ch'iu-sheng, ascertained that the actors were costumed and the program prepared. The audience was requesting that the performance go on as scheduled, Tuan went to see the regiment commander who approved verbally his request to discuss the presentation with the OD. The OD finally approved the request for the performance to be presented. At 1935 Chao sent for Tuan, as soon as the commander laid eyes on Tuan, he started to curse him. When the Political Officer asked the reason, Chao assaulted him with a chair, struck him with his hands, and kicked him.

b. Tuan reported the assault to the Chief Political Officer of the division, who in turn reported to the Division Commander, who ordered an investigation on the spot. A report of the Division

Commander's investigation went to Gen. WU, the 75th Army Commander, who determined that Chao had not acted properly, and recommended that he be discharged from the Army. A copy of the report and recommendation went to the Political Department, MND as well as to GHQ, Army. Chao was relieved by an order from GHQ, Army.

c. Upon receipt of the report by the Political Department, MND, Gen Chiang ordered a complete investigation by the following Board of officers:

Gen. HO Chih-hao, Deputy Chief of the Policy Board  
Gen. LUNG Yuan, Deputy Chief of the Inspection Division  
Gen. CHANG Yu-jen, Personnel Section Officer

This board coordinated with the Army and Divisional Commanders in this second investigation. The facts were reported to MND. Gen. SUN Li-jen concurrently sent out recommendations to discharge Col. Chao, MND studied all reports and decided that Chao had acted improperly and should be discharged. He was discharged for a period of one year by MND order Ch'uan Chin Tsu No. 7512, 16 November 1950.

d. At present it is not known whether Col. Chao has applied for reinstatement in the Army.

3. It is recommended that Army Section bring this communication to the attention of GHQ, Army and report any reaction received as to the factual character of the reporting of this personnel incident.

CHARLES H. BARBER  
Lt. Col., Infantry  
Political Department Advisor

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GENERAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY  
TAIPEI, TAIWAN, CHINA

23 January 1952

SUBJECT: Personnel Incident Involving Removal of Regimental  
Commander Lt Col Chao Han-yu of 46th Regiment, 16th  
Division, 75th Army

TO : Brigadier General John P. Willey  
Chief of Army Section, MAAG

1. The facts of the case involving the removal of Lt Col Chao Han-yu are as follows: The MND notified this General Headquarters per memorandum (39) Ch'uan Ching No. 7512 dated 16 Dec. 1950, that Lt Col Chao Han-yu, Commander of the 46th Regiment, 16th Division, 75th Army was so rude as to assault his regiment chief political officer Tuan Ch'eng-hsi which has been proved true by personnel sent down for investigation. And it was decided that Chao be removed from his post. Chao has, accordingly, been removed from his post by personnel order No. 149 of the MND.

2. The 75th Army is now requesting that Chao Han-yu be re-instituted as an auxiliary officer per memorandum (40) Chung Jen Shan No. 1387 of 16 December 1951. This General Headquarters has submitted a memorandum (41) Ching Ti No. 0070 dated 12 Jan. 1952 to the MND for official consideration of the said request.

3. This is for your information.

SUN LI-JEN  
General, Chinese Army  
Commander-in-Chief  
GHQ of the Army